

## An Interview with Governor Jim Edgar Volume IV (Sessions 17-22)

Interview with Jim Edgar

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Friday, June 18, 2010. This is Mark DePue; I’m the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today I have my seventeenth session with Gov. Jim Edgar. Good afternoon, Governor.

Edgar: Good afternoon.

DePue: We are here in his office in Champaign. You were just commenting that it’s a typical summer day, isn’t it?

Edgar: It is. It’s why I spend as much of the summer (DePue laughs) as I can in Colorado.

DePue: I understand you’re going to be heading there pretty soon, are you?

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: We left off last time talking about the flood of ’93, and basically went through most of the events of 1993 that we needed to discuss as well, so we’re getting into 1994, which is a reelection year. I want to touch base on one issue just to get your response: NAFTA legislation which was passed in December of ’93 and implemented in ’94.<sup>1</sup> Of course, that’s a national issue, but one that you did have a role in.

Edgar: I did. I was very involved—and a lot of governors were involved; I was probably as much as any of the governors—because I thought it would, and I think it has proved, to have a very positive impact on Illinois’s trade relation with Mexico. When I became governor, our—the state of Illinois—number-one trading partner was Canada, number two was Japan, and number three was Mexico. After NAFTA, Mexico moved up to be our number-two trading partner. I felt all along that NAFTA was the right thing to do. I’m a big believer in free trade, and I think

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<sup>1</sup> North American Free Trade Agreement, which eliminated most tariffs on goods between Canada, Mexico, and the United States, as well as other barriers to trade.

especially with our neighbor to the south. I thought it was important that we have easier trade with Mexico. That was particularly true for Illinois because a lot of our agricultural goods, as well as some of our manufacturing goods, were something that you could market in Mexico.

The other part of it was even then there was concern about illegal immigration, just a flood of people from Mexico to the United States. I think it's a big plus that we have a lot of Mexican Americans in the United States, particularly in the state of Illinois. I think many in my party have made a political blunder as well as a governmental mistake in their opposition to immigration reform. My feeling was that if we could help strengthen the economy in Mexico—and I thought NAFTA would do that—that could probably slow down those tens of thousands of people who thought that they had no future in Mexico and were coming to the United States. I've always thought that a strong Mexico is good for the United States. So not only for the trade reasons but for the political reasons or the sociology reasons, I thought that NAFTA made a lot of sense and had been very supportive.

I think we talked before—when I was in Mexico in '91, I spent a lot of time with President Salinas going over the roll call of congressmen from Illinois and how those people might be convinced to be for NAFTA. I think the American ambassador was a little surprised at how much the president of Mexico and I got into the pure politics of it. So I'd always been a big supporter.

Unfortunately, before President Bush left office, he wasn't able to get it finalized, though he got it close. Then when President Clinton came in, he was supportive of NAFTA—much to his credit, because there was a lot of opposition within the Democratic Party because of labor unions, who don't like free trade; they kind of like a protected situation, and they had opposed it. I had gone out a couple times and spoken to rallies and things in Washington, in support of NAFTA, after he became president. So I was a big supporter and was pleased when it did pass.

DePue: Any particular commodities or products that Illinois is going to benefit from in terms of more open trade?

Edgar: For example, we sell corn. They grow corn in Mexico, but it's a different kind of corn than we have in Illinois. So corn was a market. I spent a lot of time. I went to Mexico every year as governor. That's the one place I made a special effort and had a pretty good relationship. The presidents of Mexico actually knew who I was because I'd been down there so often—particularly the two, Salinas and his successor.<sup>2</sup> They also knew I was very pro-NAFTA and very supportive of efforts that Mexico wanted to do in the United States. But it seemed like every time I went, we talked about hogs. One of the reasons was they wanted to build up their herds in Mexico, so there was a need to purchase quality hogs, as well as cattle—but hogs is what (laughs) I remember more talks about—from the state of Illinois to help

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<sup>2</sup> Ernesto Zedillo succeeded Carlos Salinas in 1994.

improve their herds. A lot of the advancements in agriculture that Illinois farmers had been able to achieve were marketable things in Mexico, so it was very important to the Illinois Farm Bureau, too, that we had this opportunity to trade with Mexico.

Products. One of the things—we made train cars, refurbished train cars. There's a place between Champaign and Springfield—it's near Decatur—a little town. They refurbished train cars and sent them down to Mexico; they were used to haul grain. It was all tied to NAFTA. It was a small industry, but it probably created jobs for about fifty people in this little town in Macon County.<sup>3</sup> You had a lot of examples like that. We particularly worked with small businesspeople in Illinois, to assist them in being able to trade, not only in Mexico but in other countries. You didn't have to help the Caterpillars and the Motorolas—in fact, they helped us; they knew what they were doing—but a lot of small businesses were able to find markets in Mexico.

I remember going down one time; I planned my annual trip to Mexico when there was a trade show going on that was particularly for small businesses. We had several from Illinois, and I went over to the opening of that. Across the gamut of industries, but we particularly wanted to help small businesses get a foothold and trade with Mexico, because that's where most of your economic growth is—in small businesses. Again, the Motorolas, the Caterpillars, the Deeres—those are great companies to have, but overall, that's a small percent of the workforce. Most people work in small businesses, and that's where most of the growth in the nineties—I suspect even today, if we had any growth, it would be in small businesses.

DePue: Let's take up the subject that's going to be the common theme for the rest of our discussion today. That's obviously the gubernatorial election. The primary season is in March, but you know the decision whether or not you're going to run again has to be made well before that time. So can you walk us through your thought processes in deciding to run again?

Edgar: I don't think there was a whole lot of doubt in my mind or in most people's mind that I would run for reelection. Nineteen ninety-three was a pretty good year. We had the flood, which, as we talked earlier, I think our administration handled very well; we got high marks, I got high marks. My approval rating definitely took a jump during the dealing with the flood. The financial problems of the state—we weren't out of the woods, but we were in far better shape in '93 than we were in '91 when I came in. Probably the biggest headache for us was the problem with child welfare, abused and neglected children. The Department of Children and Family Services had had a tough go, and we'd had to make some changes there. But that was beginning to not be a crisis every day as it had been earlier in '93. So as we moved around through '93, we got through the legislative session, got through the

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<sup>3</sup> Excel Railcar Services, Inc. is located in De Witt County, in the town of Kenney.

flood—things were going pretty well for me if you looked at poll numbers and things like that.

I do think that there was a thought out there on the part of some that, well, maybe we can beat Edgar in '94. There were several Democrats talking about it, though the major person who had talked about it was the president of the Cook County Board, Dick Phelan; he had been running for governor ever since he got elected president of the county board the same night I got elected governor. But he was having a little trouble internally. He wasn't doing as well as he thought he would do, so he did not look like he might be as formidable an opponent as we maybe had thought back in '91. It wasn't even a guarantee that he'd be the nominee; there were other people talking about running.

Now, on the Republican side, of course the right wing was always agitated at me, but there was the new state's attorney in Cook County—you know, this is our eighteenth session, and my memory continues to fade more and more (DePue laughs)—Jack O'Malley. Jack O'Malley came out of nowhere. In fact, Thompson had found him, I think. I don't know if he worked in his law firm or what, but he had been a policeman; he hadn't been a lawyer very long. He had been elected state's attorney in 1992, much to the surprise of a lot of people, because he ran against Cecil Partee, who had been appointed but who was an African American and had been a longtime political figure—a good friend of mine. In fact, I think he sent me campaign contributions when I ran for governor. (DePue laughs) But Partee had been around a long time, had some issues, and O'Malley beat him. So O'Malley was a Republican in Cook County, state's attorney. He had somewhat of a flamboyant nature about him. Reminded me a lot of Thompson in some ways. So he was making noises he might want to run against me in a primary, which would be an aggravation.

I wasn't too worried. I remember I was at the Republican governors' meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, right before Thanksgiving. Word was he was thinking about running. Somebody told me that he had talked to Thompson, and Thompson had told him it was crazy for him to think about running against me. Well, he thought this was his time, but then he ran a poll, and I think I beat him seventy to twenty or something like that, so he quickly abandoned that. A guy named Jack Roeser, who's still around—he's very active in the far right in the party—filed, but I really didn't have any serious opposition in the primary.

DePue: When did you actually declare, though?

Edgar: We had the formal announcement; I can't remember the exact date.<sup>4</sup> Mike Ditka the football player, who's also a Republican and outspoken—more conservative than I

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<sup>4</sup> On November 9, 1993, Edgar made his announcement in a morning speech at the Fairmont Hotel, before departing for a fly-around that stopped in Rockford, Springfield, Peoria, Moline, Metro-East, and Marion. *Chicago Tribune*, October 27, 1993. For his 1990 fly-around, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, September 2, 2009, 9-15. 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.

am, but we get along fine—introduced me. I remember we had an announcement in Chicago. It wasn't quite as extensive as the original announcement back in 1990; we didn't think we had to do all that. But we had several stops. I remember we ended up in Marion, Illinois, because we got barbecue. I'm a big barbecue fan. The last thing was when we got on the plane—we did it by the Marion airport—they went to the barbecue place and got four hundred barbecues. We had a jet again. We had about ninety people on the plane, so we ate barbecue sandwiches coming home. I can't remember the exact date; sometime in October would be my guess. The weather seemed okay, as I remember it. I don't think we did it any earlier than we needed to because everybody knew we were going to run, and there wasn't any real need to do it early like we did four years before when we were just starting out.

DePue: Would it be fair to say that even back in 1991, it was generally your understanding, your belief, that you would be running again?

Edgar: That's always what happens. I don't know of anybody who's ever been elected governor—outside of George Ryan, who had some real issues later on—that did not at least seek reelection. They may not get through a primary or they don't win the general election, but I don't know of anyone who has been governor in modern times that didn't try to go for a second term. So yes, I think it was always taken for granted—unless I really screwed up bad, I'd be a candidate for reelection.

DePue: But you'd had a couple of little hiccups as far as your health was concerned. What was Brenda telling you about reelection?

Edgar: Oh, she knew that she wouldn't want to live with me if I didn't run. It's one of those things (laughter) that if she had her druthers, I would have never been in politics, but the fact she had to live with me, she'd just as soon have me be kind of happy once in a while as opposed to just always unhappy. No, she did not say, "Don't run."

I did talk to the doctors and got their assessment; they said that they didn't see a reason for me not to run because of my heart. I had one doctor who did suggest that I probably ought to get out and just go take life easy, but I changed doctors, (laughter) so... He actually was the young doctor I had when I first had my heart trouble. He said, "Well, why would you run again? That would be foolish." But the other doctors I talked to all said there's no reason not to. Heart doctors, I have found over the years, are kind of that way. They always tell you to continue your life as you would live your life, just be cognizant you... But they never tell you, "Boy, you've got to change your life." Anyway, to this point in my life they've never done that, even later on when I looked at reelection for a third time. A couple of years ago, when I was looking at it many years later, the same thing: that was a consideration, but most of them said, "Don't decide not to run because of your heart."

In '93, I'd had my gallbladder out earlier, but that was not considered a major issue. I hadn't had any more problems with my heart, and I was in pretty good

shape. I'd lost some weight, I was exercising and doing all this stuff, so I felt okay from that perspective. Again, I don't think there were ever any real thoughts of not running again. Things were getting better. They weren't where we hoped they would be—they weren't where they were at the end of the next four years—but we thought politically things looked pretty good.

DePue: Was there any difference in putting together your campaign team from inside the government than there was when you were outside looking to run?

Edgar: Well, I was still inside the government even in '90. I was secretary of state, and a lot of folks came out of the secretary of state's office; we had some people that came over from Thompson's administration. So I would not say we were outsiders then. But it was much easier, reelection, particularly when you're doing all right in the public opinion polls and you have the leverage of government. It's much easier to raise money, much easier to put everything together—and endorsements. In fact, the day I announced, I do remember there were several African American mayors in the Metro East area who endorsed me. They were all Democrats, but I'd worked with them for four years. Again, there's a lot of leverage. You don't necessarily want to make an incumbent governor unhappy with you.

So we started out with a lot of support from people who maybe at best had been neutral or in some cases had been for my opponent four years before. Labor unions weren't as out to beat me. They had worked with me. We didn't always agree, but there was some thought that we might even get the AFL-CIO endorsement. We didn't, but a lot more of the individual unions supported me. I remember right before the election, we had a big press conference at McCormick Place, which was under expansion, and a lot of the labor members were there. Even though the AFL-CIO had endorsed my opponent, a lot of the individual unions had stayed neutral or were helping me with money and actually showing up at press conferences. So in a lot of ways, it was easier. It wasn't as much fun. Nothing was more fun than starting off that '90 campaign.

DePue: Well, it wasn't as intense, either, I would think.

Edgar: No. You had to worry about governing. As secretary of state, you can kind of go off and worry about campaigning. It kind of runs itself, and we had people there running it. But as governor, you knew the most important thing politically was how you are doing as governor, not so much how you're doing in a campaign. So you couldn't just spend 100 percent of your time thinking about campaigning, or probably couldn't even spend 50 percent of your time just thinking about campaigning; you had to govern.

DePue: Did you want to get Carter Hendren back as the campaign manager?

Edgar: I talked to Carter. He didn't want to do it. He didn't want to come back. Carter never liked to do campaign management. You always had to beat him up. So he didn't do it. I can't remember the exact date, but Jim Reilly had come back to be in

the state government and was my chief of staff, and Jim Reilly was viewed as a very politically savvy guy too. Let's say if Kirk Dillard had still been there, I don't think people would have looked at Kirk at that point as politically in charge as they would look at Jim Reilly.

DePue: And I would imagine this lines up pretty well, because Dillard left to run his own campaign for state Senate.

Edgar: He left to go to the Senate, yes. Actually, he filled a vacancy. We put him into a vacancy, then he had to run in the primary in '94. That was his major time, but he was already the incumbent senator when he ran. So he was gone. Jim Reilly had been chief of staff for Jim Thompson. I can't remember if we talked about Jim coming before, but Jim Reilly and I had gone into the legislature together.<sup>5</sup> He was from Jacksonville [Illinois]; I was from Charleston. We thought a lot alike. We were kind of moderate Republicans, though I think he might have been right-to-life on abortion because of his district. University of Chicago graduate, I think both undergraduate and—at least law school. A very bright guy.

DePue: But a little bit of difference in disposition between the two of you, wasn't there?

Edgar: Maybe. I never threw things like he did, probably, but I could get a little uptight. But he might have even got more uptight—never around me—from what other people have told me. Again, he was considered a heavyweight. I think people were very surprised when I got him to come back, because he was head of the McCormick Place. Some things don't change—he still is now. (DePue laughs) But he left that to come back to be my chief of staff. I think that also reassured a lot of folks, that somebody like him... When my original chief counsel left after about a year and a half, we got Jim Montana, and I think a lot of people were very impressed that I got Jim Montana to come and be my chief counsel.<sup>6</sup>

We had, at that point, a staff that was viewed as a heavy... The staff had proven themselves during '91, '92, so in many ways the campaign manager was important, but it wasn't the paramount that it was in '90 when that was the focal point. But the governor's office was the focal point, and Jim Reilly was there. And while Reilly was going to worry about running government, he also was keeping a very close eye on the campaign. I think the staff I had brought in, the people I had—Jim Reilly and Jim Montana added a lot of luster to the fact that we had a good team. So I don't think there was as much concern on the outside, or even inside, about who was going to run the campaign as there was in 1990.

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<sup>5</sup> Jim Reilly, interviews by Mark DePue, August 10-11, 2009. Reilly's August 10 interview covers his years in the legislature with Edgar, as well as their work in Gov. Jim Thompson's administration. His August 11 interview covers his years under Thompson in the second half of the 1980s, his service as chief executive officer of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority, and his time as Edgar's chief of staff.

<sup>6</sup> Like Edgar's previous chief counsel, Montana was a former assistant U.S. attorney; he had also run Edgar's ballot security effort during the 1990 gubernatorial campaign. Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 17, 2009, 78-80.

Who we got to run the campaign was Andy Foster, who had come to work for me about '92. He had been on President Bush's—the elder's—staff. He had been kind of their political guy in the White House staff, and he had [responsibility for] the Midwest. He's originally from the suburbs of Chicago, had gone to school at Marquette, and had worked for Bush. I got to know him during the campaign in '90. He was our contact person with the Bush campaign. He decided he wanted to get out of Washington and come back to Illinois. In fact, he approached us about a job, and we were happy to get him, because again, he was somebody that had White House experience and knew national politics. He came back, and we had him working some of the campaigns in '92. I'm trying to think—he did not go to state central. Gene Reineke, who later became a chief of staff of mine—he'd been on Thompson's staff originally—went over to state central, but Andrew and Gene in the '92 election were my two political guys. So in '94, it's kind of a natural for Andy. He got his feet wet in Illinois politics in '92. Again, if I had been starting out and this was my first race for governor, he'd really only been around Illinois politics for two years. I mean, he had some sense of them, but he hadn't worked in it. But in '94, I thought it made sense that he would be the guy to head up the campaign.<sup>7</sup>

DePue: He mentioned to me that you had him working as your traveling aide, basically. His understanding of that role was, this gives him an opportunity to accompany you throughout the entire state of Illinois and get the pulse of the politics throughout the entire state.

Edgar: Yes. I'm sure that helped him because he had only been involved in Illinois politics from Washington looking down. He probably was the highest-paid traveling aide I ever had. Usually the traveling aide is kind of a young kid or somebody just starting out who you think has some promise, whereas Andy came in at a senior level. I had him do that for a while just so he'd learn the state and kind of get a feel for me too. He knew me, but they didn't really know me. You got to travel with me and worry about the mustard and those kinds of important things that get me excited, and making sure we have time to go watch the horses race—something like that. (DePue laughs) And when I get mad about some paper that's not ready, or understand being on time in scheduling and things like that. But I think from the word go, when he came we knew he was going to be used more in a political role than in a policy role.

DePue: Some of the other people—I think these would fall into the category of contractual—but were people like Fred Steeper and Don Sipple back on the team?

Edgar: Yes. We had used Steeper. He had originally worked with Bob Teeters, who was a well-known pollster in the eighties and into the nineties. In fact, when Bush got elected president, he went to the White House with Bush. When he went to the White House, Steeper took over and bought his polling business, which he'd

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<sup>7</sup> "State central" refers to the State Central Committee of the Illinois Republican Party. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, April 23, 2010, 1-3; Gene Reineke, interview by Mark DePue, April 16, 2010, 6-23.

worked for. He'd always been the guy kind of working on our account, so we had him again. Then Don Sipple to do the television ads.

DePue: Fundraising has got to be different this time around as well. How did that work out?

Edgar: Well, easier. Though it wasn't that difficult even in '90 because I was the heir apparent, and the apparatus of Thompson's fundraising kind of swung over to my fundraising. But it was, I think, probably quicker and easier. Plus, we'd been raising money ever since reelection, so we didn't have to go out and try to raise ten million dollars in six months. I was constantly going to fundraisers. So it wasn't quite as many fundraisers in as short a period of time as we had in '90, but a lot of similarities in raising money. Now, Bob Hickman, who had been involved in raising money in '90, was not involved. That was left up to Andy Foster. We had at that time, too, Lori Montana, Jim Montana's wife. She had worked for years in the Thompson administration, before she'd even married Jim Montana, so she had a history of being involved in state government. I had her come on and do the fundraising. She'd already started probably about '92 or so as my full-time—that's not a state job; that was paid by the campaign—and she was very, very effective, very good, very well-liked by people, and she did the fundraising. But it was much easier in many ways than it had been in '90, though '90 probably was a lot easier for us than it would have been if I'd have truly been an outsider starting out.

DePue: What were your goals for that second term?

Edgar: I guess we thought things would keep getting better, and we wanted to get to be governor and not have to worry about fiscal crises all the time. One of the things that came out of '93 was the Chicago school crisis—

DePue: Yeah, we did discuss the negotiation with the labor union.

Edgar: The problem was that every two years, some Chicago school would have a crisis, and they'd come to Springfield and want us to bail them out. We knew we had to do something on that. There were some other things—tax reform or a lot of things like that—we knew we wanted to do that we didn't have a chance to do the first four years.

But I have to tell you, the main thing was get reelected. I mean, you didn't sit down to say, "These are the four things..." Many of the things you do as governor, you don't control. You have to react to crisis, and who knows what the next crisis is going to be. In the '90 campaign, we didn't sit around and think, gee, we're going to have become known as fiscal conservatives; that just wasn't something we thought a whole lot about. All of a sudden, we get elected and that's what we spend four years doing. The Great Flood: we didn't sit around in the '90 campaign and say, "We want to be the best administration to deal with a natural disaster," because you just didn't think about that. We put out papers and things saying what we were going to do, like in education and all that. I knew before, but now I really knew even more, that to a great extent, you're a captive of events you can't control.

So I always wanted to reorganize higher education, governance, and things like that. We'd tried the first time—hadn't been successful. I had a whole host of things, but I actually knew that I really couldn't say for sure what I was going to be spending my major time on, because we weren't there yet. We didn't know what the crisis of the day was.

DePue: So that suggests that the campaign is going to package you as a leader, as a manager, as a fiscal conservative, as somebody who can get things done and deal with problems?

Edgar: When you run for reelection you can talk about new issues, but it's your record. I think that is the relevant thing for voters to look at. I think rhetoric in campaigns, for the most part, is a lot of hot air. The most important thing to do is look at the candidate's record and try to determine by the person's record how they might conduct themselves as governor. That's hard, unless you've been the governor. Now, I think if you're looking at somebody running for reelection, chances are that person's not going to change a whole lot after the election. It's the same job, same state. Maybe you're a little wiser, but for the most part, it's going to be very similar. So we knew all along that what was going to win the election for us or lose the election for us probably was how people perceived I had done the first four years. We could talk about new things, but most important was the record, because we had a record. I'd been governor for four years, it'd been a very eventful four years, and people were going to probably vote for me based on that, no matter how good the TV commercials we had or what kind of rhetoric.

The other unknown, to some extent, is who's your opponent, because election does come down to a choice between two people. People in most cases don't like either one of the candidates that much, but then they decide who's the lesser of the evils; or they're both okay, but who's the better? Usually if they're both okay, they'll go with the incumbent because that person's there and is a known quantity. I felt all along that no matter what we said, the key was our record, and we wanted to make sure that we put our record out in the most positive fashion. We kept track of everything we did; we looked at what we'd promised in '90 and how many of those promises we kept. Most importantly, we had numbers to show how the economy was getting better, that we'd dealt with this fiscal crisis, and we still had some initiatives to look at.

We knew we were going to do very well with the conservation and environmental crowd, probably much more than we had done even in '90, because we had a good record there—pretty much under the radar screen to most people, but that community knew that we'd been very active there. In the ethnic community, especially the Hispanics, we'd been very visible, very active; we thought we'd probably even do better in that community than we did in '90, when we broke even. So we thought we had some things going for us. We knew we had some problems, like with the teacher's union; I had opposed the constitutional amendment to change the funding for a variety of reasons in 1992, and they were kind of mad at me for that. But overall, we felt that what we'd been able to accomplish in the first three

years—we're talking about the end of '93—we had a good message to go to the voters on.

DePue: In retrospect, today, we look back at 1994, and it's this storied Republican victory. Going into the campaign, did you have a sense that it would—

Edgar: No, no. (laughs) A lot of people weren't sure that I'd win. I thought I would win, because I thought my job approval numbers were very good. Unless they ran some superstar against me, and I couldn't quite imagine who that would be, chances were the voters weren't going to turn me out. I thought whoever was going to run against me was going to have a tough go, not because I was such a better candidate than they were; it's just that my record was pretty good, and we could tell by looking at the numbers people thought it was pretty good. It's just hard to beat an incumbent who has a pretty good record for governor of Illinois.

And I thought it would make it that much more difficult for a challenger to be able to raise the money, mount a campaign, just get the traditional support among the Democrats, and then try to pick up enough independents. Our numbers were particularly good with independents, and that to me is the deciding factor in Illinois elections. We figured we weren't going to get a whole lot of Democrats—we'd get some—but independents, we thought we were going to do pretty well with, probably even better than we did in '90. The Republicans had pretty well rallied around me. I think I had surprised a lot of Republicans by my fiscal conservatism, so even though we knew we were going to have problems in a primary from the right, we didn't think it was going to amount to much, and it didn't—not as much as it did in '90. So we thought Republicans are pretty happy with me, independents like me, Democrats, we'd get some, but again, if you do that, then there's not enough numbers there to go against you. So I was optimistic but never dreamed we'd win by the margin we won by.

We got help from our opponent, who was a very fine public official, Dawn Clark Netsch, a very bright person; it just wasn't the year for her to run. She was too liberal, it turned out. But nobody even dreamed about her being the nominee. I remember when she announced, I wanted to go say, "Why don't you run for attorney general? You're not going to get the nomination for governor." Nobody thought she had a chance for... Phelan still was kind of the favorite, though we thought he had some problems. Roland Burris was a perennial candidate for statewide office, always hoping he'd get enough of the black votes, and the whites would split up; he could sneak in there. I can't remember—it seemed like there was a fourth candidate, but I can't remember if there was.

DePue: Those are the only three that I know of.

Edgar: Then that's all there was. But as it developed into '94, those were the three candidates. When it started out, Phelan—everybody thought he would win it, but Burris probably showed as well because he had all those African American votes; Netsch was running third to start it out. But Phelan, we just knew, had problems on

the county board. There were some Democrats on the county board who did not like him; in fact, we were working with them in a lot of ways because we didn't want to run against Phelan, because we thought he could be the strongest of those three candidates. Most conventional was you wanted to run against Roland Burris, because he might squeak by in a primary, but he probably wasn't going to get any more votes in the general election. And nobody really thought Netsch would get the nomination. That's how I looked at it going into the first of '94 when we knew who all was running. As their primary developed, Phelan continued to fade. I mean, he just had a lot of problems internally in the party.

DePue: So this was a campaigning issue for Phelan?

Edgar: Campaigning and governance. He hadn't done that well as president of the county board. His big supporter was Mike Madigan. Madigan had supported him from the word go, thinking he'd be the candidate in '94. He had Madigan's support but didn't have hardly anybody else's support in the party. And Netsch, I think, for the primary, had a good strategy. She decided to come out in favor of raising the income tax for schools, which in a Democrat primary, in a three-way primary, is a pretty good thing to do, because if you can just get schoolteachers enthusiastic for you, that's a pretty good part of the primary vote. It's not the general election. So she had that, and Phelan was fading. Burris, people weren't that excited about; particularly he wasn't getting many white voters, so all the votes that Phelan was losing were going over to Netsch.

DePue: Was Phelan the one who had positioned himself as the moderate Democrat among those three?

Edgar: It could have been. I don't remember that...

DePue: Certainly Netsch was not.

Edgar: No, but it wasn't so much her other record that we talked about in the general election; her whole thing was that income tax for schools. Also, Netsch, to change her image—I guess she plays pool once in a while, so she had this commercial of her playing pool. Now, if you know Dawn Clark Netsch, it's the last person you think at a pool hall. It was a great commercial because it changed her image. But the key was, I think, not so much that commercial as that position on raising the income tax for schools. She galvanized a segment of the Democratic Party. She was the only candidate that had a lot of enthusiasm. Burris had some black votes, but I wouldn't say there was a lot of enthusiasm among the blacks for him, and there wasn't really any enthusiasm among the Democrats who were with Phelan, the party regulars. So Netsch had the enthusiasm in that primary, and I think that paid off.

DePue: The lore from that primary election seems to focus on the ad that you just talked about, that that was the thing that kind of pushed her over the top.

Edgar: Well, it may be the difference, but the main thing was her position on the income tax, because that really set her apart from the other two Democrats and galvanized a lot of folks to get enthused. She had the only enthusiasm in that primary of those three candidates, I could tell. The other two did not have the enthusiasm. In fact, Phelan finished third, I think. For a while, Burriss was in the lead before she got a lot more of the votes that initially looked like they were going to go to Phelan. If I remember right, I think she told me that Burriss didn't talk to her for about three weeks. (laughs) It took a while for him to.

But primary night, some poll came out and had us dead even. Now, I didn't believe that poll because she'd got all the publicity. Our primary didn't get much coverage because nobody gave Jack Roeser much of a shot, and I don't know what he finally got—10 percent of the vote or something.

DePue: I think I have it written down here.

Edgar: He didn't get much.

DePue: Twenty-six percent.

Edgar: Oh, did he get that much? Okay. I mean, it just was not much of a factor. But all the attention was on the Democrats and particularly on Netsch, so it made me think, yes, she's going to show pretty good right now because she's had all the attention. That poll said we were dead even. The next morning, the primary was over; I go and I'm on every Chicago morning TV show. She's not. I thought, well, maybe she's getting some momentum. A few days later it was the St. Patrick's Day parade in Chicago. I did that parade, and after that, I knew I was going to win this election. I'm a big believer in parades as a good place to gauge public opinion. Here I'm in downtown Chicago, all these Irish Democrats—and others, but it's Democrats. The St. Patrick's Day parade (laughs) is a Democratic parade. I could just tell by the way the crowd... I'd never had a crowd react as positively toward me, even in DuPage County. This one downtown. And women along the route... We were a little nervous about women, because Netsch was a woman; that they might... That had always been one of my strengths. I remember coming away from that parade just saying, "Boy, I'm in better shape than I thought." In Chicago, when you get them to react that way to a state candidate, particularly a Republican, it's unusual. So I felt pretty good about it.

DePue: Andy Foster, when I talked to him about the campaign, mentioned that decision that you just referred to as well, about running a series of ads right afterwards, to bleed off some of the enthusiasm for the Netsch campaign.<sup>8</sup>

Edgar: He's probably talking about the TV commercials.

DePue: Yeah.

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<sup>8</sup> Andy Foster, interview by Mark DePue, July 12, 2010, 68-70.

Edgar: That came a little later, but that first day, the morning after, I just remember—because I hate getting up early—I got up early to go do all those things, and talked about, I'm the fiscal conservative; she's not.

DePue: The talk show circuit.

Edgar: Yes. And that set the stage. In fact, they got on Quinn this year for doing what Netsch had done—I didn't remember she didn't do anything—but she wasn't that active out there, and we were. As soon as the primary was over the next day, we were out there all-out, and I think we were able, to some extent, to set the parameters for the campaign.

Then a few weeks later, Steeper and Sipple were in, and Steeper said, "You know, I've looked at these poll numbers"—this is about two weeks afterwards; they did a poll, and I had a six-point lead or something like that. He said, "You're going to win. Now, you can win by a little bit, or we can go after her right now, identify her the way we want to identify her, and you can win pretty handily. We've looked at it, and it's not the tax issue, it's crime. Her record in the Senate is very liberal and much against a lot of bills on crime. As governor, you don't have all that much record as a legislator, but on the death penalty and things like that, you've got a much better record, particularly with women and professional women," who we were particularly worried about. "They worry about crime as much as any group out there. If you can establish that you're tough on crime and she's a little questionable, and we do those commercials now while people haven't really formed an opinion of Netsch all that much—everybody knows she plays pool, but they really haven't focused, and they kind of have a sense of you but don't have a sense of her—this election might be over before it starts."

Now, that was unheard of at that point. I think we were going to run them the end of May, first of June, but nobody had ever run commercials then. We had enough money; we had a lot more money than she did at that point. So I said, "Okay, we'll do that." Those commercials that ran in June—and it wasn't on the tax. Everybody said, "Oh, you attacked her..." Yes, we did, but it didn't have that much leverage. What beat her was the law enforcement issues and the fact she was just too liberal for 1994, running in Illinois. She was opposed to the death penalty and all these things. So we ran these commercials. I remember they came back at the end of June and said, "You've got a twenty-five point lead"—or thirty-point, I mean, it was just an astronomical lead—"from these commercials."

At that point, things were going pretty well in the session. It was the usual fight, but there weren't any big problems. I hadn't gone to the hospital yet for my heart surgery. So that seemed to have worked. As it turned out, it did work pretty well, though when she went on the offensive again, started talking about the schools—raising the income tax, lowering property taxes and giving money to schools—that had some traction; she started to make some progress. But the knockout, the thing that really put her behind the eight-ball—we'll use that

(DePue laughs) since she's a pool player—was the commercial on crime. She got a little closer, but she never got that close after those commercials in June.

DePue: So basically the strategy is: she's relatively unknown, let's go out there and define her early on.

Edgar: Yes, exactly. The ad was a comparison of my record on these crime issues, and her record. She got offended, (laughs) I know—it showed this woman walking in a garage, a parking garage like in Chicago, and hearing a noise and being afraid.<sup>9</sup> I thought it was a pretty good ad. I didn't think it was any... She took it personal. Everything there was her voting record and my voting record or what I had done as governor. Today, it would be pretty mild, but it was a very effective comparative ad. I think after that, really the election was over, and it was just according to how much.

DePue: Put your political hat on here; what were your thoughts about the ticket of Netsch-Severns? Two women who are...

Edgar: Two women, yes. We spent a lot of time working on the professional women; we had a lot of professional women's groups' support, some who were kind of nominal Democrats. Part of that was because for three and a half years as governor, I'd worked with these groups. I had a good record with women. Being the governor and working with women's groups when I wasn't a candidate solidified their support of me when I was a candidate, even though I'm running against a woman. I remember some of them took some heat from some women's groups, but they said, "Hey, Edgar's been there and he's been good to us, and we're going to stick with him." We didn't get them all, but I think we split them up enough that she never was able to get her full support. I don't think Severns had any impact on that. She's pretty well-liked by the press, but I don't think as a candidate for lieutenant governor, she... Bob Kustra was a far better candidate out there, campaigning and everything, rallying the troops and in debate.

DePue: Back in the Democratic primary, who was pulling the downstate Democrats between those three?

Edgar: I can't remember. I think the IEA is pretty strong downstate, and I think Netsch did okay downstate.<sup>10</sup> And they kind of knew her; she was comptroller. Phelan wasn't as well-known. I can't remember how they went. But downstate, Democratic primary votes don't matter. In a primary, the Democratic vote is in the city of Chicago. That's well over half, if not 60 percent or more. While there aren't that many Democrats in the suburbs, there's a lot of people in the suburbs, so the numbers... You get the Quad Cities, you get the Metro East area—that's where the Democratic votes are downstate—maybe a little bit in Peoria and Decatur, but not big numbers. They probably split it pretty evenly, but I think Netsch probably won

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<sup>9</sup> For another Edgar ad targeting some of Netsch's votes on crime policy, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEjvvhTlhCE>.

<sup>10</sup> The Illinois Education Association, an important teachers union.

downstate. Again, I haven't looked at those numbers in a long time. But I wasn't worried about downstate this time either.

DePue: You tell me if this is the right place to interject some child welfare issues, especially the Baby Richard case, into the discussion. After the primary.

Edgar: Okay. We're in June now, and we had a legislative session that's pretty typical. Madigan and I were fighting, though we did in that session—much to the chagrin of Netsch—agree on a compromise on pension funding. That's very appropriate as we sit here in 2010, because our pension liability is the big issue out there. If I've talked about this before, stop me.

DePue: We haven't talked much about pension issues yet.

Edgar: Oh, this is a very important issue because of the long-term implication. The state, even in good times under Thompson, didn't really pay that much in on the pension liability. Bob Mandeville, who was the head of the Bureau of the Budget for Thompson and very well thought of, had a philosophy that you didn't need to do that. As long as you had enough money to cover the payout, why tie up limited state funds in a reserve someplace? So under Thompson, the pension funds had really got behind on paying them so you didn't have that liability.

Well, my first two or three years as governor, we were broke; we didn't have any money to put in there either, so we didn't change that policy. But we always knew. Everybody was saying you got a liability that's growing. We had these accountants that would come around, and they always talk about accrual, a gap accounting, and that's not how government—government accounting is all on cash; they don't take into consideration long-term debt, like debt from bonds or pension liability. A balanced budget is just you take in as much cash as you're going to spend. That's what I worried about. I had enough trouble doing that; we didn't want to talk (laughs) about the pension.

So we tried to ignore it because nobody had the money for that. But Netsch started talking about that during the campaign. This was part of her "I'm fiscally better than Edgar," and thinking about these things. So she started talking about, "We have to deal with this pension problem." Well, Madigan started talking about that too. We were at the point where we're a little better off—not great, but a little better off, and we could start—and we said, "Yes, let's do it." So lo and behold, Madigan and our people sat down—now, the Senate Republicans will tell you they did it. They didn't; it was our office sitting down with Madigan's people. We came up with an agreement to start dealing with the liability. Now, it was a baby step, but it was a step. It was the first time in years anybody had really addressed the problem. We would start, I think in '95, paying in some money, and it'd ratchet up as you went along.

We also said at the time that in ten years, you need to redo this, because in ten years you're going to be up there really big—and that's what hit Blagojevich. Not

to defend Blagojevich, but he did have a little bit of a legitimate complaint; he was willing to put in as much as they'd put in before, but the formula had changed and it was now another step. So that was part of it. But the dilemma was, we had said in '94, fiscal year '95, you have to—in five years at least—look at this. Well, it was suggested when Ryan was governor, but he never wanted to look at it, because why deal with a problem that might be down the road; just enjoy today. So they didn't look at it until Blagojevich was governor, and then the problem, because those numbers were going up. But at least for the first time, we started to address it. Again, it was a baby step; it wasn't the final solution. There's no doubt it was going to get more difficult as you moved on, but it took away an issue from Netsch.

DePue: Now, you're talking about mandatory payments that the legislation—

Edgar: How we worded it, if you look at the language: it's got to be paid first. Because what always used to happen—they said, "We'll pay the pension, but we'll wait and see if we get everything else paid, then we'll pay what we got left." Well, you never had anything left. So in this legislation we put in, it had to be paid first. In fact, that's the dilemma today that Quinn's facing. He's got to get that legislation back in that says they don't have to pay that first, because by law, that money goes first to the pension plan. Well, he doesn't have the money for the pension plan, so they're not going to pay it, but they've got to get that exemption. But that was the only way we could figure out to really make this stick. So that was in there, but it was a small amount compared to what is owed today.

DePue: Then is that money invested? That's the theory, that it's invested?

Edgar: Yes. You give them that money; they can take that money, then they invest it. Now, part of the problem today with the pension funds, as it was a little bit back then—not as much as today—is all those investments aren't worth as much because the market's down. So that's made the pension funds even more underfunded; what money you have in there isn't as much, because your investments aren't worth as much. But if you don't put money in there, you can't invest it, so that compounds the problem. That's why it's important you keep paying as you go; if you don't, that liability gets way out of control.

But politically, Madigan—we worked this out. Much to my surprise, we agreed. Netsch was furious with Madigan because he'd just taken a great issue away from her in the campaign. But he didn't want his members to have to go on the campaign and say they hadn't done something about it. There was enough heat being generated at that point among some of the public employees' unions and others that they needed to do something. He decided better he protect his members than the Democratic candidate for governor, who he wasn't especially close with. I mean, that wasn't his candidate in the primary anyway. So that made her unhappy.

The other thing I remember (laughs) she was very unhappy about: When we got into trouble with Children and Family Services, we brought in Anne Burke.

I thought we talked about this before—maybe not.<sup>11</sup> Anne Burke was a lawyer. Her husband is Eddie Burke, a well-known Chicago city councilman, chairman of the appropriations committee, I think, in the city council, but probably next to Daley, the most prominent Democrat. She had been involved in some welfare issues before, so we brought her in to be kind of an ombudsman or auditor general to take a look at Children and Family Services. She actually worked for me; she was in the governor's office, but she was assigned to Children and Family Services. That took a lot of heat off me and our administration on this child welfare thing. Netsch was just furious because here was this pretty well-known Democrat—at least her husband's a very well-known Democrat; Anne may not be as rabid a Democrat as her husband—but she comes and works for me, and becomes my spokesman in some ways, in this area and takes the heat off me. Those are two things I know Democrats did that she was very upset with, going into that campaign.

DePue: Everything you've been talking about, these last couple issues especially, suggests that she didn't really have the support—maybe on the surface, but not the traditional support—that a Democratic candidate could expect from Madigan and from Daley.

Edgar: Daley never does much. He wasn't for me, trust me.

DePue: I understand that, but—

Edgar: But he's not his dad. He does not do a whole lot for anybody outside of himself; it's just he doesn't get involved. Madigan, on the other hand, is very important because he's got his campaigns all over the state; he's got his House campaigns. So he's a very important guy. I don't know if he was state party chairman yet, but he was de facto the most influential guy statewide as far as would really do something. But it's always been argued Madigan would just as soon have a Republican governor as he would a Democrat governor, because a Republican governor, one, makes Madigan more of an important Democrat; two, if there's going to be blame, he can blame it on a Republican governor, not a Democrat governor, and then have his party take the blame. To this day, there's a lot of feeling that he'd just as soon have a Republican governor. Now, he might not necessarily want Brady over Quinn, but he'd probably love to have Dillard.<sup>12</sup> I think that was the conventional wisdom. I think it's probably pretty correct because he used to always say, "Well, I'll do it and blame you," and that's fine.

But there wasn't that feeling among the Democrats like there was in '90: we need to elect Hartigan because of redistricting. That's why Madigan was for Hartigan in '90. There was no redistricting in '94. Eventually he got to the point where he was worried about his troops. It began to look like this could be a good Republican year. I remember in that campaign, an awful lot of Democratic

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<sup>11</sup> Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 28, 2010, 3-9.

<sup>12</sup> Edgar is referencing the 2010 gubernatorial campaign, in which state senator Bill Brady (R-Bloomington) defeated state senator Kirk Dillard (R-Hinsdale) for the Republican nomination, before losing to incumbent governor Pat Quinn.

legislators had pictures of me in their brochures, not Netsch, (DePue laughs) showing Governor Edgar signing their bill or something like that. We used to laugh about that, because they knew I was more popular in their district than they were, and a lot more popular than the Democratic opponent. But there wasn't that enthusiasm for her that I think had existed for Hartigan, which wasn't so much personal; it was just they wanted remap.

The other thing with a lot of these folks, even these Democrats, was I'm the incumbent governor. That had helped Thompson the last few times he had run, too. Democrats said, gee, he's the governor. Chances are he's still going to be the governor. I can work with him. Why do I want to go out and make him mad at me for a candidate that may not win? So I think there were probably some Democrats out there who figured, if Edgar wins, worse things could be happening. In fact, Andy spent a lot of time talking to Democratic ward committeemen, because they weren't crazy about Netsch, and she'd never been in their part of the party. I think he will tell you he feels that some of them actually put what are called palm cards out with my name on it.<sup>13</sup> Now, they'd do it in a way that couldn't be directly tied back to them. But there was a lot more of that going on, at least talk about that going on, than had occurred in '90.

But it wasn't so much, gee, they don't like Netsch—well, some of them didn't like Netsch. I just think they thought, he is the governor and we can work with him, and he's probably going to win, so why take that chance?

DePue: No anti-incumbency in that year.

Edgar: Oh, no.

DePue: This would have been eighteen years now of Republican rule in Illinois.

Edgar: That didn't come up. The talk was, it's not Thompson anymore, it's Edgar. He's the governor. Are you happy with his governorship? As it turned out, a lot of folks were. It wasn't, we want a change; it was, hey, he's done a pretty good job getting us out of this mess. That's how most people viewed it—I had inherited a mess. They blamed Thompson. I remember we did a poll in late '91, early '92, after we'd gone through about a year of this, and said, "Who do you blame for this?" The things that we asked—the legislature, the governor, neither, both—weren't the number-one reply. The number-one reply was Jim Thompson. The pollsters said they'd never seen that before. They didn't have that as one of the questions. People said, "No, no, it's Thompson." And this was a downstate poll, but that was the attitude out there about the problem.

So while I had problems, nobody blamed me for it, and they did give me credit for trying to clean the problems up. By '94, things were a heck of a lot better than they were when I'd walked in '91, plus we had dealt with the Great Flood. Those things combined had, I think, given people the feeling that Edgar's a pretty

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<sup>13</sup> For similar events in the 1990 campaign, see Kanter, December 17, 2009, 75 and 80-82.

good governor. I don't agree with everything he does, but they're doing pretty good, so why change? On top of that, Netsch—and we portrayed her, and I think correctly so—is pretty liberal on a lot of issues that most people aren't that liberal on, even me, who was the moderate Republican. On issues that might have helped her with women, I was just as good if not better. Crime, I was better. On abortion, I'm pro-choice. So I had a good record. We'd had the problems in children things. Now we are coming to Baby Richard, so we can now go into that.

DePue: Before we get there, you mentioned that she was more liberal than even a lot of the other women would have been. What were some of the issues that you thought she was especially liberal on?

Edgar: First of all, her district. Her district was the Near North Side. That's a pretty liberal area up there. They're much more liberal. In fact, I always ran well up there against the machine Democrats. When I ran against Hartigan, I think I might have carried her district.<sup>14</sup> Her district was more Jewish voters, and Jewish voters have a tendency to be more liberal. On crime issues, on spending matters—a whole host of those issues—she was just viewed as much more liberal than the average person, and probably the average Democrat.

The other thing, I think—she was always kind of the reform Democrat, the independent voters. I remember when I went to the IVI [Independent Voters of Illinois] in '90, she was there to help Hartigan, and she had some clout. So for the regular party guys, the ward committeemen, she wasn't their cup of tea. She kind of fought them in the party. She wasn't viewed as your typical Chicago Democrat, so some of those Chicago Democrats, those ward committeemen, they've got to live after the election; that's why they weren't as anxious to go out and help her against me as they might have been four years before, when you had two non-incumbents running.

DePue: This next thing might be a good setup for Baby Richard: February 1994, Chicago police find nineteen children living in a cold and filthy apartment with six different mothers in there. This became known in the press as the Keystone Kids.

Edgar: Yes. That's the one when I was out at the prayer breakfast—Clinton announces, and that's how I hear it. Actually, we found out later that those kids were in pretty good shape. It was a terrible situation, but health-wise, after we got them in and they got them examined, they all were pretty healthy. Now, there were some other cases that were a lot worse. There was the one that came later with the mother who had regained custody of her child and hanged the child, and she should have never had that child. That to me was the worst case, because here's a child that was killed because the system broke down.

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<sup>14</sup> Following Chicago's 1986 ward redistricting, Netsch's 4th Legislative District included the 42nd, 43rd, and 44th Wards, as well as much of the 46th. Edgar came relatively close to carrying her district in 1990: he defeated Hartigan in the 43rd Ward by 587 votes, but lost the entire district by roughly 6,237 votes (54.9 percent—45.1 percent). By comparison, he picked up 33.4 percent of the citywide vote. A more precise figure requires precinct-level data. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 6, 1990*.

DePue: That was April 1993.

Edgar: That was a year before the other one?

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: Hmm, that surprises me.

DePue: But all this kind of runs together and leads to the issue that we'd been alluding to a lot.

Edgar: If there was an area where I thought I might have some problems, it was dealing with that, because children are a key thing people worry about. Particularly since that had been kind of an area, when I ran in '90, where people viewed I had a little more of a heart for a Republican, maybe, a record. So I have to say I was much more sensitive to Anne Burke coming on board and things like that. We changed the director of Children and Family Services; Jess McDonald came in. Those are all very positive things, but that all made me a little nervous in that area, that we could be held responsible.

At the same time, in every other state in the union, they were having identical problems because you had so many more children as wards of the state. You had the breakdown of the family; you had states where these children ended up in state care, and the state mechanism wasn't big enough or wasn't sophisticated enough really to handle it. I remember going to other states and picking up the paper; you'd think you were back in Illinois. It was the same problem going on. But that doesn't help. It's kind of like taxes. It doesn't help you to say, gee, your taxes are—they don't care about the other state, they just know what's going on here. The same thing here. Even though this was happening in other states, people in Illinois cared about Illinois; they didn't care about Indiana or Arizona or wherever.

So that was an issue I thought we could be vulnerable on or could be a problem. I thought we had taken the appropriate steps. I thought we were turning Children and Family Services around; we were dealing with the federal decree. Anne Burke, I thought, had done a good job helping in that regard. But you still worry about that area. And then in June, the Baby Richard case came up. And I have to admit, when it first came up, I wasn't aware... Bob Greene, who wrote for the *Tribune* and wrote a lot of columns on this stuff, called me and talked to me about Baby Richard. I realized after I got done talking to him I didn't know what he was talking about. I didn't read the paper every day. I mean, I got the clips, but that really wasn't something I had focused on. The legislature was speeding this bill through to deal with this.

The Baby Richard thing was a case where this family in Palatine, Illinois—he was a fireman, if I remember right—had adopted this child at birth; this child was now three years old.

DePue: Can I maybe help you out just a little bit here? Baby Richard was born March 16, 1991. Jay and Kim Warburton of Schaumburg were the ones who adopted him. He was available for adoption because his parents, obviously, had been divorced—

Edgar: Had never been married, that's my understanding.

DePue: Yeah, you're right. Otakar [Kirchner], I think is how you pronounce his father's name, decides he wants to seek custody, because he wasn't aware that his son had ever been put up—

Edgar: He supposedly wasn't aware that his girlfriend was pregnant with his child, is what we always heard. That was the argument—he didn't know. He had gone to the court and petitioned that he should have his son back. Also, in the meantime, he had married this woman to help the court case, because as soon as he got the child back, they split.

In the eighties, the emphasis in Illinois law had been keep the family together. That was the emphasis, and so that's why the law probably did favor his position. It was obvious, common sense would tell you—here's this child; the only family he's ever known is this family, and they're good parents. It was a great environment. I had been to the house, I went later. This child was very fortunate to be in that situation. Common sense would just say, well, the law's wrong. So the legislature, to its credit... The Illinois general assembly can at times move swiftly and correctly—not often, but at times—and this time, they moved very quickly. After the courts had ruled in favor of the natural father, the legislature moved quickly on legislation that changed the law and gave the court an out. Because there would be an appeal; you could go back and ask the court to re-look at it. This was toward the end of June when they passed it; it was right before the Fourth of July, and—

DePue: But it was after Judge Heiple ruled—

Edgar: The first time.

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: The first opinion. I don't know if Heiple wrote the original opinion.<sup>15</sup> He wrote the next opinion that we'll talk about here in a minute. So they passed the law. They must have passed it the first day or two of July, actually, because I signed it immediately, and the July Fourth parade—that's all that people talked about on the Fourth of July. I probably signed it on July second or third, then did the Fourth of

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<sup>15</sup> 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. Mike Lawrence, April 1, 2009, 37-40; Brenda Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, September 14, 2010, 57-60.

July parades in the suburbs. I have never had an issue close to Baby Richard. I like to do parades to kind of gauge if there's anything on people's minds. It's rare if you ever hear somebody yell some specific issue; four or five time in a parade is a lot. I got thousands and thousands of comments from people. I did about five parades that day. People came up to me after the parades, before the parades. Hundreds of people did. I just had never seen a reaction... It was all thanking me for signing the bill, and a lot of fear out there among families who had adopted children. The Warburtons had adopted, legally adopted this child. This wasn't a foster case; this child had been adopted. It was supposed to be all done, and the courts had just said, "No, the child goes back to the natural parents." So anyone who'd adopted a child in Illinois was panicking because this wasn't supposed to be able to happen. I have never seen a reaction to an issue, anything close to it, in all my time in government. It was just phenomenal.

So this July Fourth, about three, four days later, I go into the hospital for bypass surgery. I'm probably in there about four days, and the Supreme Court turns down the appeal, whatever the motion was filed. And then Heiple writes a scathing opinion in which he not only attacks me for being political—which is fine, because I think the governor's office had an amicus brief that we filed—but he goes after the adopted parents, attacking them, which to me is just incredible. I remember at that time there were rallies around the state, particularly in downtown Chicago, because I couldn't go—I'm in the hospital. So Brenda and our daughter Elizabeth go, and Bob Collins, who's my friend the radio emcee—it's a huge, big rally—and they speak. I mean, this is just as big a state issue that has ever occurred in Illinois, as far as people reacting.

And after the Supreme Court ruling, that was it. Federal courts wouldn't touch it; it was a state issue. A lot of real frustration. The most frustrating thing I'd ever dealt with in government. People always said, what's your proudest or most disappointed [moment]? The most disappointed was that, because the system failed. Here it was clearly obvious what's best for the child—to stay with his adopted family—and it didn't happen. The system ruled the other way. Even though they could say, "Well, that was the law," they had an out. We gave them an out, and they didn't do it. That wasn't a unanimous decision. I think it was 5–2. But that to me was the low point in my time as governor, feeling like the government really failed big-time.

DePue: I'm no constitutional lawyer, but if the legislature came in and made an exception in the case of Baby Richard, what grounds did the Supreme Court have, then, in even looking at this again and ruling against that bill?

Edgar: I don't know. Again, (laughs) I had a lot of stitches in my chest, (DePue laughs) and I wasn't 100 percent. I can't remember their rationalization. I think they were arguing that that was too little, too late, more or less; that we'd ruled, and this is what we're going on. It wasn't so much an exception; it basically changed the intent. The law was now moving toward the best interest of the child, but it gave them [the court] an out. I mean, two of the justices voted against it. Those two

justices were always allowed to come to the governor's mansion from then on. (DePue laughs) Brenda said they could come, but the other five—she said she would leave the mansion if they ever walked in while I was governor.<sup>16</sup>

DePue: In other words, this was an issue that Brenda was animated about as well.

Edgar: Oh, Brenda was very much. I mean, this is kids. This is basic. Brenda got very much involved in that, but she was just... I'd never let Heiple in, there was no doubt about that, but a couple of the others were old-time Chicago pals. I don't know why they did it, but Brenda just said, "Absolutely not, while I'm... If you want me there, don't have them; I won't be there."

DePue: As far as this is a political issue, Republican, Democrat, did it make any difference to the public?

Edgar: No. It wasn't Republican and Democrat. The legislature was almost unanimous, I think, in that. I think the only one who ever said anything, and I can't remember if he said it publicly or privately, was Pate Philip, and he'd say things like that.

DePue: So even as heart-wrenching as this is, it sounds like this does play well politically for you in the campaign.

Edgar: I think people gave me credit for signing a bill and being very much out front on this issue; this was the paramount issue about children and the state of Illinois at that point. This could happen to middle-class folks. This wasn't poor children born in poverty and on welfare and things like this; this was a child who lived in a middle-class community. People were just shocked that something like this would happen. You can kind of understand bureaucratic screw-ups, but here was something that was very obvious, and the courts made that ruling. It was just terrible. What really made it even worse was sometime—I can't remember if it was September or October—on a Sunday night, they showed the child being taken from this family, screaming. That's on television on Sunday, so everybody, particularly the suburban Chicago area, 70 percent see that. Their last impression on the Baby Richard thing is this poor, screaming child.

So that probably took care of any danger I might have had. Now, I have to say, to this day it's still hard for me to even get through that without getting emotional, because to me that was... It also underscores something when you talk about public policy. We talk a lot in big numbers and millions of people or billions of dollars. That doesn't affect people. What affects is one case, one child, one specific example. I don't know of anything that ever affected people in the state of Illinois more than the Baby Richard thing, as far as my time in government and just watching people being revved up. To some extent, Blagojevich getting arrested for trying to sell Obama's seat got people a little riled up, too, but this was just—I had

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<sup>16</sup> In the 5-2 decision, Benjamin K. Miller (R) and Mary Ann G. McMorrow (D) dissented from their colleagues James D. Heiple (R), John Nickels (R), Michael Bilandic (D), Charles Freeman (D), and Moses Harrison II (D). *Chicago Tribune*, May 8, 1995; July 18, 1994.

just never seen it. I mean, listening to legislators talk about how people care about this issue and that issue—never anything close to the reaction it was on Baby Richard.

Never, I think, has the system failed more clearly than it failed on the Baby Richard case. This natural father and natural mother that got married—within three months after Baby Richard was back, they had split. To this day, I'm not sure what's happened to that child. I know there were stories that they saw him at the racetrack with his father a few months later. Hopefully he was not scarred. I just can't imagine the impact that would have on a child.

So that was the child welfare issue, I think, in the minds of most Illinoisans from then on, going into the election; it wasn't so much these other stories. Because again, I think we had made progress, and we did make progress. In fact, by the end of my administration, I think the *Tribune* and all the people that had been on our case said that we had made major progress. I think we'd come a long way. One of the other things—when you change public policy, it's not just enough to pass a law. You've got to change culture; you've got to change a lot of things. This whole deal with moving away from the family first to what's the best interest of the child, you had to change courts and how they interpret laws, how they view things. You had to change the bureaucracy in Children and Family Services. Just a whole host of things that had to be done other than just passing a law. That's something I think over a period of time we did pretty well in that area. We made it a priority, and we stuck with it. Anne Burke helped, because she had a lot of good contacts with the courts in Chicago, particularly Cook County. And Jess McDonald did a good job.

You're going to have problems; things are going to go wrong. The key in trying to determine how effective an administration is, is how do you deal with those problems, not that they happen. They're going to happen, but do you sweep them under the rug, do you ignore them, or do you deal with them? I think the child welfare issue and abused and neglected children is a good example where we dealt with it, and dealt with it in a very positive manner. By the time we got done, we were in far better shape than we were when we started out. I'm prejudiced, of course, about our administration, but I think we took a very bad situation that was not necessarily our fault—maybe we were slow in some areas to react—and in the end, we dealt with it in a very effective manner and recognized you got to do a broad, comprehensive approach; you just don't pass a law and say you've solved the problem. That's true in most issues you deal with in government. Passing the law is the easy part and is the quick part. The tougher part, and more important, is how do you administer that, and how do you make sure it's broad in its implications, implementation—not just passing a bill.

DePue: This might be the best opportunity we'll have during these sessions to ask you about your relationship with the Supreme Court. Maybe give us a little bit of a civics lesson on how the makeup of the court works in Illinois.

Edgar: It's a seven-person court. They're elected in districts. Most people don't have a clue who they're voting for, for judge. They're limited in how they can campaign. If it's a Republican year, in a swing district, a Republican might win; if it's a Democrat, a Democrat will win. Most of the districts are Democrat or Republican, and it goes that way. The two parties nominate the candidates. The bar association will rank them, but anybody can run if the parties nominate them. Often it's a consolation prize in Chicago, like former Mayor Bilandic, who was the Chief of the Supreme Court when the Baby Richard thing occurred. It's kind of a way to cap off a career and help the pension out. Now, that won't be true any longer. In 2010 and '11, whenever this new pension law starts, nobody's going to want to be a judge in Cook County because the pension's not that good anymore, so we'll probably have guys who barely got out of law school be judges.

In the suburbs, of course they'd be Republicans; downstate, they're more apt to be a swing district. At that time, there was one woman on the Supreme Court who sided against the Baby Richard case. I think there were maybe only two or three Republicans. One, Ben Miller from Springfield, sided against the Baby Richard decision. Those were the two that Brenda liked (laughs) from then on. She liked them before, but she liked them a lot more afterwards. It's partisan on partisan issues, because most of them come up through the partisan ranks. The Chicago ones, particularly, come up through the partisan ranks. Downstate and suburban may not be that politically active locally.

DePue: Maybe I just wasn't listening closely enough, but the two people you identified were Republicans on the court?

Edgar: No, one was a Democrat and one was a Republican.

DePue: Okay.

Edgar: Most issues are not partisan, the Supreme Court. It's not as intrusive as the federal courts are in what you do in state government—at least it wasn't when I was governor. The big decision they made was on Thompson, the reelection with Stevenson when he won by five thousand votes, and it was contested. That decision was purely on partisan lines, with one Democrat voting with three Republicans to give a 4–3 vote. That one Democrat had been denied a federal judge appointment by Adlai Stevenson, (DePue laughs) and his son had worked for Jim Thompson.<sup>17</sup> I always suspected they all sat around and figured out, “All right, [Seymour] you don't like Stevenson anyway; why don't you be the one guy to let Thompson keep it, and we'll vote with the Dem—I always thought that might have been fixed. But that's the most partisan roll call I can think of that they've had that actually had a meaning. Baby Richard was not partisan at all. Most cases, they're not partisan. But if it is a partisan issue like election, redistricting, they usually will split on partisan lines.

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<sup>17</sup> Seymour Simon was the Democrat who joined the three Republican justices. *Chicago Tribune*, January 8, 1983.

DePue: But it did become personal between you and Heiple on this one.

Edgar: Well, it wasn't just me, but Heiple attacked me in the opinion. That didn't bother me—it probably helped me in the election—it's just that at that point, I had no use for Heiple. He got in trouble about a year or two later. He got stopped by a policeman; he [Heiple] threatened him and all that, and he was censured. There was an attempt to impeach him in the legislature. Thompson came and defended him—he was his judge—in the House; it didn't make it to the Senate. But no, Heiple was not my favorite judge. When I left the governorship, I had money left and I said, "There'll always be some money as long as there's a possibility that Heiple might run again." (DePue laughs)

Brenda, we've talked before, is not that political, but she volunteered to be whoever the Republican candidate was against Heiple. No, first of all, if Heiple had run it would have been retention. He decided not to run and he put his candidate in to run, and Brenda volunteered to be the honorary chairman to whoever the Republican was to run against Heiple's person, and she did. Unfortunately, we lost that seat. But I don't think Heiple's person actually ran. I think it was somebody else who ran, but Madigan worried about that. I didn't deal much with the Supreme Court. I mean, I'd see them; we got along fine, just Heiple I didn't care for.

Even before that, I'd been around him a few times. I remember sitting at the governor's mansion when Thompson was governor, and he was over there for his Eagle Scout thing, and that's the first time I'd ever met him. I sat by him, and he spent the whole time complaining about Thompson, who was his host, who was the sitting governor, and who later defended him. I don't know if he was even a Supreme Court judge yet; he might have just been an appellate judge at that point, but I just thought, well, it's not very... But he came out of Pekin, and there was a lot of anti-Thompson feeling in that area. Fast-forward, and I'll tell this one last story on Heiple.

In the State of the State address, I think I did mention the unfortunate decision—I said "the terrible decision on the Baby Richard case." He was sitting there, and I don't think he cared for that, but I didn't care. I thought that was pretty mild. My staff didn't want me to get into it, and I said, "That's mild compared to what I really want to say about that decision."

But fast-forward: I leave the governorship, I come to U of I, I get my football tickets, and the first game of the year, we get there a little late. Brenda and I sit down, and I hear this voice behind me. I say, "I know that voice." I turn around, and it's Heiple. They'd given him tickets right behind me, because he was still on the Supreme Court. That's back when they used to give tickets to public officials. I was scared to death she'd turn around and see him, but she never did realize. So I went to the university and said, "Guys, you know, I'm the former governor; he's just the Supreme Court. You'd have thought I'd have got better tickets, but I sure don't want to be sitting next to him." So the next year, he got new tickets that were

a lot better than the tickets—they left me where I was. (laughter) I thought that was a message: He's still on the Supreme Court; you're not governor anymore.

DePue: Let's change gears here. We're not going to go back to the election quite yet—we'll certainly get there—but I wanted to ask you about Bob Hickman's resignation from the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority. Tell us about that and the impact that had, if any, on your election campaign.

Edgar: It didn't turn out to have any. Netsch tried to make it something. Bob Hickman originally was a car dealer from Charleston who got elected mayor of Charleston; he was mayor a long time in Charleston, a very active mayor. When I first ran for state rep, he had stuck his neck out and supported me in that primary we talked about many sessions ago against Max Coffey when the town was kind of split.<sup>18</sup> So we had always been allied together. His car business in 1974–5, when we had a recession—he lost it like a lot of people lost businesses in Charleston during those two years. Or I guess he hadn't lost all of it yet. It was the recession in '80–'81, because he'd supported me when I ran then and the other two times. He was looking for a job, so I hired him in the secretary of state's office, and he worked for me there. A very personable individual. Had played basketball at the University of Kansas on their national championship team with Wilt the Stilt.

DePue: Chamberlain.

Edgar: Chamberlain, yes. Held the free throw record for years in the NCAA tournament or something. He was a good basketball... Very, I thought, good guy. I'd put him in charge of the Chicago office for the last two years I was secretary of state, then when I ran for governor, he headed up my fundraising and raised a lot of money, knew a lot of folks. He was very good at dealing with the Democrats as well as the Republicans in Chicago, which is part of the process. He wanted to be secretary of transportation. I said, "No, Bob, you're not the secretary of transportation; that's going to be a professional. It's been traditional that the Tollway is given to somebody from politics. It's not necessarily a transportation expert, but you've been mayor; you dealt with transportation issues." It's an important job, but it's not one where you got to put a professional in.

So I put him in Tollway. I think he did a good job of trying to—because the guy before, under Thompson, had been a young guy; there were a lot of questions and a lot of audit findings and things. Bob had a tendency to get along with folks and try to help people out. He probably wasn't the best administrator in the world, and there were some issues on just how the thing was run. At that point, I didn't think there were any questions on legality or anything dishonest, just a question about how some things... It was getting to be kind of an issue.

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<sup>18</sup> Hickman's support of Edgar's 1974 campaign also indirectly led to the first collaboration between Edgar and Carter Hendren. Hendren became an important political advisor to Edgar. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 29, 2009, 23-29.

Part of the thing was, too, that is located in DuPage County, and the DuPage County Republican politicians think that's their thing. Well, I didn't want to give it to them. Now, the chairman was Pate Philip's guy, and he would do some things that were questionable. Bob would say no to him, so he and Bob didn't necessarily get along, but I named the executive director. Even though they [the Toll Authority] had a board, they had to go with who I wanted.

So there was friction there, and there was stuff in the paper; I'm sure it was coming from these guys, trying to make him look bad. But also there were just some questions on the management. It became apparent to me that we needed to make a change. So I called him in and just said, "Bob, I need to make a change. There are some things there that we ought to bring in somebody maybe a little more professional to run it, because it's gotten to be a big deal." He said, "All right," so that's what happened. It was more of administrative questions on some of the things; it wasn't a question that he'd done anything dishonest. We brought in an engineer from DOT and put him in; he stayed there the rest of the time that I was governor.<sup>19</sup>

About two years later, Bob was indicted for a land transaction with a Chicago alderman who made money. They never said Bob made money; they just said he did this deal to help this guy out, and they didn't need to do that deal. He got a six months' sentence in DuPage County, which surprised everyone. People who had been at the court and watched it were surprised with the verdict, because they didn't think they'd proven the case. These were people who didn't like Bob that told me that, so... But that happened two, three years later. That wasn't an issue when we were dealing with him.

Now, Netsch, in the campaign, late in August, was getting kind of desperate and ran a commercial attacking me for corruption and things like that, and Hickman was part of that commercial. We did a reply. Her ad didn't have much impact, but we came right back with an ad. I think at that point, my numbers jumped to about a thirty-point lead. We went from about a fifteen—because she'd made some inroads talking about the income tax in August, but then when she went after me on this, and we came back and said she's trying to divert the attention from these issues...

But Hickman, I always felt sorry for him. I didn't sit through the trial, but the people who did told me they were surprised with—it wasn't a jury; it was a judge, a DuPage County judge, who made the ruling, and he always felt they were out to get him in DuPage County.

DePue: I suspect another name that would have come up in that ad would be Arnie Kanter.

Edgar: I don't think so. His problem was a personal thing. Arnie Kanter was my first chief counsel—a very bright guy—and if he did [come up in Netsch's ad], I don't remember. He got in trouble because as a lawyer he failed to show up at court for

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<sup>19</sup> Ralph Wehner replaced Hickman. On this transition, see Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009, 122-24.

one of his clients. He was in the process of coming to work for me after the election, and I don't think he had turned all his cases over. For some reason, he missed this—I think it may be more than once. Apparently that's a big no-no—I'm not a lawyer, but that's a big no-no—and my understanding was that's what they disbarred him over, this case. He came to me—he'd been there for about a year—and said, "I need to resign because I'm going to be disbarred." This was the incident, and it had something to do with his private practice; I don't know what the right term was, but basically for being neglectful of his legal responsibilities. So that's why he was disbarred.<sup>20</sup>

DePue: It sounds like the kind of things that fellow lawyers can get animated about but the general public says, huh?

Edgar: Yes, I could see him being fined or censured, but I was a little surprised they disbarred a guy over that. But that's what it was. He's doing fine these days. (DePue laughs) I see him every once in a while.

DePue: Well, you mention this ad—

Edgar: If the Hickman indictment had occurred prior to the '94 election, that would have been something I'm sure she would have hit me with. (laughs) I probably had other people who in some ways did a poor job as administrator, and we probably removed them, but it didn't cause a controversy. But Bob was a guy that a lot of people would go after. I don't know if it was jealousy or what. He was definitely someone who would have succeeded very well in the 1950s and 1960s in Chicago politics. It was just kind of the old style. (coughs) We kind of knew that with him. We just said, "You got to be careful; you can't do certain things." This case that they went after him on, it never made sense to me. They never could prove where he had made anything. It was poor judgment, there's no doubt about that. This alderman who then was a state legislator, who also got sentenced to six months, was kind of a sleazy guy, I thought. Bob had a tendency to—that's just the Chicago environment, a little bit, that he kind of succumbed to, I think. But as far as working for me over the years, he did a very good job, and I think most people found him to be a very personable individual. It's unfortunate, because he lost his pension back from the mayor's day. He kind of lost everything over that six-month sentence, and I always thought it was too bad, the way to end a public career.

DePue: You mentioned this ad in August where Netsch is attacking you on ethical issues. Come October, the *Chicago Tribune's* got one quote that they attribute to her—"he" obviously being Edgar—"He promised to run the most ethical administration in history, and it's been one of the worst. This administration is a poster child for the plundering of the public pot."

Edgar: Where's that from?

DePue: The *Tribune*.

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<sup>20</sup> Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 29, 2009.

Edgar: An editorial?

DePue: No, that was—

Edgar: A letter to the editor?

DePue: No, that was a regular news article where they were quoting Netsch.

Edgar: Oh, quoting Netsch. Oh, okay.

DePue: Oh, excuse me, they were quoting Peter Giangreco, who was—

Edgar: Her spokesman. Yes. Well, that's campaign rhetoric. I don't think the public thought that was true. It was obvious after she ran that ad and we did the rebuttal—I'd never seen a campaign (laughs) collapse as quick as that one did.

DePue: In other words, that kind of a comment didn't bother you at all; that's just part of the—

Edgar: Oh, no, it bothered you, but not from Giangreco; that guy was really bad, too. He was even worse than Netsch. I mean, he was always saying things.

DePue: Do we need to talk more about the budget fight for 1994?

Edgar: Have we talked about it before?

DePue: Not really, except for the issue of the pension.

Edgar: Oh, we got to talk, because it's a great story.

DePue: And interwoven in this, now, was your—

Edgar: Is my heart.

DePue: —health concern. (laughs)

Edgar: Yes. Oh, yes. I haven't told this story yet to you?

DePue: I don't think so.

Edgar: Oh, this is one of my favorite stories. Most people that know me get sick of hearing this story, but since you haven't heard it... Three days after the Fourth of July parade, I get this little twang in my chest. I'm figuring, All right, I had an angioplasty. Either I need some medication—because I wasn't really on medication; I was just exercising and eating—or maybe I need a stent or something like that. At that point, stents were just beginning to come out. So I called the doctor in the suburbs, [Dr. Firouz] Amirparviz, who was a guy I'd met playing tennis. He was one of the leading cardiologists in the Chicago area. He'd come down when I'd had my first one and just observed. So I called him and said, "I'm having this pain.

I probably ought to get it checked out, but I don't want to do it in Springfield. The last time I went to Springfield, ten minutes later it's on the radio. I'm in the middle of a campaign; I want to find out what it is before we go talk to the press about it." He said, "Fine, when can you be up?" I said, "I'll be up there Thursday. I've got a bunch of things to do Thursday; can I come by Thursday night after I get done with my events? I don't want to cancel things."

DePue: Had you even mentioned this to Brenda at all?

Edgar: I think I had. I can't remember what day exactly I called him, but she knew I said I'm going to check with Amir. I can't remember what day of the week it was, but he said, "Fine, I'll have everything set up." He's one of these kinds of guys, he would set everything up. They'd stop the hospital from doing anything else until I was... So I had a busy day. I was in Chicago. I'd met with different groups. My last event, the carpenter union had a reception for me. This was a union that didn't endorse me, but they were for me. They had the reception for me, and I'd gone by. People later called and said, "Did we do that to the governor?" (DePue laughs)

But I just had a full schedule, so about eight o'clock I got out to Downers Grove, to Good Samaritan Hospital—that's where his office was—and I'd been in a parade there about four days before, on the Fourth of July. They do an angiogram; that's when they put the dye through your veins and your arteries and stuff, and they look at you. So I come through from that, and he says, "We need to do surgery. Let me show you." I'm looking, and I can see blockage. He says, "I thought this might be the problem from before; I thought it was just a matter of time until we probably were going to have to do this, based off your angioplasty a year and a half ago, and it's come back. I've got a team of surgeons waiting. I held them. A guy was going on his vacation to London, but I've kept him."

I was looking at that, and he kept talking. I said, "No, wait a minute. You don't have to convince me. I only got one thing: when you want to do this?" He said, "Right now." I said, "All right. Can I make a phone call tomorrow at noon?" He looked at me and said, "Yes, probably, but why?" I said, "I've got the four legislative leaders coming to my office, and I still don't have a budget." Madigan was still holding out, though I was winning the press; the press was just beating him up already. So I said, "If I'm going to have heart surgery, I'm going to use it for everything I can. (DePue laughs) I'm going to leverage it and get a budget from these guys. They're going to be in my office, they'll meet at twelve o'clock tomorrow in Chicago, but I need to..." He's just shaking his head like, you're thinking about that?

So—go through the surgery. First thing, I'm in the recovery room, and I've got a tube in my mouth, and (talks as though something is in his mouth) "What time is it,?" you know, kind of muddling. Finally they take it out, and they say it's eleven o'clock. I said, "All right, I need to make a call." It was closer to 12:00 when I finally made the call. My secretary from Springfield, Sherry Struck, had come up to Chicago for this meeting. Who I had talked to the night before—I told Mike

Lawrence, finally, I was going to go in and get checked.<sup>21</sup> I did not tell Bob Kustra, because I didn't—he was my lieutenant governor—we need to talk about lieutenant governor change, too.

DePue: Yes, absolutely.

Edgar: This was all going on at the same time. June and July were just a crazy month. I hadn't told Bob, because I just thought I was going to have some medication checked, but I wanted Lawrence to know that I was going to go get checked by this guy. And I hadn't told Jim Reilly, my chief of staff, because he was in Springfield and I just didn't get to it. I just told Lawrence because in case something happened, I wanted him to be thinking about how to handle it. Brenda knew, and Brenda had driven up with Elizabeth that evening just to be up there. I said, "I don't know why you are coming." She said, "No, I'm going to come." Because I had come for these meetings in downtown Chicago. So Brenda's there when I'm talking to the doctor. All I know is eleven o'clock or so, I'm out and I feel pretty good. Of course, you got a little button; any time you have pain, you just push it, and you get morphine. It was a great little button. I never had any pain. What I didn't know at the time was that after... I had told Brenda, "Get a hold of Mike; have him get a hold of Jim Reilly. Somebody get a hold of Kustra—how they handle it with the press and all that, but they'll be able to figure it out."

About one o'clock I came out of surgery, and they said everything went fine; they put out the notice we're going to have a press conference at six o'clock in the morning, some time like that. Bob Collins is going to get the exclusive first, because he's on early in the morning. They had this all set up, and Brenda went to bed in a hotel nearby. About four o'clock she gets awoken; the phone's ringing, and it's the doctor saying, "We've got a problem. The governor's bleeding and we can't stop it, and we're going to have to go in, we think, and reopen him up and redo this."

Needless to say, Lawrence is about ready to have heart failure himself because they've got the press corps ready to come in, in about two hours, saying everything is fine. They've already called it, so the press knows something's up. They might have even told them where they're having it. So they can't cancel it. They have to tell them something. So Brenda tells me they said, "If we don't get this stopped here in the next half an hour, we're going to go back in."

DePue: Are you conscious of this?

Edgar: No, no, (laughs) I'm asleep. I'm missing all this. I'm hearing this later. So Brenda is a member of this prayer group, and she calls everybody up at four o'clock in the morning, and they all start praying. In half an hour, the bleeding stops; they don't have to take me back in, so they can go on to the news conference. So I always tell people, "This is a pretty easy operation, you know. I go in, I come out, I feel pretty

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<sup>21</sup> Sherry Struck, interview by Mark DePue, November 3, 2010, 71-77. For a significant amount of time, Struck and Brenda Edgar were the only two who knew about Edgar's plans.

good. I'm out walking around the next day." And Brenda just says, "Yes, you think it was easy." (DePue laughs) She tells me this story about what they went through.

They have the press conference. Everything's fine, procedure's good, and expect him to be in the hospital so long, blah-blah-blah. So I'm really worried—I worry about everything—I'm worried about, how is the press going to play this? Are they going to say Edgar's near death, he can't be governor, and blah-blah-blah?

DePue: You mentioned that it played on Bob Collins' show, but certainly you weren't being interviewed on the show.

Edgar: Oh, no, no, no, no. I was still out. I didn't come through till about eleven o'clock in the morning. So this is now being played throughout the state of Illinois. Everybody wakes up that morning and finds out the governor has just had quadruple bypass surgery; he's in the hospital in serious condition, as anybody that has it is automatically in serious condition. Now, the middle of July, we're going to have the thirtieth reunion of my high school class; we're going to have it at the governor's mansion, because I'm the governor. The two gals that are putting this on in Charleston wake up, and they're just devastated, not because I might be dying. What are we going to do about the class reunion?; (laughter) that's what I later hear. "Yes," they said, "we were scared. What are we going to do about the class reunion?" I was recovered enough we had the class reunion there, but I had to sit on a bench or a stool and shake hands with everybody.

They do the press conference and everything, and as I said, I'm worried about how it's going to play. I come through, they pull the tube out, I get on the phone, get Sherry in my Chicago office. I said, "Are the leaders"—and we had Kustra go to the meeting, for him to fill in for me. I said, "Are they in there?" She said, "They're all in there, and Bob's in there." I knew all the lead stories—not in papers, because it was too late for papers—but all the television and radio, that's all they were talking about, me in the hospital. I said, "All right, put me on the squawk box in there." So I come on, and I said, "Guys? Now, we got a problem on this budget. I understand everybody's out on a limb saying this and that, and I've done that too, but we now have an excuse for everybody to compromise, because everybody in the state thinks I'm near death. Everybody has a reason now to compromise, because we got to do this. If you don't, I am going to beat you over the head with this, because I'll have public sentiment on my side. We're willing to give, but you got to give, and we got to have a budget before the day is over. The lieutenant governor's here, he's in charge, and my staff's there, they'll help out. I've got things to do." I hang up. (laughter) Two hours later they call me and say, "We have a budget agreement."

Now, the story they tell me—Madigan's smart. He knows right away he's losing this game anyway, and now this. There's no way he can keep fighting with me laying in the hospital. Because he was already getting beat up by the media, holding up the budget for election reasons. But Emil Jones doesn't want to deal. "Naw, I got to have this." Of course, the two Republican leaders are just looking at

him. And so the Speaker says, “If you gentlemen could excuse me, I’d like to ask Senator Jones—maybe we can go in this other room and talk.” They said for about an hour they’re in this other room and they can hear them shouting and screaming in there, (laughs) Madigan and Jones. The two Republicans and Kustra are just sitting in there laughing, and they can hear them shouting and everything.

Finally they come back in, and the Speaker says, “We can work this out.” (laughs) I think Madigan told Emil, and Emil kind of, “Oh, I’m not going to...” First of all, Emil told me later, he did not believe that was me on the phone. He **knew** that was someone else. He **knew** that I couldn’t be on that phone. He wasn’t going to agree to anything, and Madigan finally said, “Hey, we don’t have a choice. Edgar’s got us over the barrel on this.” So, within two hours we had a budget agreement.

DePue: What were the things that they compromised on?

Edgar: Oh, I can’t remember. Who knows. Those budget fights, we’d be fighting over insignificant things. They probably wanted more money than I wanted to put in. That usually was the fights we’d have. I probably wanted to put it here and they wanted to put it there. In the scheme of life, it wasn’t anything that anybody was going to remember, but it was just the principle, by gosh. “This is our position, and we’re not going to compromise.” “Well, we’re not going to compromise.” I cannot remember it. Chances were they wanted to spend more than I wanted to spend, or they wanted to spend more in education than I wanted to put, because they were probably going to take it out of administrative costs; that meant I couldn’t run agencies. I can’t remember what it was. But whatever it was, Madigan had already—the downstate editorials had already turned on his position versus mine. So in a way, I think he was looking for a way to get this over.

About two days later, Kustra and Daniels come. Pate doesn’t come, and the Democrats don’t come, but I sign the appropriations bill in my bathrobe at the hospital. I look at the staff and I say, “I’m not doing this again next year.” (laughter) But the day after I came through the surgery, later that day they wanted to get me up to walk around, because they were worried about pneumonia and things like that. So I get up and walk around. I walk to the window at the hospital, and all the TV trucks are out there. So I lean out the window and wave. And again, Jones tells me, “I knew they had a mannequin or they had a cardboard thing of you. That wasn’t really you.” (laughs) I say, “That was me waving out there!”

DePue: You were in your hospital robe and the whole deal?

Edgar: Yes, and I just waved outside the window. (laughs) Then I was exhausted. I remember I was so tired after that I went and just kind of collapsed on my bed.

DePue: Now, governor, I don’t know how to say this, but you are rather particular about your appearance, and—

Edgar: My hair was combed.

DePue: —especially your hair.

Edgar: My hair was combed. It was the distance, too. Because I'd been laying and I hadn't been able to turn around like I—I mess my hair up when I turn around, but (laughs) when you're in surgery, you're pretty flat. Well, my hair wasn't perfect. There's the picture. We're looking at a picture of me waving from the hotel room.

DePue: This is in the book *Meeting the Challenge*.

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: Thumbs up.

Edgar: I think there was a picture in here of me when I signed the bill, too. Maybe not. We're worried about how's the newspapers going to play? Is it going to say, "Oh, this is the end of Edgar's career," or "Oh, this is nothing?" All the stories except one come out and say, "Edgar's expected to make a speedy recovery; bypass surgery is pretty common, it's not life-threatening like people might think." The only one was Tom Hardy, my friend Tom Hardy, (DePue laughs) who I later hire as press secretary, who had written a decent story on my first... He said, "Well, this is really serious. It brings up the health issue again about him. He's had this over and over again, and people might begin to..."<sup>22</sup> I called him up on the phone, and I yelled at him. (laughter) I said, "What are you doing? I'm fine!" But that was the only story. That was fortunately an early edition story that didn't get a whole lot of play, I don't think.

I do that press conference on signing the budget, so that reinforces that I'm still in control. Now, the other thing good about this was Bob Kustra had come to me sometime in May. He had been doing a radio show on WLS radio, just once a



<sup>22</sup> "Edgar's Health Is Issue Now and for Fall Campaign," *Chicago Tribune*, July 9, 1994.

week. Bob's a very articulate guy. I think he was very frustrated. Lieutenant governor is a very frustrating office; he'd been out doing a lot of good things, but no name recognition was coming with it. WLS, the ABC radio station at Chicago, offered him a job—Would you like to be a full-time radio person? I'm sure the pay is going to be a lot better than he got as lieutenant governor, and this is one of the major radio stations in Chicago, a talk program. He'd have maybe a more exciting future than being lieutenant governor. He came to me and said, "I think I'm going to take it." I said, "Really? I hope they pay you a lot. I got to figure out if you're going to do this, who we're going to replace you with." I can't replace lieutenant governor, but I had to put somebody on the ticket for next time.

We'd have had to go to the state convention to have them put—because he'd been renominated in the primary. So I had to start thinking about who I was going to put on. Then they had an announcement at WLS radio that Bob was going to resign as lieutenant governor and come and be a radio personality on their station. Everybody knew I needed a lieutenant governor candidate, so I had to start thinking about who to pick. I was going through that, and I'm not going to tell you who all I thought about since I didn't pick them.<sup>23</sup> I had pretty well concentrated on somebody out of my cabinet, because I wanted somebody who understood politics. I really wasn't sure. In my mind I had a couple guys I was zeroing in on. We'd had some conversations with my staff more than I had had con—because I wanted to keep a little distance, but I'd had some conversations and started thinking about it. But whoever you pick, it's an unknown—you don't know how they're going to campaign; you're going to make people mad.

I'll go ahead and talk about who I thought about. I had thought about a woman, but who I came down to was (pause) Terry Gainer, who was the head of law enforcement, who had run for state's attorney.

DePue: The Terry Gainer we always see—

Edgar: In Congress, yes. In the Senate. The other person was Howard Peters, who was African American, who had been director of Corrections.<sup>24</sup> I can't remember if he was still just director of Corrections or if he'd already moved over to the general office. But he was one who we talked about before, I think. He's an African American, and some downstate county chairmen loved him because he had jobs at Corrections and he'd come to their Lincoln Day dinners and speak; he just was a very good speaker, a very smart guy—both, I thought. Gainer, law enforcement—that was kind of a theme of the campaign. He had run for office. Those were the two guys that I kind of was thinking about. Now, it got out that I was thinking about Howard Peters. I was amazed how many people reacted negatively because he was

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<sup>23</sup> The announcement came as a surprise to Edgar. Bob Kustra, interview by Mike Czaplicki, February 1, 2011, for his negotiations with both WLS and Edgar.

<sup>24</sup> At the time of this interview, Terrance W. Gainer was the Sergeant at Arms of the U.S. Senate. Howard Peters, interview by Mark DePue, January 21, 2010, 18-21, for his perspective on the possibility of serving as lieutenant governor.

black. In 1994, I couldn't believe it, but there was still a lot of agitation about that. I don't know if Gainer ever got that...

Those were the two guys I was thinking about. But I knew, boy, it'd be a lot better if Kustra just stayed. Then, when I had the heart surgery, everybody in the state Republicans got real nervous. If I die, Roland Burris is the governor, because he's the attorney general. If Bob resigns as lieutenant governor, you can't fill that vacancy; then it goes to the attorney general, and that would mean a Democrat would get to be governor. So that had the party folks all, jiminy Christmas, how well are you? (laughs) I was thinking, Maybe I can use this a little more. So I said, "Bob, (DePue laughs) you know, this is really not a good time for you to resign as lieutenant governor. I know this radio thing, but I'm not sure that's a good deal. Are there ways we can redo this office. So he said, "Well, let me think about it."

DePue: Did you sweeten the pot a little bit?

Edgar: Yes, I did. I leave the hospital. I've got to stay at the mansion for two weeks, they said, and do nothing. Well, I don't do nothing, but I have to stay at the mansion. So I call Bob over. First of all, I think he knows this is a bad time to leave with no lieutenant governor; that means Roland Burris is next in line. The party folks (laughs) were getting real nervous about all this. I don't know if he was having second thoughts about the radio thing or not. I think people just—"Oh, we hate to see you go, you shouldn't go," and all this, so I'm sure he's feeling maybe a little better about being lieutenant... Whenever you say you're going to leave a place, then you begin to think, well, I don't want to leave. People come up and say, "Oh, you can't leave, you're doing such a good job," and all that.

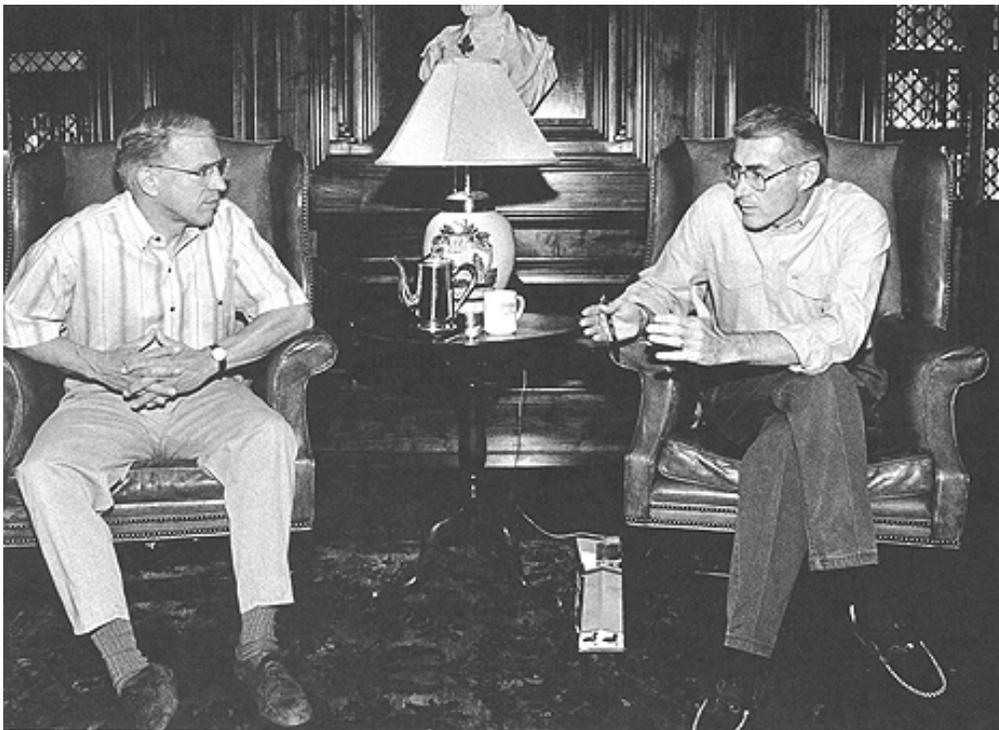
DePue: We're looking at another picture again.

Edgar: We're looking at another picture, and this is when Bob's over to talk to me. You can see how thin I look there.

DePue: This is page 156.

Edgar: You see, I got my slippers on. I got clothes on, casual clothes, but I got slippers on. That's when he comes over and sees me, and that's when he agrees he'll stay. He said, "But I would like to have more duties as lieutenant governor." He wanted to be the point guy on economic development. I said, "That'd be fine. Now, I'm still the governor. You can be the point guy. I might make the announcements, and you got to check with me, but you can be the guy out moving around, talking to business guys and doing all that stuff." That was one of the things we gave him. It might have been a couple other things. It wasn't a whole lot. I mean, it was very reasonable, and he was good at the stuff. It wasn't like I gave him something he couldn't handle.

He said, "Now, the other thing is, you got to call WLS and tell them." (laughs) I said, "Okay, I'll do that." So I had to call somebody at ABC radio. Oh, they were not happy. I said, "Well, you got to understand, (laughs) this is a real emergency. He's lieutenant governor. We can't replace him, and if something would happen to me, now people are real nervous that..." They said, "Well, we're not going to hold this job till the..." I said, "I understand that." Because Bob already knew he was going to run again then. The deal was he'd stay and run. It wasn't just stay through the term; he would stay and run, because he knew they weren't going to hold the job. And ABC—the guy was kind of mad at him, but I think everybody else in the



state understood why he did it.

If I hadn't had the heart surgery, (laughs) I wouldn't have been able to get him to stay. It was great, because Bob for me was the ideal lieutenant governor. He was a team player; he was smart, articulate; he met people well, and you wanted somebody you could have out and about. He was much more of an extrovert,

and I'm a little more of an introvert. I couldn't get around to everything because I had to worry about being the governor, whereas he had the time. Now, he didn't like to fly. He'd drive a lot of places. But I felt very comfortable with him as lieutenant governor. After trying to figure out who was going to replace him, I realized it's just a lot better for me. Then it turned out that was a lot better for the state, because of the situation we were in, for him to stay. He did, and I appreciate that very much. He stayed.

At the end of the second term, after he knew he wasn't going to run for anything and I wasn't running again, he had come to me, probably sometime in June, because he'd had his name out for presidents of universities; he didn't know when anything would come through. Well, one came through; they wanted him to go be president of a university in eastern Kentucky. So he came to me in about July. I said, "That's close to Keeneland Racetrack, isn't it?" He said, "Yes. Now, don't try to talk..." "I'm not going to talk you out of it." I said, "You got a guest room? I'll come down there and watch the races." (laughter) I went down and spoke at his inauguration. But I appreciated very—Bob was a very good team player. Lieutenant governor, I think, is a **terrible** job.

DePue: That was what I was going to ask you. The public perception is, okay, this is a position where you're kind of grooming yourself, or somebody else is grooming you, to higher office or for governorship in the first place, but it doesn't seem to work out that way in Illinois.

Edgar: No, it doesn't. Part of the problem is, as lieutenant governor, really you hardly have any power—just what the governor gives you—so you got to get along with the governor. But then you always have got the jealousies; the two staffs are just natural... You get problems. Most people don't know who the lieutenant governor is. Bob had a great job. He had a name that was a little tricky—KUS-tra, KOOS-tra—people weren't sure what it was, but it wasn't Jones or something like that. Even though I had him involved in a lot of things—the higher education reform, education stuff, he was out cleaning up the Illinois River, a big project in the Peoria area—still his name recognition didn't move up a whole lot. It's like a lot of things in state government. You can have an important role, but if you're not the governor, you just don't get the visibility. I thought he did that job as well, and I think we got along as well as a governor and a lieutenant governor can; he did it well, but I think it's a frustrating job. At the end, when I wasn't going to run again and I was leaving office, I didn't have any problem with him taking something that he needed to take now and not take a chance on it not being there when he got out. He was a very good lieutenant governor.

I have to say that I got a budget and kept a lieutenant governor with that heart surgery. I'm sure I got a lot of sympathy from folks out there too, because poor Netsch—we had just run these TV commercials saying she's weak on crime, and just killed her in the polls—couldn't come back because I'm in the hospital. You can't attack a guy that's in the hospital. I'm in the hospital for a week and getting all this free publicity—and it's all sympathetic—but it's obvious that I'm still in

control. Also the Baby Richard thing is playing out right now; that's going on. Then I go back to the mansion, and I get Bob to stay, do a couple other things, and have my class reunion while I'm recovering at the mansion.

I remember I told the docs, "I have a vacation to Colorado planned. I've had it planned. It's going to be the only chance I'm going to get between now and the election. I really want to go. If I got to recover, I'd just as soon recover in Colorado as I would here. It's going to be hot and humid." They said, "All right," and checked me over. This is like two and a half weeks after my surgery. "All right, you can go. What are you going to do out there?" I said, "I'll probably go hiking. It'll be in the mountains, too." They said, "Well, that's all right. You get tired, stop. And you can only take one dog." I said, "What do you mean I can only take one dog?" They said, "You cannot use your left hand, because that will pull on your chest. You can use your right hand. We know you. You're going to take both dogs out for a walk, and you can't take both dogs out for a walk, so you can only take one dog." (laughs) They were insistent: "You can only take one dog." So I had to pick between my two dogs (DePue laughs) who got to go, and the other one went home with one of the secretaries at the office.

DePue: Well, which dog was it?

Edgar: Emy, the white one there. You had to take Emy. She was the queen bee. Daisy had a good time going home with one of the secretaries over by Jacksonville, but Emy went. (laughs) We sneak out of town. We don't let anybody know we're going. I remember we're scared to death they're going to find out I'm leaving, but we just said I'm recovering. I didn't want to tell them I was going to Colorado. I flew out on Harry Crisp's plane—a friend of mine. He's a Pepsi distributor. He provided his plane, and Emy, Brenda, and Elizabeth and I flew out to Colorado. We went to a friend of mine—Bill Smithburg, who headed up Quaker Oats, had offered us to use their house he had out in Snowmass, next to Aspen. So that's where we went. I guess I was still bandaged up a little bit, but not too much. I go hiking every day in the mountains. Poor Netsch, (laughs) she can't attack me because I'm still recuperating. I'm thinking, here I am in Colorado enjoying this nice weather and out hiking every day, and poor Netsch is back in Illinois—she still can't attack me.

I get back for the state fair. I was probably better off to be in Colorado, hiking in the nice, cool mountains, than being at the humid state fair, then she can start attacking me again. So I had about a four-week period where she couldn't attack me, and I was enjoying life.

DePue: Was there ever a time during any of this that you thought, you know, maybe this is way too much; I'm just stressing myself out, I need to step aside?

Edgar: No, but that is probably when I did decide this would be enough. I remember laying in the hospital bed, and the doctors said, "You should recover. We don't think you ought to drop off the ticket. Just take it easy." But it does make you realize you're mortal. I'll tell you what happened. It was about two, three days after the operation.

One of the doctors was in there saying something about, “Well, when we stopped your heart...” I said, “What do you mean, you stopped my heart?” They said, “We had to stop your heart. We opened it. We had a machine we ran the blood through.” Usually when you have open-heart surgery they give you some time and explain the procedure to you. Well, we didn’t have any time; they just said, “We’re sending you in right now.” So they didn’t do that. It dawned on me, that’s right, my heart was stopped. I didn’t have my... Then it kind of hits you, hey, this was real **serious**. I’m sure glad I wasn’t the first guy they did open-heart surgery to.

So I’m laying in bed and I’m thinking, I’m mortal. There are a lot of things in life—I like being governor, and I want to get reelected, but eight years might be enough. Do I want to go to the U.S. Senate? Everybody thinks, oh, you’ll run for the U.S. Senate. Maybe, but maybe I just want to go hike with my dogs. We’d just had a son and daughter get married, and I thought, at some point I’m going to have grandchildren. About two months later we found out that Stacey was pregnant. I think I might want to have grandchildren, and I want to see them. There’s just other things. I want to travel. I love to travel. I get to travel now, but I got to wear a coat and tie, pronounce names I don’t know how to pronounce, and (DePue laughs) go to meetings I don’t want to go to; I’d rather just wander around.

I know that’s when I began to realize my political career does have limits. Not that I thought, I got to get out because I’m going to die if I don’t; it’s just that I’m not going to live forever, and there are other things in life I want to do. Now, I didn’t for sure say this is it, but that’s when, for the first time in my life, I started to think there are other things than politics, and there’s other things I want to do. If I get two terms as governor, if things go well, hey, that could be enough; my ego might be satisfied. While I still can, I need to maybe think about going out and doing other things. So I didn’t make the definite decision, but that’s the first time I started thinking that way. That thought continued and prevailed come 1998, and it prevailed in 2003 and 2005, when they wanted me to get back in. But I’m not sure I would have thought that if I hadn’t gone through the heart surgery, because that does have an impact on you.

DePue: What were you hearing from Brenda during this time?

Edgar: She was very supportive. She went and filled in for me. Elizabeth was working on the campaign that summer, and she filled in for me in places. But Brenda did not say, “Hey, this is it.” First of all, it was always, “I’m going to keep running; I’m not going to get out of this.” Everything went okay. Now, if the surgery had gone bad and there were serious problems... But there weren’t. Everything went just as expected. She was a little taken aback when I said, “We’re going to go to Colorado, and I’m going hiking.” She kind of looked at me like, Are you nuts? I said, “No. They said I can.” “They said that?” I said, “Yes, ask them. They wouldn’t let me...” And I remember going off a couple times and getting real tired. (laughter) She never came and said, “You got to drop out”—never did. She might have wished I would have, but she knew I didn’t want to do that. Even since then, anytime something has come up, Brenda has never said, “You can’t do that.” She just says,

“Think about it. Whatever you do, fine, but you got to think about the pluses and minuses.”

DePue: That’s oftentimes the conventional wisdom when people speculate about why you didn’t run in ’98 or in some of these other elections, that Brenda didn’t want you to run.

Edgar: No. Well, I knew Brenda didn’t want me to run, but she never... I would say the last election, probably—Brenda never said “Don’t run,” but I knew she didn’t want me to run and probably had more of an... In ’98 it wasn’t because Brenda didn’t want me to run. I knew—none of these she wanted me to run. It was more there’s other things I need to do in life.

DePue: Speaking of other things—you already alluded to Brad’s marriage—is there anything more we need to add to that or the World Cup or some of those other things?

Edgar: That June and July just probably were the most eventful two months of my life in a lot of ways. It was packed full... We ran the commercials, which was key in the election, I had heart surgery, Brad got married in the end of June. We had the wedding across the street at the Central Baptist Church where we attended; we had the reception at the governor’s mansion, which we paid for.

DePue: What was his wife’s maiden name?

Edgar: Oh, we’ll look that up. (laughter) I know her folks, and I’m terrible. Stacey [Nehring]. I’m blank. We also had the World Cup, since we’re sitting here in 2010 and there’s a World Cup going on in South Africa. I didn’t know what a World Cup was—I’m not a soccer person—but realized pretty soon this is a big deal. Chicago was the host, and started off, and we had the first game. I remember we went to Chicago. This was the day of Brad’s rehearsal dinner, which the parents of the groom are—that’s their dinner. I said, “I got to go. That’s the opening ceremony. I’ve got to go up there.” President Clinton was there. Henry Kissinger’s there, Helmut Kohl, the chancellor of Germany, was there. The president of Bolivia, who Germany was playing, who actually had got his college degree at the University of Chicago and gone to high school in Wisconsin or Iowa—spoke Spanish with a Midwestern accent—was going to be there, and Daley and I. I said, “I just got to be there.” She said, “All right, but don’t be late for this reception, or you might have a big campaign issue.” (DePue laughs) You know, for the dinner.

Hot as blazes. I just remember we’re sitting outside. We’re all in dark blue suits. They offered to let us sit inside, but Helmut Kohl was up for reelection, and he said, “Nah, I can’t sit inside, the Germans will think I’m weak” or something. So we’re all outside in the sun (laughs) in these dark blue suits. I thought there was a picture in here of that. Daley and I are sitting next to each other. Behind us are Kissinger and Helmut Kohl, then President Clinton, and the other side of him, the president of Bolivia, who I’d had a breakfast for that day.

Well, we're sitting there, and I don't understand soccer. We're sitting there. Kohl and Kissinger are huddling the whole time, talking back there. Of course, Kissinger was originally from Germany, so they're talking in German, so we don't know what they're saying. I say to Daley, "Boy, wouldn't you like to know what those guys are talking about? I bet it's some world strategy, policy or something like that." So finally, at the end of the first period, I turn around to Kissinger and Kohl, and I say, "All right, what are you guys talking about? You've been talking the whole time." Kissinger looks at me and he says, "The chancellor and I, we cannot figure out the German coach's strategy on this. That's what we've been trying to figure out, the strategy. It just doesn't make sense." Of course, Kissinger's a big soccer fan. When he was on the National Security Council, he used to have them pipe in the World Cup to the White House and to his room so he could listen to it. They were talking about the game. They didn't care about world peace or politics or war or anything; they were talking about the... About the end of the second period I tell them I've got to leave. I say, "I've got a son getting married tomorrow, and you guys are important, but if I don't get home, I'm in **big** trouble." (laughs) So I leave.

About four days later, there's another game. The crown prince of Spain, who was the heartthrob of Europe at that time—he's still the crown prince—was just finishing up his schooling in the United States, and he was going home; this was kind of one of the last things. Spain was playing, so I was to have lunch with him. I took Elizabeth with me because I thought, Elizabeth, now this, you might enjoy. I said, "This guy supposedly is the heartthrob." So Elizabeth went along with me, and we had lunch with him. You know, you always worry about really screwing up and doing a dumb thing. There is a famous singer from Spain, one of the four of those...

DePue: One of the opera tenors?<sup>25</sup>

Edgar: Yes. Domingo or something. One of them is from Spain. So we're at this table in this restaurant for lunch. It's the crown prince, Elizabeth, me, and this singer who I think's Italian. (DePue laughs) It just hasn't clicked. So I say something about him being Italian, and he kind of looks at me like ...

DePue: Plácido Domingo, maybe?

Edgar: Yes, Domingo. He says, "What wood did you just walk into?" This is the picture with Daley and me, and there's Kissinger and Kohl having this deep conversation, and here's Clinton. Oh, Hillary was on the other side. I thought he was sitting between them. This is the ambassador from Brazil, who ended up winning the World Cup that year.

DePue: Some pretty heavy hitters in that picture.

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<sup>25</sup> During this period, Plácido Domingo and José Carreras (Spain) and Luciano Pavarotti (Italy) frequently performed together as the Three Tenors.

Edgar: I tell you, I was sure glad we didn't have any—oh, here's the picture with the crown prince. So that's Elizabeth and the crown prince and I at lunch.

DePue: Okay. And the crown prince's name, while we're talking about that—Felipe de Borbón y Grecia, the crown prince of Spain. I don't even recognize that reading the name.

Edgar: Yes, it was Philip. He's still the crown prince. His dad's King [Juan] Carlos. He's been very successful as the king of Spain. So I thought that was kind of a kick for Elizabeth, to have a chance to—because he was probably about four years older than she was at the time.

But anyway, Brad's wedding was the day of the opening, the next day. It went very nice; it was neat to have the reception in the mansion. I might have a picture of the wedding in here. They go off to the Tetons for their honeymoon. They get back, and right after they get back, they get a call that I'm having open-heart surgery. It was a busy, busy two months.

DePue: I tell you, by the time you get to August, it's all anticlimactic after that.

Edgar: It actually was. I came back and did the state fair; I was so hot. In August, Netsch started running the commercials about her proposal for the income tax increase, property tax reduction, and helping the schools. We'd attacked her on, she just wanted to spend more money, tax, and all this and that. She actually started coming back a little bit in the polls. Then the end of August, right over Labor Day, I think she ran that commercial attacking my integrity. We fired one right back. I remember I was going to see the Farm Bureau of Bloomington. I don't know if I was going in the meeting or coming out of the meeting, but I got a call from Mike Lawrence; he said, "We got the poll results." I said, "All right." I thought, oh, shoot. I was up fifteen, then she ran this one. It could be five, ten maybe at best. I said, "What's the difference?" He said, "You got a twenty-eight or thirty-point lead." I said, "What? That doesn't happen." He said, "That's what the poll said. I didn't believe it either, but they double-checked it; that's what it says." This was right after Labor Day; then you just knew you really are going to have to mess this one up.

It didn't stay quite that much. I don't know what we finally won by, but pollsters have told me that the larger the margin gets, the more distorted it is. The closer it is, the more accurate it is. If you've got a poll that says two points apart, you might be two points apart. If you've got one saying you're twenty points apart, you're probably not twenty points apart; it's probably fifteen or something like that. It's just not as much as it is. I think that's probably what happened on that poll. At that point, Netsch had trouble raising money; we had money. We also began to sense we had a chance to do a sweep and maybe get a Republican House; we already had a Republican Senate, but maybe get a Republican House.

The national scene, Clinton wasn't up [for reelection], but he had gone through his health care fiasco. The thinking was that this could be a decent Republican year. In Illinois it looked like we could have a good year. I was going to run well. All the legislators wanted to run with me, including some of the Democrats, it seemed like. So the last month of the campaign, I pretty well spent most my time going for other House members and Senate members, to help them.

We did have one incident that caused me pause. Probably sometime in October, Pate Philip had gone into the editorial board at the *Arlington Herald*. They reported that he had made a comment saying something about black workers don't work as hard as white workers, talking about state workers—some racial comment like that—which, of course, got picked up and played all over the state. I'm spending a lot of time in the black community. He denied he had said that, but they had him on tape saying it. That caused quite a... Of course everybody wanted to know, what do you think about this? Are you going to denounce this and Pate Philip? First of all, we tried to avoid it for a while because we just didn't want to get into it; then finally we said, "If he said that, it's unfortunate; that's not true." Pate had had a tendency before to make comments that were taken as racial. We checked, and people had listened to the tape, so it was obvious he had said it. Then Pate got mad because I didn't defend him. That was kind of a bump in the road that didn't amount to anything, but you just never know.

One of the things I always worried about—I didn't want to have the African American community just get mad at all Republicans and come out in huge numbers and vote against us, because in '90, one of the reasons I was able to run as well as I did with black voters was a lot of blacks didn't vote, particularly from the projects. The percentage of middle class black voters is larger when you have a small turnout. I can do well with those, but if this becomes a racial issue, we're going to lose them all. If they really get mad and they come out in big numbers, which they didn't in '90, then they're voting 95 percent Democrat; that's going to hurt everybody. We had to go out that weekend in DuPage County. I remember finally they convinced Pate not to show up that day, because we were doing a thing with... It just was a very awkward situation.<sup>26</sup> But everything was going fine, then we had that happen.

The other incident, which is one of my favorite stories I tell, is that it's about a week before the election. We'd run our TV blitz. I was going to a lot of areas where I don't usually do well—I mean, Republicans don't—but I had a feeling that we could really have a big number here, and I wanted to get a big number. It's in the South Side of Chicago, near the South Side there. They have a groundbreaking on a new building, and the reason I was invited was the state was going to be one of the anchors. I think Children and Family Services or something like that was going to put an office in this new building. That's how they could get the financing to do the building, this guarantee the state was going to... Because then, that was a good deal. Today, I'm told, one of the leading causes of bankruptcy is people who have

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<sup>26</sup> For Edgar's remarks at the time, see "Edgar Turns Up Heat on Philip," *Chicago Tribune*, October 8, 1994.

the state as tenants, and they don't pay, (DePue laughs) which causes the developers to go into bankruptcy. But then, it was a good deal. I wanted to go, and it gave me a positive thing to go to on the South Side.

It was a beautiful fall day, and I showed up. This was a neighborhood that had really had a lot of problems; it was pretty depressed. This was the first new thing, positive thing, in a long time, this new building. So there were a lot of people out, and it was a beautiful fall day. I remember getting out of the car and walking over, and there were probably a thousand, two thousand people, all African Americans. So we went over—I forget who else was there—and we turned the dirt, and everybody's in a good mood.

I'm walking back to the car, and I'm surrounded by the crowd. I've got two troopers who are two Irish guys. I don't see them anyplace, but everybody seems to be in a good mood, and I'm not worried about it. All of a sudden this guy walks up to me, bigger than I was, and you could tell by his dress that he had kind of a rough life. He says, "Are you Edgar?" I'm looking at him, and I'm thinking, This guy doesn't look like he's real happy with me. I'm looking around, and no troopers anyplace. The crowd's [thinking], this might be fun. Well, I had just spent three, four million dollars on a TV blitz saying I'm Edgar, so it was going to be kind of hard to deny it. So I say, "Yes, I'm Edgar." He says, "You know what you did to me?" Again, the crowd is, oh, good. I'm thinking, oh, I don't know what I did to you, but I sure wish I hadn't. I don't see my troopers anyplace. I say, "No, what'd I do to you?" He says, "You took away my public aid check."

Well, this is one of these guys I think we talked about in '91; one of the things we had to do was do away with public aid for able-bodied men and women. They always said we were going to have riots in the streets and all this, and we didn't. But I'm thinking, we're going to have a riot right here, and it's going to be directed toward me. I'm ahead in the polls, I'm going to win this election, but I'm not going to live to see it because this guy (laughs) is going to get revenge. Again, my troopers are no place to be seen, and the crowd's loving this. Before I could say anything, he says, "And you know, that was the best thing you could ever do to me." I say, "What?" He says, "When you took that away, the one way I could keep it for six months was to go to that job training program you had. I went to that job training program, and I got a job, and I've had a job since. It's not a great job, but I've had a job, and I just want to thank you." The only reason I thought he wouldn't kill me—he had a little girl on his shoulder. He says, "This is my daughter, and I can't tell you how proud I feel now. When I go home at night, she knows I've been to work. Again, I really appreciate you doing..." And I'm thinking, where are the TV cameras (laughter) when I need them?

Sometimes you get caught up in numbers and ask is this worthwhile, does this really matter? That's something that did matter. Now, I also say that piece of legislation came about as a compromise. We didn't have the money, so we had to cut out the program. We had a lot of African American legislators saying, "Hey, we don't want to do this, but all right. As a compromise, can we do some job training?"

So we said yes, we'll do that. Well, it worked. This person got job training and then went and got a job and felt a lot better about themselves, which also reinforced that most people don't want to be on public aid; they'd rather have a job. Unfortunately, a lot of folks just don't have the skills to hold a job. So that happened. That's always been one of my favorite stories in the closing days of that election.

It seemed like there was one other thing that happened in the closing days of that election that was somewhat significant. At that point, we were pretty well concentrating on just not making a mistake and trying to help other folks get elected. Netsch couldn't raise any money. Her money had dried up because it's pretty obvious she was going to lose, so she really couldn't do anything to attack me. So we felt pretty good going into the closing days of the election.

DePue: Do you remember her bus down in southern Illinois acting like it was a school bus, putting on the flashing lights and putting out the stop sign, and a little dust-up about whether or not that was appropriate; then her counter-challenge that you had a bus or some vehicle that had "Governor One" on it? Remember any of that?

Edgar: No. I remember she made a bus trip through southern Illinois on her tax thing, and she couldn't get hardly any Democratic legislators to show up with her. We had a truth squad kind of following her. I don't remember that, and I was trying to think what we'd have had that said "Governor One." We probably had some kind of bus or something. Yes, possible. You worried about it, but none of that stuff ever... People had pretty well made up their minds. It was pretty obvious, looking at the polls, they'd made up their minds probably sometime in the summer.

DePue: How about this quote? This is one that maybe (laughs) would stick with people a little bit more. Somewhere in this process, somebody asked her why she deserved to be governor and she said, "I deserve to be governor because I'm smarter than Edgar."

Edgar: Yes. She always thought she was. I'll tell you what I did to her, and she really didn't like it at all. She always used to talk about how she was smarter and she knew finance better and she was the expert and I wasn't. So it turned out they hadn't paid their property tax on their condo in Chicago one year.

DePue: She and her husband Walter, who was a well-known architect.

Edgar: Yes, they had not paid their property taxes. We ran a commercial saying here she is, the state comptroller, and she didn't pay her property taxes. What kind of fiscal responsibility is that? She was very indignant because Walter forgot to do it, and I had embarrassed Walter, and his health wasn't good, and all this and that. I didn't ever tell her this: she really ended up blaming Andy more than she blamed me, but I told him to run the ad because I got tired of hearing her talk about how she was smarter and knew the fiscal things better than I did. I just said, "Ah, run the commercial." I wanted to say, "For Pete's sake, why would you leave it up to an architect (laughs) to take care of your property tax bill?" I mean, Walter was kind

of in the clouds a lot, and you're the financial expert. But, oh, she did not like that commercial. That's probably the maddest she was at me—and still is, probably—over that commercial. But I felt sorry for her because the press had a tendency—they ran this picture of her. She was looking in a window or something, a terrible picture. She looked terrible, and they ran that all over the state.

I'll never forget. It was the last weekend, and traditionally the last weekend, you spend it in Chicago. You always try to hit the black churches, because they'll let you in. (laughs) I always wanted to try to do better in the black area than most Republicans do. There was this one church that was very good to me over the years—a large black Baptist church on the South Side. The minister is a good friend of mine, so I go in there the last weekend, and we have all the TV cameras, of course, follow us around. I'm down there in front, and he's talking about me; he's talking about what a great governor I've been, and I'll be president someday, and then he says, "And the other thing is, his opponent—she is so ugly." (DePue laughs) I'm thinking, oh, no. Now I'm going to have to denounce or repudiate what he said. I'm sitting there thinking—and the cameras are up there, unfortunately. Because people were already getting on about Netsch. Well, what's it matter how she looks? I mean, that has nothing to do with being governor, (laughs) but unfortunately for a woman, it's a different standard they hold them to. I just think, oh, no, I can't believe he said that. Because this was going to be kind of a fun weekend. You're going to win; everybody knows it. Oh, I don't want to have to deal with that. Fortunately the press never asked me about that. They didn't play it; they didn't do anything with it. But oh, it was... So you're always worrying about those kinds of things at the end of a campaign like that.

But the campaign, it seemed to me, was probably over in the summer. It was just the wrong year for Netsch to run. I think of all the candidates, she's probably as smart and as qualified as anybody I've ever run against. You never want to lose, but if you're going to lose, if you had to lose, probably just as soon to her. If you wanted somebody to take the job instead of you, she'd have probably been very good at it. She'd have had a hard time dealing, I think even more so than I did, with some of the party folks in her own party. But she is very bright. She's very sincere. But I don't think anybody was going to beat me that year. I think our numbers were good, and I think we had enough intelligence in how to run a campaign; I just don't think they were going to beat us.

I think she had real trouble. She could win the primary, but winning the primary doesn't guarantee you're going to win a general election, and raise the money, and be taken seriously. And I think in some ways it might be tougher in the Democrat Party for a woman than it is in the Republican Party. Especially in Illinois, there's old-line ethnic Democrats that [think] it's kind of a man's thing, and I don't know if they're ready for a woman. I think historically, years ago, Illinois had more women legislators in the state, and they were Republicans. With cumulative voting, a lot of women came out of the suburbs long before Democratic women did.

DePue: We're seeing that at the national level right now with Republican female candidates who are doing very well.

Edgar: Yes. So I think a lot of that comes out of the suburbs, where women maybe have an opportunity. I like to think, gee, I won that big margin because I was such a good governor. It was a Republican year nationally, but I think we had done a good job in the four years. Now, other Republican governors around the country did well that year, so it was a good Republican year. Also, at the state level, we had demonstrated during those years that we could deal with problems, where at the federal level, things were at a gridlock. It wasn't till '96, when Clinton got ready to run for reelection, that he worked out deals with the Republicans and they did welfare reform and a lot of things like that. But in '94, everything was just at a gridlock, and I think the contrast at the state level, where things were getting done—you were dealing with the budget crisis and Medicare problems and things like that—enabled governors, and even some Democratic governors. Now, [Mario] Cuomo got beat by [George] Pataki that year. Ann Richards got beat by George W. Bush. But Ben Nelson, the governor of Nebraska, who now is a U.S. senator, who had a tendency to vote with Republicans, got reelected by the largest margin of any of us in the nation, and he was a Democrat.

DePue: Did Tommy Thompson run that year?

Edgar: Yes, I think he ran that year; I think he ran the same time I did. But in Illinois, for the first time since I don't know when, we swept everything. We elected all the statewide offices, which we'd never done—we elected a Republican House as well as a Republican Senate.

DePue: So you had yourself, obviously, Kustra, George Ryan as secretary of state, Loleta Didrickson as comptroller, Judy Baar Topinka as treasurer.

Edgar: And Jim Ryan as attorney general.

DePue: And of course you hold the—

Edgar: We got the House and the Senate, yes. The other thing that was kind of fun about that night in a way—not real exciting, but fun—I think a minute after they closed the polls, they declared I was the winner. Four years before, we had to go to the next morning before they'd declare me the winner. So it took the suspense out that night, but you could enjoy the night a little more.

DePue: I want to go through the numbers, but before we do that, a little bit more on the campaign itself. You had two debates with Netsch, according to my records: October 19 in Chicago, League of Women Voters; October 21 in Champaign, at Illinois Associated Press Editors. Anything memorable about either of those debates?

Edgar: No. I was awake, at least, for (DePue laughs) the first one. It wasn't like the one in '90 when I slept through the first one. I don't remember anything memorable. The

first one was televised. The second was on radio; I don't think anybody televised it. I didn't feel the pressure on these that I did on the first ones in '90. I mean, you worried. You didn't want to screw up and blow a lead, but—

DePue: But by this time, I'm thinking that she's got to knock it out of the park to take any kind of an edge off of you.

Edgar: Yes, and especially the comments that came out of the last debate—I remember Bob Crawford from WBBM came down, and I think his lead was, "No knock-out punch for Netsch" or something like that—"No home runs." I thought they went fine, much better than that first debate in '90, and nothing that people remembered afterwards, which is all I wanted. (laughs)

DePue: I want to get your reaction to one more comment, a quote from Netsch, and this is from something she said on November 7, on the eve of the election. "We need a governor who understands that Chicago is part of the state of Illinois. Edgar doesn't understand the importance of Chicago. He hasn't done one thing that a governor should do for the city."

Edgar: She was trying to play on what Daley had [said], that I was anti-Chicago, which wasn't true. She should have walked down and seen the expansion of McCormick Place, which is probably the most important thing to the economic engine of Chicago, along with O'Hare Airport; it was the largest expansion of a public works project in the history of the Midwest, which had happened under my watch. I had a lot of labor union guys there saying I was going fine for Chicago. We'd put a lot of money into programs. It was late, desperate, and that had been a theme they tried to—whenever I'd tell them no, they said I was anti-Chicago. But you look at the election results. People didn't buy that. My numbers in Chicago were probably an all-time high for a Republican in that election.

DePue: Let's throw some numbers out there. I know as a political junkie, you pay attention to the numbers.

Edgar: Oh, I'll tell you one other thing, the last thing, the only thing that marred election night. About two weeks before the election, I was at the campaign headquarters in Springfield. I don't think I had been there before. It's where Andy [Foster] was, because I was out and about. So I went in there, and I was looking at poll numbers; I was looking at voters county by county, and I looked at Andy and said, "How are we doing in Gallatin?" He said, "I don't know. What do you mean?" I said, "I'm looking at this. We got a chance to carry every county in the state, which has not happened, I don't think, in a gubernatorial race, except I'm worried about Gallatin County." He said, "Well, why Gallatin?" I said, "Just that's a Democratic county." He said, "That's Mike McCormick's area. Let me get him on the phone." So he called McCormick; McCormick's someplace in downstate Illinois in a phone booth, talking. Andy said, "The governor wants to know about Gallatin County." McCormick said, "Gallatin County? I'm worried about..." Andy said, "The governor's worried about Gallatin." McCormick said, "Well, I think we'll be all

right in Gallatin. I don't know." And Andy said, "Should he come down there? He wants to know if he should make a trip or send Brenda in." "No, no, we'll be all right. We'll be all right." I said, "Are you guys sure? I'll send Brenda. It would probably do more good to send Brenda down there than me, but I just don't want to come up..." "No, no, no, we're..." I said, "All right."<sup>27</sup>

So election night, about eleven o'clock I get a call, kind of smug. He said, "I want you to know you carried Gallatin County by three votes." I said, "Good, then I should carry every county in the state." About an hour later they called back and said, "We made a mistake; you lost it by three votes." (DePue laughs) I said, "Okay. Just remember who told you two weeks ago." That was the only county I didn't carry. So from then on, I'd be introduced to speak out of state and other places—"He carried every county in the state except one." Everybody said, "It's Cook County." I blew them away in Cook County. (laughs) It was Gallatin County. The night of the election, I'm looking at the results, and I'm carrying every county but Gallatin County. We had been trying to find for years—the feds said we had to have a dump site for nuclear waste. (DePue laughs) We'd looked at some counties, some areas, and of course a lot of people didn't want it, and there were a lot of geological questions about putting it where there could be an earthquake or something like that.

DePue: Next to the Ohio River.

Edgar: I said, "I think we have found the perfect county for the nuclear waste site: Gallatin County." Well, they heard about that in Gallatin County, and about a month later I get word back. They said if there's any jobs, they'll take it. (laughter) I also checked with the engineers, "Is there any way you can change the course of the Ohio River and put Gallatin over in Kentucky?" But that was the only thing that marred election night, because in the history books, they always show gubernatorial races black and white, which county carried, and I wanted an all-black county showing I had carried every county. I didn't get that. It had never happened in a gubernatorial race that I could find, that anybody had ever carried all the counties. I missed it by three votes. We can go to numbers now, but that was the thing that marred election night a little bit.

DePue: What time did you get to bed that night?

Edgar: I stayed up till we found out—Topinka was the last one. She had the closest race, and I went over her place about 12:30 or one o'clock. I don't think I got up early the next morning. I don't think I cared about (laughs) doing anything too early.

DePue: Now for the numbers here: you won the state, obviously, 63.87 percent versus Netsch's 34.43 percent. So that's right at that 26 percent margin. I mean, this is a huge victory.

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<sup>27</sup> Mike McCormick, interview by Mark DePue, July 22, 2010, 24-30.

Edgar: It was the largest plurality in the history of anybody running for reelection as governor in the state of Illinois.

DePue: You mentioned Cook County—by far the largest county in the state. Carried it 52 percent versus Netsch's 46.7 percent. Sixty-five thousand more Republican votes in the Cook County area.

Edgar: You mean, I got.

DePue: That you got.

Edgar: Those weren't necessarily Republican votes, but I got the votes, yes. We got a lot of Democrats, because Cook County by that time had definitely gone big-time Democratic.

DePue: Now, for some of the other typical Republican strongholds, DuPage County tops the list in that respect—78.5 percent of the votes that were cast in DuPage County went to—

Edgar: Seventy-eight?

DePue: Seventy-eight point five.

Edgar: That's (laughs) really good. I didn't realize it was that high in DuPage, I guess.

DePue: I don't have some of the other percentages here. I've got the tallies. I'll let you take a look at that.

Edgar: We used to always figure you needed to win DuPage by about 65 percent to be able to win state, because you knew you're getting killed in Chicago, so you needed to build up. So that was good. Of course, you did percent on some of them. That's a better percent than I probably ever got in my home county of Coles. Of course, the thing was, they knew me there, (DePue laughs) which you're always worried... They weren't taken in by anything.

Looking at the Democrat counties, though, that was the other thing. Alexander County—that's Cairo, Illinois. We carried that by a thousand votes. Percentage-wise, it had to be phenomenal, because I got twenty-three hundred and Netsch got thirteen hundred. So that was one of the counties McCormick was worried about that I knew I was going to carry, because I ran into the county chairman, who was an African American, Democratic county chairman, and he was out trying to get votes for me because we'd put the supermax [prison] down there. So we were getting things like that. Let's see, St. Clair and Madison, those are the two big Democratic counties downstate that it's hard to... Yes, I beat her... I probably got 65 percent of the vote in St. Clair County. Madison was where those black ministers were. Yes, Madison, I beat her probably by the same thing—probably got 65 percent of the vote in Madison County. So it was a good election. One of the reasons I got out. (laughter) I just figured I'd better get out while I'm ahead.

DePue: How are you going to match that the third time around?

Edgar: That's right. No, you weren't going to match that the third time. As I said, it just was not the year for Netsch to run: it was a good national year; I think our record, what we had done, had worked well, and just everything kind of came together.

DePue: We talked about this a little bit last time, when you were talking about dealing with the legislature, but now you've got Lee Daniels as Speaker of the House and Pate Philip as the Senate president. What's your thought—

Edgar: Oh, we don't have time to go into that. (DePue laughs) I had mixed feelings going in. If I'd known then what I know today, I'd have been even more worried. I think that a one-party state doesn't work as well. You have a tendency for your extremes in the two parties—whatever party's in control—to demand more and be more of a problem. So one of the advantages when you have a split government is you know you got to compromise them. From a chief executive's point of view, since you're governor for the entire state, in some ways, that makes it easier because you've got to... But when you just have one party, there's that tendency—you don't have to worry about those other people; they don't matter. Well, they do matter. I mean, that's part of the state. And particularly Chicago, there would be things that would come up.

But I have to say, that night I took it as most people gave me credit for getting the House to go Republican. It hadn't been able to go, and I spent a lot of time. I remember going in a couple districts, and Rick Pearson from the *Tribune* said, "Eh, this guy's toast." I said, "No, he's not. I'm going to go in there." He said, "That doesn't matter; you won't have that..." And election night, he called me up and said, "You were right; I was wrong." I said, "Just give me credit for it." A lot of those guys never thought that I had that ability politically. They didn't question so much my governing, but the political skills. I think after that, they gave me a little more credit there, too, because they thought two or three of these House guys were dead as a doornail. Especially in the suburbs, where you can have an impact by how the top of the ticket does more than in other parts of the state, it had an impact. But there were some guys downstate, and I went in and we beat incumbent Democrats with them. So it was very satisfying, from that point of view.

But I think more importantly, it was probably the first time in my life—I was reading through some of the things I said in my first session or second session—that I felt very comfortable that I'm the governor. People know I'm the governor and think I'm a pretty good governor; I should feel pretty confident that I know what I'm doing, and I don't have to be as worried or insecure. Pate used to say I was insecure. Maybe I was. But after that, it was just kind of like, all right. People have said I know this job; I know how to do this job. The second term, I think we did a lot of important things. It wasn't as stressful at all because of being reelected by that margin and feeling comfortable that you know what you're doing and people think you know what you're doing. Even if the press still didn't give you credit for that, the public gave you credit for that.

So that was probably the thing that I look back to. That was a very satisfying thing. I read something or heard something the other day, that people can die in peace if they feel like they've done a good job in life. I think that margin of victory, the way the second term turned out, and the name—again, we kept those approval ratings—kind of [made me realize] I can walk away from this. I never thought I would, but I could, because I've done a good job, or at least the voters, who in the end are the final say, think you did a good job.

Now, I don't want to get too carried away with this, because Clinton was in trouble nationally, Netsch wasn't the best candidate to run against me that year. I had a lot of things going on that I didn't control, but still, that victory margin gave me a lot more confidence and comfort that last four years and probably continues to give me comfort and confidence. I always said if you're going to do well in one, you'd rather do well in the reelection than the first one, because the reelection's based on you. The first one has to do more with the other guy or the last guy, to some extent, but that reelection is pretty much on you. I think that's true of most gubernatorial elections when you have an incumbent governor. It usually rises or falls on what they think about that governor. I think this election we're faced with in Illinois this year—I've told Bill Brady, "I don't want to take anything away from you, but in the end, it's about Quinn; you win or lose, that has a lot to do with how people think about Quinn." But if you're the governor and you're the incumbent running, then it's about you, so I think maybe you can take more satisfaction out of those election results than any other election. I took a lot of satisfaction. I felt pretty good. I just wished I'd have carried Gallatin County.

DePue: (laughs) How much of your success in that year had to do with what was going on in the national trends? This is the year of the Contract with America—

Edgar: But I don't think that Contract for America—I think that's overblown. I think the problem was Clinton was in the doghouse; Clinton was in trouble. People were mad at Clinton. They'd blown that medical plan. So people talk about that Contract for America; that's not why they got a Republican House. They got a Republican House because Clinton had a bad two years. I think that's what it was about.<sup>28</sup> Now, as I said earlier, there's no doubt the national trend helped, but Illinois is still a Democratic state. The fact we carried that much is a lot more than the national trend, but it did help. Back on my take of the national election—Gingrich could have had that contract two years before, and it wouldn't have done diddly, and two years later it wouldn't have done diddly. Politics is pretty simple, and the tide was against the Democrats that year, there's no doubt about it. But that is a normal year: the first election of a president in office, usually their party doesn't do as well. That year, they did disastrously in some ways, but I—(cell phone rings) just a second.

(pause in recording)

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<sup>28</sup> For a somewhat different reading of Gingrich's role in the 1994 election, see Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, April 28, 2009, 53-61.

DePue: I'll pick it up unless you wanted to complete a thought here.

Edgar: No.

DePue: We're back from a very quick break. Let me ask you this as a closing question. What was your feeling about the future of the Illinois Republican Party, especially in terms of the bench for four years down the road, and governor, and the rest of the constitutional slate?

Edgar: We developed a bench in 1994. Unfortunately, none of them ever got elected governor or U.S. senator. They tried.

DePue: Well, George Ryan.

Edgar: Yes, but he was already there; he was already a statewide official before that election, the others were all new. There's no doubt it helped, but unfortunately, because of the George Ryan problem, I think it cost both Jim Ryan and Judy Baar Topinka. I don't think there's any doubt in my mind Jim Ryan would have been elected governor if he'd have run after me; he'd have won by a much bigger margin than George Ryan. Now, if he'd have run against Rod Blagojevich and that election had been after me, Jim Ryan would have won by 10 percent. I mean, there's no doubt in my mind that George Ryan cost Jim Ryan, and it probably cost Judy Baar Topinka the election. So it's hard to say, but I think it does help you to have bench people in statewide office to run statewide for a bigger office. Unfortunately for us, it never translated into as much as I think it could have. Loleta didn't get out of the primary; Kustra didn't get out of the primary, which is unfortunate. I think both of them would have won the general. There's no doubt Loleta would have won the general election against Carol Moseley Braun. I think Kustra might have even beat Durbin that year. I really think Durbin has never been that big a vote-getter in Illinois. He's never run against anybody really tough, and that would have been a tough race.

Saying all that, we don't have a bench streak right now, but I think in this election coming up, Republicans could very well win three statewide offices. I think they got a good chance of governor; I explained before, it has more to do with the problem on the incumbent governor, which I always think is the main issue. I think Judy Baar Topinka, while she's not an incumbent, is the closest thing to an incumbent you've got down the ticket. Nobody has ever run for comptroller with the name recognition that Judy Baar Topinka has. So I think the Republicans this election have a chance. Now, this is their chance. If they don't pick up some statewide offices this time, I think it'll get more difficult down the road. But whoever gets to be governor these four years, it's going to be a tough four years. So even if we don't get the governorship and we don't get these offices, maybe four years from now, it might be the same opportunity; it might be possible in four years. But I've always thought this election was the year for the Republicans to make some gains. If my candidate had won the primary for governor, I think we might have had a better shot, but I think Brady still has a real good chance of winning the

governorship. I think Topinka has a very good chance—in fact, I'd bet money on her winning comptroller. Maybe Rutherford, from Pontiac, might even have a shot at treasurer.

DePue: Well, I've been looking forward to this discussion for a long time.

Edgar: Oh, are you done yet? You got any more discussion?

DePue: No, I was just going to ask you if you wanted to make any closing comments about the '94 campaign.

Edgar: I've always said if you want to look at a real study in Illinois politics, it's the '90 election; if you want to look at one where I had fun, that was the '94, it turned out. (laughs) I always viewed '94 as a referendum on my governorship. I looked at the public opinion polls. Those numbers didn't change a whole lot after we got done four years later. If I'd have run that election, I think I would have won. I wouldn't have won by that margin, but I think I would have won, probably pretty handily. But '94 is a year I always look back on fondly, maybe because I lost that first race [in 1974]. For years, I had dreams I lost my reelection for governor. I'd wake up at night and say wait a minute, you didn't lose that; you won that by a record margin. (laughter) I think you always worry about losing, and because I lost the first one, I always think, gee, I went out a loser. I didn't go out a loser, I went out a winner, which is very important, at least for me, and I think for most politicians.

The reason '94 was especially good for me or I always look back on it fondly, is because I thought the public gave me approval on what I'd done the first four years. That's very important in politics, in a democracy, I think, for public officials to feel like they've received the ultimate approval, and that's from the voters. It's nice to get the editorials, it's nice to have nice things written about you; it's not nice to have bad editorials, bad things written about you. But in the end, when the voters say, "We're voting for you," that, I think, is the most important gratification or most important ratification of what you've done that you can get.

Ninety-four, though, you also think about it—going through that open-heart surgery, and you came out of that in good shape, your son gets married, and I think we found out in the end of August that we were going to be grandparents the next year, so that was exciting. I mean, '94 was a very good year. If we'd have just carried Gallatin County, it would have been perfect.

DePue: (laughs) Well, it's rare that everything in your life turns out perfectly, so—

Edgar: That's true, that's true.

DePue: —you got pretty darn close: three votes away from perfection.

Edgar: That's right, that's right.

DePue: Thank you very much, Governor.

(end of interview 17)

## Interview with Jim Edgar

# ISG-A-L-2009-019.18

Interview # 18: August 30, 2010

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Monday, August 30, 2010. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today I'm in Gov. Jim Edgar's office. Good morning, Governor.

Edgar: Good morning.

DePue: Believe it or not, this is the beginning of our eighteenth session.

Edgar: (laughs) But it's been a while.

DePue: It has been a little while. You've been traveling quite a bit. I know you spent a considerable amount of time out in Colorado and seeing the grandkids and the kids. So we're back at it again. We last got you elected for the second time, so today we get to begin with your second inauguration. Anything in particular that you remember about that one?

Edgar: I was much more relaxed. First, I kind of knew what I was getting sworn into for the second time. Also, we had won by a huge margin, so it gave you a sense that you were in control. I had a Republican legislature, which I thought might be good. It could be bad, but it was far different than 1991, when I was sworn in and we had barely won, the state we knew had real financial problems, and I had a somewhat hostile Democratic legislature. So I was in much better spirits, I think, when I went over to do the second inauguration. The one thing I remember, I held up the wrong hand. (DePue laughs) I've always wondered if that meant I really wasn't [sworn in], because I held up my left hand instead of my right hand. We'd got confused. I was talking to somebody, and the guy said, "Well, do this." He had it turned around.

DePue: Did they get you straightened out?

Edgar: No, no. If you look at the pictures, I've got the wrong hand up, (laughter) so I don't know, maybe that term doesn't count. The thing I enjoyed the most about the second inauguration was when Lou Rawls, the singer, came down and sang a special song to Brenda, "Wind Beneath My Wings."<sup>29</sup> I enjoyed it, because it surprised Brenda, and here's a big-time entertainer. He did that free. He was from Chicago, and he came down and sang that to her. That's my favorite part of that inauguration, watching her expression as Lou Rawls sang this song to her. But again, we were already established. For the most part, everybody was in place, though I did make some changes. As I said, the inauguration, I enjoyed more: I wasn't uptight, worrying about what am I going to do the next day, how am I going to cut the budget, who am I going to put in these places, how am I going to deal with the legislature, and all that. Felt much better.

DePue: The Edgar administration was never known for putting on lavish parties. How was the inaugural ball?

Edgar: I think the ball was fine. We went to bed early—I mean, I didn't stay up very late. (DePue laughs) I went over and did the dance, and we talked to some people, then took off.

DePue: This time Brenda didn't go around the mansion turning off the lights? (laughs)

Edgar: No. So the inauguration was fine. We didn't stay up any later. We'd had the family in again, to come and have dinner with us at the mansion before the inauguration, and it was different. Mom wasn't there—she'd passed away—so it was a little less dramatic to me without her being there. But I think everybody had a good time at the inauguration.

Again, there wasn't the pressure of having to take quick and decisive action the next day, as we had to in '91 when the state was hemorrhaging. The state was beginning to get back on sound footing financially, and we had a little flexibility; we had some time. The big difference was we now had a Republican legislature versus having a Democratic legislature or even the split legislature I'd had during the second two years of my governorship.

DePue: Did you assume that you were going to have that in the long term?

Edgar: We knew we had it for two years, and who knows? But two years is a long time. We had had meetings with the Republican leaders in the legislature, and there were a lot of groups, business groups in particular, that were hopeful we would act quickly on things like workers' comp, unemployment insurance, tort reform, and repeal the Scaffolding Act, which kind of duplicates workers' comp. I think we were the only state in the union that had both. So there was a lot of hope, I think, on the part of people who were Republicans; they thought, now the Republicans are in control and we can get things done.

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<sup>29</sup> For photos of Rawls and Brenda Edgar at the event, see "Republican Redux," *Illinois Issues* (February 1995), <http://www.lib.niu.edu/1995/ii029506.html>.

We had had several meetings with the Republican leadership in that legislature, meaning Pate Philip and Lee Daniels and their staff, to kind of come up with an agenda we could agree on and move quickly. Particularly the legislators wanted to move quickly to show what it meant to have a Republican legislature, Republican governor. It was kind of our Hundred Days, like FDR's.<sup>30</sup> Actually we moved a lot of things in that first hundred days. We reached agreement on workers' comp, and tort reform, and things that we—internally, within the Republicans—could agree on. I also wanted to do higher education reform. I said, "That's my pet thing." I couldn't get it done with the Democrats. We also couldn't get tort reform. A lot of these things we had tried. They had tried even before I was governor, and I had tried. So we figured this was the best time to do it. We also knew you wanted to move quickly, because that sets an image that people remember. To this day, we talk about Roosevelt's first hundred days, and the fact that a lot of things didn't happen **after** that, people forget. So how you start out's important, and I could appreciate what the Republican legislators—particularly Lee Daniels, because this was the first time he'd had control, and he wanted to show that that made a difference.

DePue: Who was doing the heavy lifting on all of this new legislation? Was it the legislature? Was it coming from your office as well?

Edgar: A combination. A lot of the stuff came from business groups, to be very truthful. Again, it wasn't new legislation; it was stuff we had tried before, and we couldn't get the Democrats to approve it. We had our staff sit down and agree. Every so often we'd have to bring them back to reality; sometimes they'd get a little carried away on these things. But I would say 95 percent of it was probably written in previous pieces of legislation. So it wasn't that difficult to reach consensus between the legislature and the governor's office on what we were going to do.

DePue: I'm assuming most of these, though, were pretty divided in terms of the different parties?

Edgar: Oh, yes. We didn't think we'd probably get a Democratic vote, and I don't think we probably did. If we did, I don't remember it. The other thing that was different—I think I did invite the Democrats down one time. I don't know if they came or we got anything done. But for the most part, for the next two years, just the two Republican leaders and I met, because the Democrats really didn't feel like they had a whole lot of say, and Republicans wanted to do things, and you had complete control. So I think we had a few ceremonial gatherings, but it wasn't like it had been the previous four years, where you'd have all four leaders down many, many times and long hours.

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<sup>30</sup> Name given to the first three months of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's first term as president, during which the 73rd Congress rapidly passed most of the major pieces of his New Deal program. The term is often used in popular media to evaluate the progress of new executive administrations. Mark Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, September 9, 2009, 43-44. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

DePue: Down to your office?

Edgar: Yes. I saw Madigan a couple of times, but he kind of withdrew in some ways because he was in the minority. He just sat back and... He wasn't an obstructionist to me. He didn't support many of our things, but I wouldn't say he was an obstructionist, just he wasn't as engaged, it didn't seem like. I think his theory was, I'm not in control, so I'm just going to sit back and let them do it, and we'll pick and choose where we want to be involved.

DePue: It sounds like he was able to hold onto some party discipline, otherwise you might be picking off some of the southern Illinois Democrats, who tend to be more conservative.

Edgar: Yes, but they also are very tied with the labor unions, and most of this stuff, the labor unions were opposed to. We might have picked up a few, it just was not—in that first hundred days, we pretty well shot through this legislation. The thing I probably spent more time myself on was the higher education. Now the tort reform, the Democratic Supreme Court threw it out a few months later, after we passed it and made it law—something that they continue to do up to today, it seems like. They passed the medical malpractice a few years ago, and they [the Court] threw it out.

For the Republicans in the legislature it was pretty heady because they had been trying to pass some of these things back during Thompson's years, and they couldn't get them passed, and this is the first time the Republicans had control of both the House, the Senate, and the governor's office in a long, long time.

DePue: Can you be a little bit more explicit, then, and we'll just go right down the list here, in terms of what the legislation fundamentally changed on workers' comp?

Edgar: No, go look it up. (laughs) I can't remember the specifics, and I never claimed to be a great expert in that stuff. Like in tort reform, it put caps on awards and things like that. The Structural Work Act basically—you got hit with workers' comp and you got also hit with structural... But as I said, it was—

DePue: You called it the Scaffolding Act.

Edgar: Scaffolding Act, yes. It was basically something passed before we had workers' comp, but when they passed workers' comp, they kept it, so businesspeople were hit with both. So that was repealed, and that just kind of brought us up to date with other states.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The Structural Work Act (SWA) was an Illinois law dating from 1907 that provided protection for workers who suffered workplace injuries. Despite passage of the Workers' Compensation Acts in 1913, the legislature did not repeal the SWA, and a 1952 court decision allowed injured employees to file lawsuits against third parties under the SWA. Thus, injured workers could collect workman's compensation under their employer's coverage and still sue every other party connected with the project on which the accident occurred. The two systems of coverage resulted in higher insurance and legal costs compared to neighboring states. The issue is

DePue: How about the higher education issue?

Edgar: Okay, now that, I can talk a little more. I had tried higher education reform previously, during the first term as governor. We wanted to do away with what I call the middle governing boards. In Illinois we had the Board of Higher Education, which I was a big supporter of, and then you had all the university campuses. But between those campuses and the Board of Higher Education, you had these other governing boards. The U of I had their own governing board, which was elected by the voters at that time. Then Southern had its own board, but all the others were together. There were two boards, the Board of Regents and the Board of Governors. Illinois State, Northern, and Sangamon State were under the Board of Regents. The Board of Governors had Eastern, Western, Chicago State, Northeastern, and Governor's State.

Now, if you know anything about the universities, there's absolutely no correlation between Sangamon State, which is about three thousand students, and Illinois State and Northern, which are over twenty thousand with graduate programs. Under the Board of Governors, you had two downstate universities, basically old-time teachers' colleges that became universities, then you had the Chicago universities. There really was not a whole lot of correlation between them. The Board of Governors spent most of the time kind of worrying about the Chicago schools, especially Chicago State, because it was always a basket case.

DePue: But not the Circle Campus?<sup>32</sup>

Edgar: Circle was under the U of I, so that was part of the U of I. Then SIU at Carbondale and Edwardsville, and the medical school when they got it at Springfield. So that was a very inefficient way to govern. Coming out of Eastern, I knew a little bit about the problem because the Board of Governors was always telling Eastern what to do; it took a lot of the time of the administrators to go to the Board of Governors, and they also had to go to the Board of Higher Education. So I had tried as a state legislator to realign the boards, to kind of put all the downstate schools together as they originally had been, and maybe the Chicago schools together, but that didn't go anywhere. I'd left the legislature right after we proposed that.

So I wanted to do away with those middle governing boards, the Board of Governors, the Board of Regents. Also, we thought the U of I Board of Trustees should be appointed by the governor, like the other boards. Each university would have their own board. So U of I would have the same board they had, they'd just be appointed instead of elected, and the other universities—Eastern, Western, Illinois State, Northern—would have their own board; they wouldn't be with other schools

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still contested, with labor advocates and legal interests supporting reinstatement of the measure. Alliance to Help Employment and Development, "Facts About the Structural Work Act" (2008), <http://www.buildingillinois.com/pdf/SWAFAQ2008-04.pdf>. For the SWA in the context of Edgar's economic agenda, see Gene Reineke, interview by Mark DePue, April 16, 2010, 29-30.

<sup>32</sup> The Circle Campus of the University of Illinois at Chicago, which was designed by Walter Netsch, husband of Edgar's 1994 gubernatorial rival, Dawn Clark Netsch.

under another board. My feeling was that would prove to be more efficient. The administrators from these schools wouldn't have to spend all their time running to these board meetings like they were, because the board would be right there. Board of Higher Education would stay, still be very powerful. So that was kind of what I wanted to do.

There has always been kind of a move in Springfield—they wanted Sangamon State to be part of the U of I. U of I didn't necessarily want Sangamon State. I remember Ikenberry wasn't real excited about taking Sangamon State.<sup>33</sup>

DePue: At that time, Sangamon State was an anomaly; they really didn't have the first two years of an academic program. It was focused on junior, senior, and the graduate level.

Edgar: Yes. But the people in Springfield, many of them U of I graduates, (DePue laughs) wanted to see them affiliated with U of I. Then there had always been talk about a law school in Springfield. That didn't happen; we kind of gave up on that years before. And Southern had the medical school, so U of I kind of—

DePue: In Springfield.

Edgar: In Springfield. So to have a presence in Springfield, that got put on. That was not my ideal, originally. It came really from the powers to be in Springfield, including the publisher of the *Journal-Register*, the Springfield paper. I just went blank on his name.

DePue: We can get that in there later.

Edgar: I think he was the big pusher, and there was a group of other people. Doc Davidson, who was a state senator from Springfield, was big for that.<sup>34</sup> This was kind of a big thing for the Springfield community, so we incorporated that into the—because we really weren't sure. I mean, Sangamon State was so small, it probably needed to be someplace.

So that was the proposal. The Democrats had never been excited about it before for a variety of reasons, probably the main being that I had proposed it. The unions were not excited because under the Board of Governors, they had got collective bargaining approved by a majority vote of all the faculty. When it occurred at both Eastern and Western, they actually had voted against it, but the other schools under the Board of Governors in the Chicago area had voted enough for it to offset the fact that Eastern and Western voted against. So under the Board of Governors, the ruling was, all the system has to be unionized. The same thing

<sup>33</sup> Stanley Ikenberry was president of the University of Illinois.

<sup>34</sup> John P. Clarke published the *State Journal-Register* until his retirement in 1996. John "Doc" Davidson (b. August 31, 1924; R-Springfield) served in the Illinois Senate from 1973 to 1993, when he was succeeded by Karen Hasara (R-Springfield). John A. Davidson, interview by William Ortman, April 24, 1989, transcript, Illinois Legislative Research Unit's General Assembly Oral History Program, Norris L. Brookens Library, University of Illinois Springfield, Springfield, IL, <http://www.uis.edu/archives/memoirs/DAVIDSON.pdf>.

was true for Illinois State, Northern, and Sangamon State. They were unionized, but the U of I was not. Part of the controversy was moving Sangamon State from the Board of Regents, where they were unionized, to the U of I, where there was no union; this caused the unions to be very upset that they were going to lose the union at Sangamon State. They came to me, and I said, “Look, I remember when you guys made the call; you wanted however the system votes. Now, if Sangamon State goes to U of I, have an election and see what the majority says.” Well, they knew they weren’t going to get it. I said, “If it was good enough before, we’re just keeping the same system. You guys are just going to have live with it. You know, Eastern, Western didn’t want to be unionized, but they were.” So they did not like that.

They knew the Democrats couldn’t stop it, so they went to George Ryan, who was the secretary of state, who had absolutely nothing to do with this. But George loved to meddle. They went to him and talked him into seeing if he could talk to Lee Daniels about getting this changed. I had designated Bob Kustra to be my point guy because he had a higher education background, everything, to work on this. One day I got a call from Bob Kustra, “I’ve got Lee Daniels over here, and they want to amend the bill.” And I said, “What do you mean, they want to amend the bill? That’s my bill. I’m doing all these other things they want to do. They don’t mess around with my bill.” (DePue laughs) Daniels got on the phone and said, “Well, George Ryan was over, and the unions...” I said, “First of all, George Ryan has nothing to do with this, and he shouldn’t meddle in it, and that upsets me. Secondly, when did you start becoming a champion for the unions? I mean, you’ve been fighting the unions more than I have.” “Well, I want to make...” I said, “I don’t care about it. This is not George’s bill. This is not under the secretary of state. This is **my** bill, and if you guys mess around with this bill, everything else is off. I’ll hold up... All these things you want to rush through the legislature—everything’s fine, but I want this. This is what I’ve been trying to get for three years now. I want this, and if you mess it up, the deal’s off. We’re not going to have workers’ comp, tort reform, or anything.” I was bluffing, but, (makes grumbling sound) “Okay.”

I told Kustra, “Bob, don’t pay any attention to those guys. They got to pass this the way it is. This is a bunch of malarkey, and George Ryan is just meddling as he always does.” He’d done that earlier in the first term on riverboat gambling too. People would come to George, and George just wanted to always make people happy, (DePue laughs) and he loved to get involved in deals. He never knew what the deals were, but he always liked to be involved with them, and he got involved in this. So that’s the last ... They said that Daniels backed off. He understood that I was very excited and upset, and he wasn’t going to... Not necessarily that they agreed with me or liked me, but (laughs) I was the governor; they had to have me there.

So that bill passed, along with all these other things we did that first hundred days. That was a very significant change, because first of all, I think if you talk to presidents at the universities, particularly those who overlap with the old system and the new system, they said it was night and day. I think Sangamon State got

a lot more prestige being part of the U of I, because you could pay, I think, fifty dollars and get your diploma changed and say it's University of Illinois. And thousands got their diplomas changed (DePue laughs) to say they'd graduated from the U of I.<sup>35</sup>

Probably the most controversial change long-term was the appointed U of I board of trustees. It didn't become controversial until Ryan made his appointments, and those people were not necessarily what I had in mind, and then Blagojevich continued that type—

DePue: Another source of political patronage, if you will.

Edgar: Yes, yes. So that became somewhat controversial, but at the time, when we did it, my biggest ally on having an appointed U of I board of trustees was University of Illinois, because the system of election had really deteriorated. It used to be that both parties would ask the University of Illinois alum association, "Do you have recommendations?" They'd recommend Republicans to the Republicans and they'd recommend Democrats to the Democrats, and both parties usually would take those recommendations. They maybe gave them ten and they'd pick four out of that, or whatever the number was you were going to have on the ballot, but—

DePue: This was a statewide ballot, then?

Edgar: Yes, they were elected statewide. It was one of the few states left that elected a board of trustees.

DePue: One of those elections that's even more obscure than voting for the justices.

Edgar: Yes. This was so obscure, the only thing good about this was political scientists used how the U of I trustees vote went to get the base Republican or base Democratic vote, because that's the only reason people voted for these people. If they were Republican, they voted for the Republican; if they were Democrat... So that's how you could always determine. If it was a Republican year, the Republicans would sweep the U of I trustees. If it was a Democratic year, the Democrats would sweep the U of I. It wasn't like anybody had a clue who those people were. Now, these people thought people knew them, but they didn't. (DePue laughs)

But the Democrats had started slating people for the Board of Trustees that they didn't slate statewide, people who had ambitions and used this as kind of a stepping-stone; they thought this would be a stepping-stone. So then they got on the U of I trustees, and they were all out there trying to make a name for themselves and do their own... For the U of I administration, it got to be a real pain. Some of them were rather strange people, and difficult to deal with. Republicans, both when Thompson was governor and I was governor, stuck with the U of I board recommendations. A few times, I had to go to the state convention and just beat on

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<sup>35</sup> Sangamon State University became the University of Illinois Springfield in 1995.

that committee and make sure they didn't try to put some other people on. I mean, there were always people trying to get on who had an axe to grind about the U of I or something like that, and I was able to keep those people off. But even some of the people who had been put on originally came to be problems. I had to spend a lot of time mediating with the U of I Board of Trustees sometimes on various issues. And as I said, in most states, the trustees were appointed by the governor, and we appointed all the other boards except the U of I Board of Trustees. So to me, I thought it made a lot of sense that we ought to take it out of the political realm and let the governor name it.

Now, is there politics? Yes, there's going to be, but you're not dealing with a state convention and people trying to use it as a stepping stone to run for something else. I found people who I thought knew the university and could bring in expertise—maybe a business background or medical or whatever—that would be worthwhile. The U of I was at the point where they were especially tired of dealing with these Democrats who were really—some of them were good, and some of them were terrible. In fact, the good ones usually had trouble getting re-slotted. So they wanted to see a change. They didn't say it publicly, because publicly they'd be going against their bosses; the elected trustees didn't want to go to an appointed system, because who am I going to appoint? There was some controversy around that when we were passing it, but because the U of I was quietly for it and put that word out, we were able to get that. Probably more controversy because the unions were putting—and there were some Republicans they could almost get to—but they were able to hold the Republicans' line, and we passed that bill.

DePue: Did you get any Democratic support on that bill?

Edgar: I can't remember. We passed it. If we did, probably very little. We might have got some from some university areas where they were getting pressure, because all the universities wanted this. I mean, Eastern, Western—all of these places wanted it. They wanted their own board; they didn't want to be part of a board that spent all their time worrying about Chicago. Illinois State and Northern both wanted their own boards. They thought they were big enough.

DePue: I'm wondering about Chicago State, since that was a more recent creation, and it was very much something that Emil Jones would have been interested in.

Edgar: I'm trying to remember back. I do think there was some worry on the part of the Chicago legislators, and Emil Jones probably in particular; that they didn't like the idea because they thought then they would have to fend for themselves, as opposed to when they're part of the Board of Governors and have downstaters who are going to help because their universities are down there. That was maybe one of the arguments given by some of the Chicago Democrats to oppose it, as well as the labor union guys putting pressure on.

DePue: We're into the area of education, and that's very much—

Edgar: Do you want me to go ahead with that and just follow up what we did on appointments? Because one of the things that was important on that, since we're on this subject, was, all right, now I have all these new boards to name. We didn't have any of these boards [filled]. We're probably talking a hundred people I had to appoint.

DePue: And these are paid positions?

Edgar: No. You get expenses. But to me, as I look back, of all the appointments, I had the best appointments. If I was a person wanting to contribute and be in kind of a neat appointment, it would be on the board of trustees of a state university. Because really, to some extent, you run the place. Hopefully you set the parameters; you let the president run the place. You set the parameters, but you're involved in something that's very meaningful. You hopefully have a decent football team once in a while. (DePue laughs) So that's fun, and you got things you can do on campus. I always thought of all the appointments I had, those might be the best appointments for a person to contribute, feel like they're doing some good, and enjoy. But I also knew these first appointments were very important; I spent hours and hours on these appointments. I had Tom Livingston, who was my higher education person. His priority, once we passed this bill, was to start working on who we were going to name to these boards. I did talk to all the universities, get their input, but I wasn't going to necessarily do just who they wanted.

Also, I thought, okay, I'm going to look at these universities and look at their student enrollment and try to do a reflection of their student enrollment. Like Eastern, a certain percent of their students are from the suburbs, so I wanted to make sure I had some suburban representation. The majority are probably downstate, so majority would be downstate. I was probably going to put somebody from each one of the communities on there. This was kind of a change, but I was convinced finally that you had to have somebody locally, because they cared about that, but I didn't want a majority locally. I'd look at the racial makeup of the student body and try to reflect that in the trustees. But I spent a lot of time on that, and we named the boards all at once.

The one I got the most requests for, by far, was U of I. There are two things I got the most requests for as governor: to be director of agriculture and be on the U of I Board of Trustees. Everything else was minor compared to (laughs) the names and people that called me about those boards, the U of I Board of Trustees. Originally the law was written that I would appoint the whole board, so everybody that was on there, even though they had terms, it ended, and I would name a new board.

DePue: And these terms, would they end at the time your administration would end?

Edgar: They were going to be staggered. I think I was going to name a staggered board, but everybody would be new. I could name everybody new. So even though a person had had a six-year election and maybe had four years to go, they were going to be

off. That's the way the law was written. They took that to court, and the court then ruled—we hadn't named anybody yet, but we had gone through the process, so we thought we had the whole board.

DePue: Who's "they"?

Edgar: The trustees that were going to lose their spots. Because they weren't sure I'd—and I actually was going to reappoint some of the trustees, including the Democrats, because I had to have a balance. I knew them, because I had spent time with a lot of them; I'd gone to the ball games, the bowl games, and I would call them all the time because I'd try to get them to stop acting up, even the Democrats, on things. So I knew most of them and had an opinion of most of them. There were some very good Democrats, and there were some bad Republicans on there, and I was going to take them off, the bad Republicans. They all thought they were going to get renamed; they weren't. Some of the Democrats were going to get renamed, and they were probably surprised. Anyway, before I could ever make those appointments, they had gone to court, and the courts had ruled, "Well, you can name them, but you can't name them until their terms are up." So that meant I only had three to name instead of nine or whatever the total board was.<sup>36</sup>

DePue: I just find it ironic that they're going to court over a job that they're not receiving any pay for.

Edgar: Yes, but to the people on these boards, especially U of I, this is their life. Even when they just cleaned house a few months ago, some of these guys, it was really hard for them to resign because this is their life. This is all they care about. That board, I think I renamed two people, one a Democrat and one a Republican, and then I brought a new person on, an African American. I had also talked with the university. I didn't want to put somebody on who was going to be a bomb-thrower or a thorn to them, but at the same time, I reserved... I said, "I'll listen to your input, but I'll..." The African American I named was a person the alum association had recommended, and he was a very good guy—actually a Republican too.

The other boards, everybody was new. There were a few off the old Board of Governors, Board of Regents. I had my doctor in Charleston. I had put him on the Board of Governors, and he hated the Board of Governors because he was pro-Eastern, and they just used to fight all... So I named him to the Eastern board, and named a variety. I think I had an African American who had played football back in my days, who was a principal or superintendent of a school. So we had a good cross-section on all the boards. Northern—I think that group remained almost intact for probably six, seven years after I left office. I remember I had to call a guy, a very successful developer, real estate guy, in the Chicago area; he was a graduate of Northeastern [Illinois], and he'd been a teacher. I said, "I want to put you on the Northeastern board." "Well, I don't want to do that." I said, "Yes, you do. This is

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<sup>36</sup> Trustees' terms were staggered in groups of three, which meant that Edgar would be able to replace those whose terms expired in 1997, while George Ryan filled vacancies in 1999 and 2001. *Chicago Tribune*, March 22, 1996.

really good, and I need you there.” He’s still there. I think maybe he just retired. But he made a huge impact on that board.

And I remember bringing them all in. We had a seminar for all the new trustees, and I said, “Now, there’s just one thing I want to say to you. I don’t want you to fire any presidents for at least six months,” (laughter) because I knew what the Eastern guys wanted to do. Because the Eastern guy, my doctor, hated the current president of Eastern—just didn’t like him. They had a personality... And most people in Charleston didn’t like this guy. He was a bad pick. In fact, the head of the Board of Governors even admitted later that it was the biggest mistake he made. So I knew my doctor and some of the guys were going to want to fire him, and I just said, “You can’t fire anybody for at least six months. Let’s just see how everything works out. I want you to learn the lay of the land.” Six months, the guy resigned. (DePue laughs) For the most part, it worked very well. I think everybody who was involved in higher education, particularly at those universities, felt very good with the new arrangement.

The key to all this was the Board of Higher Education still had to be very powerful, because, let’s face it, the governing board from Eastern is going to go along with Eastern. They’re not going to tell Eastern administrators no a lot. But the Board of Higher Education, that’s their job. We didn’t need the Board of Governors to do it; that’s why you had the Board of Higher Education. So I maintained a very strong Board of Higher Education. I had Art Quern as chairman, who unfortunately was killed in a plane crash in ’97. Then I replaced him with Bob Kustra.<sup>37</sup> Bob wanted to do that for future [opportunities in] higher education, and it surprised a lot; it was kind of unorthodox, but I put him in as chairman. The Board of Higher Education at that point was very powerful in keeping higher education under control. Today, I don’t think it’s as powerful as it was then.

DePue: Did their power come from determining how the money would be sliced out?

Edgar: Budget was a big part of it. But the key to the Board of Higher Education is the governor and the legislature have got to listen to them. If they instead listen to the various universities and don’t pay that much attention to the Board of Higher Education, then the Board of Higher Education doesn’t have any power. The Board of Higher Education can only recommend to the legislature and the governor, but since Ogilvie’s time it had been kind of the philosophy that the governor will listen to the Board of Higher Education, and I particularly believed in that philosophy.

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<sup>37</sup> Arthur F. Quern was an important figure during Edgar’s career. Edgar formed a close working relationship with him in the Thompson administration, when the two worked as legislative liaison and chief of staff, respectively; Quern helped shape Edgar’s view of the chief of staff position. Later, Quern chaired the working group on Edgar’s 1990 transition team that discovered the true scale of the state’s budget deficit. Jim Edgar, June 10, 2009, 96-98; Jim Edgar, November 17, 2009, 17 and 22; Kirk Dillard, September 29, 2009, 43; Dillard, November 9, 2009, 13-14; Joan Walters, July 29, 2009, 13. All interviews by Mark DePue. Quern died October 30, 1996, when the corporate jet he was traveling on crashed while taking off from Palwaukee Municipal Airport. *New York Times*, November 1, 1996. On Kustra’s appointment, as well as his role in higher education reform, see Bob Kustra, interview by Mike Czaplicki, February 1, 2011.

While sometimes the Board of Higher Education and I would disagree, they knew my priorities. They knew that I wasn't going to let Eastern be abused, (DePue laughs) and they knew I liked community colleges.

They'd send a capital list—that was one of the big things. The Board of Higher Education would put together this capital list, and they had ranked priorities. This was to keep all the universities from doing end runs. They may give you a priority list of fifty, but you only had money to maybe do twenty of them. Well, they knew that, so often, they would take something for Eastern or one of the community colleges, and they'd stick it down to thirty to force me to reach down and take all thirty. They knew I wouldn't go down and just pick one out, but I'd have to figure out how to afford it. I called them in one day. I said, "Stop doing that. I know what you're doing." I think Eastern should have been number four or five on their list, and they had it down about number thirty, and I said, "Don't do that. I know what you guys are doing." They finally backed off.

I think the whole governing thing in higher education has been very successful—much better than the old system. I think anyone who was involved at those universities would say it's much better. I felt very good about the people we named. Again, this all works if you name good people. The problem that developed later on with U of I trustees, they didn't send the right message. These trustees though they were there to do political work, and that's not what they're for.

DePue: For those who might be listening twenty to forty years down the road, we probably should give you an opportunity to speak very briefly about the specifics of the problem they have.

Edgar: I got to name three. I had three more to name, and unfortunately the legislature refused to approve my recommendations the last month of my time in office, because Pate Philip had somebody he wanted on the board of trustees; he held those up. So when George Ryan came in, he had the three that I had had, and he named his good friend Jerry Shea, a former Democratic leader in the legislature, who was a wheeler-dealer. I think even he would admit he was a wheeler-dealer. He was a U of I graduate, and he eventually became chairman of the board and was very difficult for the administration to deal with. I think he felt that chairman of the board meant he ran the university. It was a lot of friction between him and President Stukel.

Then the other board members—I think they meant well, but a lot of them unfortunately decided, we're there, and we'll meddle in this, we'll meddle in that, and I think became a great frustration for the administrators at the U of I. Blagojevich, when he came in, it was pretty much whoever wrote the political check got named, and there were guys dealing. I mean, you had one guy that used to call the football coach and try to give him plays for the football team. You had stories about people that if you were going to do a contract, you had to go see this one developer who was on the board. Just a lot of questionable things came up, often trying to micromanage the university, which was unfortunate. That was not

the intent. Trustees are to set the parameters; they hire and fire the president, but they're not to micromanage the university. I think there were some that meant well, tried to do a good job, but I think there was probably too much meddling and too much micromanaging, and that made it very frustrating for the president. President Stukel, who had worked under both, all of a sudden started having these people coming over that just were difficult. President White came in, but kind of came in that system. He got picked by the board. Then you had the controversy over admissions, where the trustees were involved with trying to recommend people and political clout and stuff, political things.

DePue: And awarding scholarships on that.

Edgar: I really think that was probably the tip of the iceberg in their meddling and questionable... There were other stories the Champaign paper mentioned, possible investigations on some contracts and things. Nothing ever came of that, but the stories are around, and it was just unfortunate. But the problem was not that they're appointed versus elected, because elected, you could have the same problems in some ways, and other problems. It's just you've got to put good people on. So whoever's making the appointments, that's the governor; that's where the buck stops. I think the two governors after me failed to really do the right thing.

Now, Governor Quinn got everybody to resign, and he named a new board. It's a lot easier if you have all the board at once; you can do a better balancing thing. But I think the people he named, except the two who refused to resign, are still on there. The people he named were the kind of people that I think was my intent when we passed the legislation, and I give him high marks for that board that he named. He also did something I always did, which the other two governors didn't do. I did at least talk with the U of I alum association and get their input. Didn't always—and he didn't agree 100 percent with them—but they did have input. They had people who knew the university, who had worked on various committees, and I think came in understanding the institution better.

So going back to the legislation that we had proposed and got passed, I think it was the right thing to do. But the key is—and it's like any time you're going to appoint—who's making the appointments, and are they doing the right job of prioritizing the type of people they want to put on those boards? And also making sure, as we did—I said a two-day seminar was held, the only time that's probably ever happened in Illinois. You bring all these new trustees in and talk to them about what we expect from them and what their job... We brought people in from national organizations to talk about the role of trustees and things like that. So I think overall that has worked very well in higher education and has helped the universities to govern in a little more rational way than they were before.

DePue: One of the things that students, from their perspective, always found aggravating—especially if you're the kind of student who moves around from one college to another—is transferring those credits over. Did this clean that up?

Edgar: This didn't so much. We spent a lot of time on that. I had the Board of Higher Education, I had the community college people. The main problem was the community colleges. They were not finding their courses transferring into the four senior institutions. I think the Board of Higher Education was kind of dragging their feet on that, because they were much more—the Board of Higher Education was always accused by the Community College Board of being pro-senior institutions, and they probably were a little bit. In fact, the Community College Board tried an end run on me. They tried to get themselves taken away from the Board of Higher Education. The chairman, Harry Crisp, who is a good friend of mine, was behind it. He always denied it, but I knew he was behind it. They passed the bill, and I vetoed it. They were going to probably override me, and I finally just beat them into submission. But part of the beating into submission was to bring in the Board of Higher Education and tell them they had to stop treating the community colleges like stepchildren, which they were.

DePue: They passed the legislation. Did that mean they got a considerable amount of Democratic support on splitting out the community colleges?

Edgar: Oh, I think they got everybody's support, yes, because all the community colleges were for it, and everybody has a community college in their district. So they passed it, and I vetoed it. I don't think they ever called the override. Community colleges had some legitimate complaints, but I didn't want them out there on their own, because again, I wanted all higher education to kind of have to work through the Board of Higher Education, so you could keep some type of overall pattern for higher education. I didn't want to have community colleges doing this game and U of I's doing this game, Southern is doing this—the way it used to be back before Ogilvie created the Board of Higher Education.

We had several meetings that I chaired in my office, trying to get an agreement on making it much easier for courses to transfer. And we made progress. We didn't get 100 percent done, but I think community colleges felt much better at the end, that they had finally began to get some things done there. I think eventually the universities recognized they needed that too because they needed those students. The name of the game is enrollment, and they wanted to get those students; community college students who had completed two years probably were going to make it, whereas you never know when a freshman comes in a university. So today I think they've come a long way from where we were in the mid-nineties, but we made some important improvements in the mid-nineties. But that wasn't so much part of this legislation, that was just—I spent a lot of time on higher education, probably more than any governor had. A lot of that had to do with my background growing up in a university town; being a legislator from a university district probably made me a little more sensitive or concerned about the specifics in higher education.

DePue: How did the union situation sort itself out once the legislation was passed?

Edgar: Sangamon State no longer was unionized. (DePue laughs) I can't remember if they had a vote. If they did, they lost it. It still was a bone of contention for a long time with the unions, but I just said, "Hey, guys, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. You guys got..." Now, Board of Governors, I think all those universities—Eastern, Western—are still union. They'd gotten set up, and they didn't change back after. They had their own ability to do that. But Sangamon State, they were union. Unions really hate whenever you lose a union. That just really is a hard thing for them to swallow, and that always was kind of a sore spot with them.

DePue: Let's stay on the theme of education—we're going to stay with this after we get back from lunch as well—but go back to 1991. Maybe this is something where you aren't going to be able to address any of the specifics, but accreditation legislation for primary and secondary schools—does that ring any bells at all with you?

Edgar: Not big-time. I'm trying to think. No.

DePue: How about Project Success?

Edgar: Oh, yes. Project Success is my favorite thing to talk about—outside Chicago school reform, probably—in elementary and secondary education.

DePue: I don't think we've talked about that much, although that was something that was very much part of the first administration.

Edgar: Yes. Very much part of the first, but also we spent a lot of time on it in the second, too, because it was very successful in the second. Project Success came about from when I was campaigning in 1990 for governor. There was a corporate school, they called it, in Chicago. It was a school that some of the corporate guys paid for, and they spent the same amount of money per student in that school as they did in the public schools. They wanted to show that if they didn't have a lot of the red tape and union things and all this and that, you could give a good education; it wasn't just money. So I went over and visited the school, and they were doing well. They could discipline kids; they'd toss them out if they acted up.

What I remember from that trip, they were talking about how things in public schools just don't get done a lot of times. They were telling me about this one student they had who was a fourth grader; I think he'd come in as a third grader from the public school. When he first came in, he was one of their worst students—just a cut-up, a troublemaker. Well, then the day came to do the vision check, and they check and say the kid needs glasses; he can't see hardly at all. So they got him glasses, and he just started turning around. The kid started paying attention. By fourth grade, he was one of their best students. So they went back and checked why—public school is supposed to do this. What happened? The two years he was in school, the day they did the vision check, he was absent. Nobody ever followed up and said, "Hey, Johnny wasn't here when we did the vision test. He's here; let's go get his eyes checked." It slipped through the cracks.

I realized from that, we've got the laws in place, we spend the money, but there's no follow-through. It's not the teacher's job, but there's nobody checking on some of these programs we provide for kids to make sure the service is being delivered. And we thought probably with a lot of other things—health things, all kinds of things we think they're getting checked for or there's help for them—nobody ever gets the child in the classroom who has the problem to the social agency that delivers the service, because that's not part of education. So we thought we needed to come up [with a program] where maybe there'd be somebody designated in that building, that if a teacher noticed a student was sick or something like that, or seemed to be some problem, that person would follow through and find the appropriate social service agency that needed to deal with that. That was kind of the theory behind this—we don't need to go out and spend a lot of money; we just need to make sure that the money we're spending, that service is getting to the child in school who needs the help.

That was early in my first administration when we decided to set this up. I was always looking for things in education to give Bob Kustra to do as lieutenant governor, so I said, "Here, take this," and I told him what I was thinking of.<sup>38</sup> I said, "We're going to put together an advisory group, and you come up with the specifics." One of the things they came back with was pretty much what I just outlined, but they also came back and said, "We need the community involved, so we need to have an advisory board made up of people from the community to be involved and help too. Not only do we need to make sure that we're getting services from these social agencies, we need the community to feel like this is their school." And one of the things that was good from that is you did get the community involved. I remember in Freeport, Illinois, we had a retired dentist who started to give free dental checks to students that weren't getting them before. We had other things like that where the community started—and they didn't necessarily have kids in the school, just they got involved and provided some services and became much more involved in the school.

After about two years, we went back and checked. The first year, I think we had seven schools, maybe—a couple in Chicago and the suburbs and downstate. I remember going downstate to one, down in deep southern Illinois. In all those schools, they all said, "Hey, things are working a lot better. We're getting parents involved more, the community's involved, we're finding kids that have problems, and we're getting help." From talking to people in other states that looked at this, the key was the directive had to come from the top down, because Department of Public Health or Department of Children and Family Services—their priority is not school kids. They've got their own things; schools are something else. But I told all those directors, "This is a priority to me. Your people need to work with these school people, and we need to get some things happening." That made everybody know in these departments, if you get a call from a school, Project Success, jump on it, because that's the governor's pet project. (DePue laughs)

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<sup>38</sup> Kustra, February 1, 2011.

As a result, we started seeing some really amazing stories. There was a story about a child in one of the schools; he had been a pretty good student, and they couldn't figure out—he just was not doing well. They talked to him, and he wasn't sick; they found out, though, he had problems at home. Apparently his dad was having tax problems, and he hadn't paid his taxes or whatever. Long story short, they got a hold of Department of Revenue, they sat down with him, and they worked out a schedule to pay his taxes; things at home were fine, the kid went back to being a good student again. You'd have things tied to those family issues, again, things you wouldn't think the school had anything to do with dealing with. So that worked, and that was helpful, but the thing that turned out to be probably the big success was this thing that the committee had come back with: Let's get the community involved. Let's have these advisory committees, and let's see if we can get them...

I remember taking Bob Dole to a school in the inner city of Chicago. In fact, it was so bad the Chicago police told the Secret Service, "Don't go down and advance that at night. Wait till daylight. It's too dangerous down there." (laughter) But you went in this school, and it was the difference between night and day. Just everybody was getting along. Mothers were coming and learning skills that they needed to know to be better mothers. Kids were doing very well in school. It was an oasis in this jungle, kind of, where they were. But they had participation from the community. Some businesses around there had pitched in and helped out with resources. And again, there was this pride.

Decatur got to be in Project Success in the second or third stage. The superintendent of the Decatur school, who I had fought with on some funding issues earlier, right before he left to head up the Illinois School Board Association, or maybe it was the superintendent organization... We had some dealing over there on Project Success, and I went over, and I mean they had an auditorium packed. The place was filled. The superintendent got up and said, "I just want to say that Project Success is the most successful, important thing the state of Illinois has done for us," and he went on and on—just said it was great, how it helped turn their school around. And it didn't take much money. So Project Success was something that I felt very good about. I don't think even at peak we ever spent over five million dollars on it.

DePue: It sounds like, though, each one of the schools had the option of whether or not they wanted to participate.

Edgar: Eventually they did. We started out with a few, then we expanded, and then finally, sometime probably in the second term, we just said, "Any school that wants to be involved can." Now, we did give them a little money to help pay for the coordinator, but for the most part, the real success came just from the community being more involved in the schools, whether it was in southern Illinois or in the inner city. It worked. As I said, I think educators around the state said, "This is something"—and it wasn't a lot of red tape. We just told them how to get organized, and we provided some help. And they also knew that whoever their

coordinator was, if they dealt with a state agency, they were going to get response because this was the governor's pet project. I made sure the directors knew that, and they made sure their people knew that, so it worked very well. I think everybody thought it was very successful. George Ryan came in, and they did away with it. It wasn't their thing. It underscored to me the importance of community involvement in the schools, and that you can coordinate; if everybody knows this is a priority, you can do it.

I went to the Education Commission of the State—I was chairman of it one year when I was governor—and this was the topic I made the issue. I remember talking with some experts from around the country, and they said, "It didn't work in our state because we never could get the agencies to respond, but we never had the governor, being his pet project. That's the key why we think it's worked so well in Illinois, because these departments know this is important to the governor." And the coordinator I had was in my staff. It wasn't somebody off on the Board of Education, it was somebody in the governor's staff who was the coordinator, and that helped make everything move. Bob Kustra did a good job kicking that off and getting it going, particularly that element of getting community involvement. That's something I had not thought about so much when I was looking at it in the '90 campaign, but I think it turned out to be a very important part of the success of Project Success.

DePue: Do you recall the specific reasons that Ryan decided not to continue it?

Edgar: Oh, I don't know. I think they said money, but the money was pretty insignificant. I don't think he ever had a person on his staff that—I think they probably stuck that person over at the Board of Education or something like that. I was disappointed. I wasn't surprised, but I was disappointed, because I thought it was a pretty inexpensive program that had a lot of success.

DePue: What I would recommend now is for us to take a break and then pick up Chicago school reform right after lunch.

Edgar: Okay.

(end of interview 18)

Interview with Jim Edgar

# ISG-A-L-2009-019.19

Interview # 19: August 30, 2010

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Monday, the afternoon of August 30, 2010. We’re in our second session for today. We had a very interesting discussion about higher education reform this morning, and this afternoon we pick up our conversation with Chicago school reform. Good afternoon, Governor.

Edgar: Good afternoon.

DePue: We have talked in previous sessions quite a bit about some of the struggles to fund Chicago schools, and the system’s yearly attempt to get more assistance from the state, but why don’t you provide us a little more of the parameters of the problems that you saw.

Edgar: (clears throat) I think all the time I was in Springfield, Chicago schools were always in crisis.

DePue: So we’re going all the way back to the mid-seventies.

Edgar: They wouldn’t come every year, they would come every other year, because that’s when the teachers’ contracts, I think, were two years. So they’d come every other year—and they were on the verge of closing down, they needed more money—and usually they basically wanted to do a contract and give the teachers some more money. The problem that always struck me was Chicago schools were part of the political organization in Chicago. The Chicago Teachers Union is a very close ally of the Democratic Party in Chicago. Just a personal thing: when I ran for governor in 1990, I came out early to make the surtax permanent, which was a huge plus for education. I’m running in a Republican primary against a right-winger. The Illinois Federation of Teachers is the parent to the Chicago Teachers Union, but the Chicago Teachers Union is the—the tail wags the dog in this case; that’s what most of their members are. They not only didn’t endorse me in the primary, I think they endorsed Hartigan for the general election and the primary. Not that you’d have thought they might endorse me in the primary, just because in the Republican primary I was a clear choice on who was more important to education. But they were so Democrat, that’s just part of their mentality; they’re part of the organization.

As a result, Chicago politicians, Democratic politicians, were always very leery about anything that would infringe on the unions’ power or make changes that would be opposed by the Chicago Teachers Union. They had a tendency when it came to labor negotiations to always give them something more, and as a result, the

schools were very expensive. I viewed there was very little control over what happened in the schools. Now, I think it was in the early part of 1980 when Chicago schools closed. They were financially broke, and they wanted the state to bail them out. I think we talked in an earlier session—

DePue: Yes, we have.

Edgar: —about when I was working for Governor Thompson, and being over at the mansion for three days. We were kind of locked in. No legislators, but we had Chicago school officials, and that brought out the budgetary authority over the Chicago schools, and a bridge loan that allowed them to reopen.<sup>39</sup> The state didn't give them money, but it allowed them to borrow money over a period of time. That was a major reform. That was a major change. This finance authority that now looked over the Chicago schools, at least for a few years, did provide a little fiscal stability for the Chicago schools. So I would say in the eighties, they always wanted money, but it wasn't quite the crisis it had been. And for whatever reason, that began to dissipate, and they made changes probably later in the eighties—which I wasn't involved in because I was secretary of state at the time—but the finance authority didn't have control over the schools, and they began to get in a bad situation again.

So in '93, which I think we talked about, the schools were going to close down and go on strike. At the last minute, a federal judge put an embargo, although we knew that they wouldn't go on strike. Everybody was pretty sure that when you came right up to it, the unions would settle because they knew they couldn't afford to go on strike. But unfortunately, this judge, thinking he was doing a good thing, did the worst thing, and that drug out and cost me my trip to Europe to see my daughter and have dinner with Helmut Kohl and his wife. But that problem underscored to me, we have to do something about Chicago schools; every two years, we go through this crisis.

The mayor always said, "Well, I really can't control it," and he was right, because there had been reforms passed in the eighties that created these school councils and things, which really kind of decentralized control over the Chicago schools. The mayor at that time really had little control over who went on the school board. He would name who was going on, but he had to name from names given to him by these councils and other groups, and it wasn't people he probably would have picked if he had a free choice.

DePue: How about the superintendent? Did he have a voice in that?

Edgar: He had a voice, but it was through the school board, and it was questionable whether he really controlled the school board.

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<sup>39</sup> The Chicago School Finance Authority was born out of a summit meeting Governor Thompson called in early 1980 to meet the Chicago funding crisis. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 10, 2009, 68-73. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

DePue: If you had a superintendent come in who really wanted to make some dramatic reforms, would the school board have resisted that?

Edgar: They would have resisted, and the teachers' union would have fought it tooth and nail. The teachers' union had the most clout in the whole thing. In the end, the Chicago Democratic organization probably wasn't going to buck the teachers' union—that was the feeling. We kind of knew that we could talk about reforming Chicago schools in the early nineties, but it wasn't going to happen because the Democrats weren't going to let it pass. The unions would put pressure on them, and they just weren't going to buck the union. That was my sense of it. When we come to '95, the Republicans control the legislature and the governor, so the Democrats are no longer able to stop Chicago school reform.

DePue: Let me throw in a couple other items here as well. The school shortfall for the budget that year was \$150 million, and they were projecting a \$290 million dollar shortfall for the next couple years down the road. I think shortly before this, during George Bush's administration, secretary of education [William] Bennett called the Chicago school system the worst urban school system in the country.

Edgar: It was actually Ronald Reagan's.

DePue: Reagan's?

Edgar: Yes, it was '87, I think. William Bennett.

DePue: I'm sure you're right.

Edgar: Bennett was good for one-liners. I don't know if Chicago schools were the worst—I've always thought Detroit had to be worse—but they were bad, there's no doubt about it. And again, we're looking at every two years they got a financial crisis, and they come to Springfield and want to get bailed out.

So we were going to do something about it. Well, when we talked about workers' comp, unemployment, and stuff like that, business groups—who are traditionally Republican groups—had bills that they had talked about for years, and so it was pretty easy to come up with, what are we going to do here? It didn't take a whole lot of discussion between the House, the Senate, and the governor's office.

DePue: Can I quote you here? It's a quote I got from the *Chicago Tribune*, January twentieth. This is what you're not going to do, as far as this particular cycle of budget crises they have. This is your quote: "It is up to the Chicago schools to look internally at ways to cut costs. If they expect to be bailed out by the state, it isn't going to happen. The day of reckoning is coming."

Edgar: Yes, and we knew that while we were out of the financial woods a little bit, we still weren't going to go bail out the Chicago schools, and we now had a Republican legislature that was even more adamant than I probably was on some of that. I might be a little more sympathetic to Chicago than they were.

DePue: “They” as in Pate Philip, perhaps?

Edgar: Pate and Lee [Daniels]. I mean, just the nature of them. But of course, the House Republicans had their plan for reform, and the Senate Republicans had their plan, and they didn’t look anything alike. We sat and talked with them, trying to work out something, and it was obvious they were... Whereas on the business issues it was pretty well agreed to, because of the business groups, there wasn’t any education group to come and say, here, this... Republicans in the House thought they knew more about education, and the Senate Republicans really thought they knew more about it than anybody, so they had their own plans. And we looked at them and just said, “Hey, first of all, we’re not sure we agree with either one, but we got to get agreement here.” So we spent a lot of time talking to a lot of other folks, a lot of education groups. I can’t remember the exact date, but the *Tribune* has a story in it about two days later, because we leaked what we agreed to, which is one of the few leaks that I wanted to do. I wanted to get it clear what we were going to do.

Arnie Weber, who was the former president of Northwestern, was now the executive director of the Civic Committee, which is the business group that represents all the major CEOs in Chicago—very influential group. They had a concern about Chicago schools and education reform, and they’d talk. So Arnie Weber and I sat down one day in Chicago. There were a lot of proposals out there. We didn’t invent anything new, we just decided what would work and what wouldn’t work, what we thought would work. I remember we had talked on my staff before I went up there, and there were some things we thought would be good, and I wanted to get...I felt Weber, being a former president of a university, plus head of the most important business group in the state, who had looked at this issue—if we could come to agreement, then we could pretty well get the House and the Senate, tell them that’s what it was going to have to be or they’re not going to get reform. We sat down one day, and after about a two hour discussion, we came up with a list of seven or eight things that we thought had to be in that bill. And that was the basis for Chicago school reform. Now, we later got the House Republicans and the Senate Republicans—a committee of them—to sit down, and there were a few things we added from then, minor things, I think; there wasn’t anything real major.

DePue: I think I’ve got the specifics. I believe it would have been from an April 26 *Tribune* article.

Edgar: *Tribune* story? Yes.

DePue: I can go through these, and then you can respond to each one of them in terms of the logic behind it. “Abolish the city school board.”

Edgar: We wanted to start over on the school board, because one of the big problems—I thought Daley had a legitimate [complaint]—he didn’t really have control. He kind of got blamed for the schools, but he didn’t really control it, and we wanted to give him a board that he controlled and he’d be responsible for.

DePue: In the old system you had a superintendent, obviously a career educator, and in the new system you're going to have a chief executive officer, as if it's a business and run like a business, and not even a person who came from education.

Edgar: Yes. It turned out, Paul Vallas really hadn't been in education before that, and he's gone on and been in Philadelphia, and now he's in New Orleans. So now he'd look like an educator, but then he was just somebody who had worked for Daley.

DePue: Yeah, his previous experience was to be Daley's budget director.

Edgar: Yes, and at one time he'd been [Dawn Clark] Netsch's financial guy, maybe even when she ran against me. But the whole thinking was that you needed to have more business input into that place, because it was obvious that it was a financial basket case.

DePue: This is going to be very similar to what we've been talking about this morning: the mayor now gets to appoint the management team and a five-member board instead of the school board.

Edgar: The school board was fourteen, I think, before, and it was unwieldy. As I said, he could name them, but he'd have to pick between two or three people to name a spot, and they wouldn't be the two or three he'd probably put. And I was a great believer that if you're going to be held responsible, you've got to have the power to control the thing. Daley had kind of complained about that, and we just figured, here, we're going to give it to you; now, you are responsible.

DePue: And part of that would be this particular board then gets to oversee financial and budget process.

Edgar: Yes. Well, before, you had the old finance authority that we had created back in 1980, and that, as I said, wasn't as effective at holding the line. It was murky on just who had to do what.

DePue: The next one here—you've talked about this a little bit already—I'm not sure how you do this: "suspend teacher strike rights."

Edgar: Pass a law. (DePue laughs) Needless to say, that was very controversial. Democrats and the labor unions went nuts.

DePue: But basically you're overturning a contract that the teachers' union has with the city, right?

Edgar: Teacher contract was up, too, pretty soon.

DePue: So they're in the process of renegotiating.

Edgar: I think so. But whatever. We felt very clear on constitutional grounds, because I have to admit, when they originally said it, I said, "Can we do that?" Yes, we could.

And the reason I asked the question was for school reform, not that I'm opposed to collective bargaining. Not that I'm opposed to collective bargaining. We needed to give this new school board time to clean house and not have to worry about having a strike on their hands. You also knew that if you passed this law, and they did go out on strike, labor leaders would have to go to jail, so they probably weren't going to have them go out on strike. Again, we needed a period—and it wasn't forever; I think it was eighteen months or some period of time—to give them to try to get control on that school and deal with the budget deficit and all that. And that time might have moved around a little bit, but I think the final thing was eighteen months.

DePue: Would you have even considered any of this legislation if the Democrats still held the House?

Edgar: No, no. There's a time and place (laughs) for everything, and if the Democrats controlled one of the houses... Now, you might have tried giving the mayor the power to name the board. They would have probably gone along with that. Not this one. They would have just—

DePue: Not the teachers' union portion of it?

Edgar: No, no, no, no. There are some other things there maybe. You know, Daley opposed it, but I think he was secretly hoping we'd be successful, especially to get this—but he couldn't publicly be for it because he didn't want to make the Chicago Teachers Union mad. That's too important up there.

DePue: The next couple things are tied directly to the teachers' union. One of them is to lengthen the tenure track for teachers.

Edgar: Take longer to get tenure, yes.

DePue: And the rationale for that?

Edgar: Make sure these people are really qualified before you give them tenure. What was it? I can't remember if it was two years or...

DePue: I think it was two and lengthening it to four, perhaps.

Edgar: Yes. Universities are a lot longer than that. So I think that was part of it because we knew there was a lot of dead wood there, and it's hard to get rid of. Once you have tenure, it's hard to get rid of somebody.

DePue: A lot of the horror stories from the late eighties and early nineties dealt with incompetent teachers. So the next thing I've got listed here is "streamline teacher dismissal procedures." Again, I would think that would be one that the...

Edgar: Endearred us to the unions, yes.

DePue: (laughs) Okay. No other comments beyond that?

Edgar: No, no. Again, I was a little leery about the Senate Republicans and the House Republicans because they would have probably—one time, they said, “Why don’t we take over the Chicago schools?” And I said, “There’s absolutely no way I’m taking over the Chicago schools. I got enough problems. I don’t need the Chicago schools. I’m in favor of giving the mayor the power; let him be responsible.” But one of the reasons I wanted to sit down with Arnie Weber was I felt comfortable with him if we came to some agreement, if he said, “Yes, this makes sense.” I figure he’d spent most his life in education, even though it’d been higher education, and he was a reasonable... I have to say I got a little nervous sometimes. The Republicans were a little zealous when it came to reforming Chicago. We’ll get onto some issues later on, where they want to take over things. Because these are pretty major changes—you can’t strike, you’re changing tenure, and things like that—I felt much more comfortable after Arnie Weber said, “Yes, this makes sense,” that it was a reasonable thing to try to do.

So I go back and I tell my people, “All right,” and I tell Pate and Lee, “This is what I want. This is what I’ll sign.” See, that was the key. They could pass things, but they needed the governor to sign it. And they kind of knew I was ornery enough that I might veto their bills. But they couldn’t agree among themselves, and that also helped too. We sat them down and said, “Look, this is the basis. Now, if you guys want to add some things, we’ll take a look at it, but this is what...” At that point, it was a little easier for the House Republicans and the Senate Republicans to say, “Okay, this is what the governor is saying,” versus, “I’m not going to give into the Senate” or “I’m not going to give into the House.” So pretty quickly, we had an agreement on a bill, which basically encompassed all that and maybe a few other things that were not huge. That became the reform proposal. We had good support from the newspapers. We had support from everybody except Democrats in the legislature. And of course the labor unions were going nuts, but...

Daley happened to come down on one of his rare visits to Springfield, and I don’t think he came down because of this bill; he came down for something else, but we met with him. In fact, I had Daniels and Philip and myself, and we met with the mayor. I might have met with him earlier, but we had them in there and just said, “Look, we’re trying to help you. We realize why you can’t support it publicly, but is there anything else you want in it?” And he said, “Yeah.” (laughs) So he had a couple little things, minor things, we put in for him.

DePue: You don’t remember what those would be?

Edgar: No, no. They weren’t major. But he couldn’t have been nicer in that private meeting. He didn’t say, “Oh, this is terrible; you can’t do this.” He just wanted to clarify a couple things. Then he went out and he said, “Well, no, I’m opposed to the bill,” but that was it. He didn’t twist anybody’s arm, but at least the labor unions weren’t after his scalp because he was going to change this. Only one Chicago

Democrat voted for it. Judy Erwin—she's head of the Board of Higher Education now.

DePue: Erwin?

Edgar: Erwin. Much to her credit. She'd been Phil Rock's press secretary, then she got elected to the House. I think she's still executive director of the Board of Higher Education. Very thoughtful legislator. She voted for it. I mean, it was kind of amazing, because the others were all scared off. And I think some downstate Democrats might have voted for it, at least in the House. But it passed.

DePue: How about the minority communities in Chicago, or some of the ethnic communities?

Edgar: My theory, and from what I've heard over the years and observation, there's certain departments in Chicago and Cook County government that certain ethnic groups have a major role. In the schools, not only teachers, but all the service people and janitors and things like that are pretty much African American. So (coughs) that was always an important part of the tie for African Americans with the Democratic machine.

One of the persons that was very much supportive of whatever the Chicago Teachers Union wanted was Emil Jones, and I think part of that was because so many of those people were African Americans, or important... So that was kind of viewed as the patronage haven for African Americans, the Chicago schools, located somewhere in the South Side of Chicago—Pershing Road. I've never been there, I just remember them always talking about Pershing Road. And when you rode in on the Dan Ryan, you'd see Pershing Road. That was the headquarters, and that's where a lot of the jobs were that we weren't sure they needed. So the African Americans probably were the most opposed in the legislature to the bill, because the ties with the union and the—

DePue: Doesn't that make it a little bit dicey in terms of some of the opposition rhetoric that might be coming out, if a lot of the incompetent teachers are also African American?

Edgar: Well, it wasn't so much the teachers. There were a lot of incompetent white teachers, probably more than there were African Americans, because there are more white teachers. There were a lot of non-teaching workers at the Chicago Board of Education; they were primarily African Americans, and they weren't maybe so much incompetent, they just weren't needed or they weren't doing anything. But that was also one of the arguments being made on the money thing. It wasn't just the teachers who maybe aren't teaching in the classroom—that's part of an education problem—

DePue: But Vallas and the board are going to have the opportunity to reorganize?

Edgar: They're going to go in, and they can clean house. I mean, no school board was ever given as much power as this school board had been given. Around the country everybody just said, "Whoa." That strike provision, things like that—no school board had ever had that. So you could basically go in there and clean house. Now, I don't think we knew for sure at that time who he [Daley] was going to name. Of course, he was opposed to the bill, so he wasn't going to give it credence. He moved very quickly, though, after we signed it.

But again, we figured the school board would now have the power—because part of the problem, they'd come down and say, "We need money," and they'd say, "We can't do anything about this. We're tied because of contracts, we're tied because of this or that." We're going to say, "Fine, we're going to give you *carte blanche*. You solve your problem." It's kind of like in the old days, when we used to always want to get revenue sharing. "We'll take less money but no strings, and let us sort..." And that's kind of what we were saying here: "We're going to take all the strings off." I mean, a lot of the state mandates, too, if I remember right, in the end. They didn't have to follow all the mandates on some things. They had about as total flexibility as any school board in the nation ever had. The fact that Daley would be able to pick his five people—we expected he would name some businesspeople, which he did—they wouldn't be beholden to the teachers' union, and they would do what they had to do. And it kind of all proved out.

DePue: The papers did make the point that one of your selling points to Daley was that he would be able to get waivers to some of the state mandated programs. Do you remember anything about what those programs would have been?

Edgar: I can't remember the specifics, but they were significant, to give them some financial flexibility. I can't remember what they might have been. And there was a reason we knew they were going to get them—I'm trying to think. It was the state Board of Education you would have to go to, and I'm not sure we were always 100 percent sure what the state Board of Education was going to do, but I do know that they did get waived on some of the mandates.

DePue: A couple other things that had been very much part of the public debate about education was charter schools and vouchers. Was that part of the mix?

Edgar: No.

DePue: Neither one of those?

Edgar: No. We did charter later. Never vouchers—I always was opposed to vouchers. But no. I believe when we did the school finance thing a couple years later, I think we did some charter things, unless we did charter... I don't remember charter being part of the Chicago [reform]. We did something on charter, and it might have been a stand-alone bill, but it was a compromise where we did charters within school districts. A school district would have to approve a charter in its district; we

didn't... So that kind of placated the teachers' union, and we were able to get agreement on that. But that wasn't part of this.

DePue: One other thing that I believe was part of the package was to privatize some of the school services.

Edgar: We probably gave them the flexibility to do that, yes.

DePue: Once the bill actually passes and you sign, I believe that's May 1995, here's another one within that first hundred days—you're passing an awful lot of significant legislation.

Edgar: Yes. I will say Daley moved quickly and named Vallas; Vallas went in, and with that power they had, they erased their budget deficit. And it was interesting, the politics and the impact. Chicago schools had always been one of the major roadblocks any time you tried to get additional funding for education, because Chicago gets a big chunk of it—probably more than they should get. So Republicans used to always say, "Well, why should we spend more money on schools? It's good money after bad in Chicago." But now you had Chicago school reform, which was passed by the Republicans. Now, later, you'd have thought Daley had passed it, if you'd listen to him. But Republicans in the legislature really had a lot of pride of authorship, and so now the Chicago schools were kind of their schools.

And to his credit, Vallas was very good at PR, and Vallas came down and worked the Republican legislators, told them what he was doing and everything. He didn't come down to ask for money. I think he might have come down and asked for a little more authority over some things, but he did not come down and ask for money. In fact, I remember him telling me, "Not only am I not going to ask for money, we've got some surplus." Because they went in and they found—oh, I forget—like toilet paper. They might have had enough toilet paper in the warehouse for ten years. They had stuff that had never been opened, stuff they had bought.

DePue: Warehouses full of furniture. I think some of the headlines were things like that.

Edgar: Yes. They were probably spending money on somebody that was in business they needed to make happy; they didn't need [the supplies]. And they had a lot of employees—not just teachers, but a lot of, as I said, rank and file employees that they didn't need. We'd always known. I noticed this when I was secretary of state. You'd go to some program, like something on traffic safety. There'd be three people from the Chicago public schools there, from the head office. What are they doing? Maybe one, but three? Any kind of thing you went to, there was always somebody, because they had all these employees with nothing to do, and they'd go to these meeting and things. They were very top-heavy. They didn't so much waste money on teachers—maybe they had teachers who were incompetent, but you'd have to have teachers—but they had a lot of other people that you didn't need, that didn't do anything but make big salaries. It was patronage; it was people that had

been there, and... It wasn't all Democrat patronage; part of it was probably internal patronage. But they moved quickly on that and got rid of a lot of those people.

So they erased the deficit and talked about a surplus, and needless to say, Pate Philip thought that was the greatest thing, and he loved Paul Vallas. So all of a sudden, he was very protective. Vallas could come down on education stuff and get things from the Republicans a lot easier than he could get it from the Democrats. He could probably get more off those guys than anybody else could in education, because they had this pride of authorship of that bill, and they really felt good about it. And it got a lot of favorable press, not only in Illinois but throughout the nation. Vallas, at least the first few years, made it look like it worked well; a couple years later you started to see test scores go up. Of course, it didn't take much to make test scores go up in Chicago schools.

DePue: Much of the stuff you read in the press that was about Paul Vallas and all the innovations he was doing, certainly balancing the budget was a big part of it, but also issues like tougher standards for students to advance; if somebody took a test in a particular year and they didn't pass the test, they had to take the eighth grade over again, for example.

Edgar: Yes, [instead of] just getting pushed on like they always had been.

DePue: At the time it was certainly presented as being a very radical approach to education.

Edgar: In Chicago. Chicago was known for just passing kids along no matter what, so a diploma from Chicago didn't mean a lot. Vallas was able to do the budget; he also was able to do the educational reforms. Those are two different things, educational reform and financial reform. And he was able very quickly to claim victories in both areas. I'm sure some of it was maybe overrated, but how it got played was, hey, Chicago schools have come a long way. And Daley had a board. I can't remember who all was on it. One I know was a president of one of the major banks, who's a good guy and knows education well—I think he's actually a Republican. There are some other guys. That board backed Vallas up. [Gery] Chico, who was named the chairman of the board, who had been Daley's former chief of staff, I think did a good job.

With Chico or Vallas, there's always maybe a little competition there. They both had ambitions. Vallas probably got more of the publicity to start with. It was interesting. When Vallas ran for governor in the 2002 primary, Daley never did support him, and part of the thought was Daley thought Vallas took too much credit for Chicago school reform; he didn't get enough, maybe.

DePue: That's a significant election because Blagojevich beat Vallas by—

Edgar: What, 1 percent?

DePue: Yeah, just a few thousand votes, because Blagojevich carried the southern part of the state.

Edgar: Yes. Well, he didn't do bad in the city, because of his father-in-law. But that was one of the arguments. Now, when Chico ran for governor—or he ran for something—I don't think Daley helped him either. Daley didn't help anybody. But the thing you always heard about Vallas, he [Daley] really didn't because he thought Vallas took too much credit for... But Vallas did get a lot. I mean, Vallas ran for governor and lost, and then he moved to Philadelphia. He thought about coming back in 2006—we'd had a couple conversations—but he decided not to and went to New Orleans, or he was in New Orleans by then.

DePue: There even was some conversation this last election cycle about him coming back and running as a Republican for some office.

Edgar: Yes, yes, that's right. It was this time, yes. We had a discussion. He called me and we talked in 2006 a little bit about it, early. And you're right. He was supposedly going to give me a call, I never did hear from him, and he decided not to. He stayed in New Orleans.

But Chicago school reform I thought worked well. Years later, maybe it didn't work as well as we thought it did the first two years, but far better than what they'd had. And Chicago schools are probably still not the best school system in the nation, but it's far better than what it was. And again, this wouldn't have happened without a Republican controlled legislature, because the politics were you just weren't going to—even if they might privately want to see this pass. A lot of Democrats were happy with what we did. Some African American legislators might have been really upset, but most all the others were quietly happy that we were doing what we were doing.

DePue: Well, you're suggesting then that the fear of the teachers' union—in their minds, the teachers' union was all-powerful.

Edgar: Well, it's not just them. There's a lot of other groups on a lot of other issues that they don't want to make mad. That's part of a politician's nature. They want to be loved; they don't want to make people mad, especially a group that's very important to them, and the Chicago Teachers Union is important to Chicago Democrats.<sup>40</sup> So they were very...

DePue: I certainly don't want to editorialize here, but your average Chicago Democrat who's not attached to the teachers' union in any way, wouldn't they just be in favor of a better educational system as anybody else would be?

Edgar: Yes, but they probably don't vote in a primary and put money in a primary and endorse in a primary, and it's not where you've got a lot of your folks placed that you need to find jobs for—not so much as teachers, but janitors and these other things. So again, you got to understand. And I'm a downstate Republican, so maybe I'm over-exaggerating a little bit, but there is no doubt in my mind, just from talking and over the years working on this issue—Chicago Democrats were not

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<sup>40</sup> Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 15, 2009, 104-105.

going to buck the Chicago Teachers Union on something quite like this. Now, they might do some things. There might be some little things they might say, but they're not going to do something that would have probably caused the Chicago Teachers Union to take a hike. Because this was major. I mean, this was a huge takeaway for the Chicago teachers. If the Democrats had looked like they'd been part of this, then I think they would have probably politically suffered from the teachers' union, and would they have got that much plus from the other citizens? I don't know. Also, I will say, within the African American communities, probably more pressure. And there's a lot of legislators who are African American. There's probably a lot who really thought this was bad, this was going to hurt the teachers' union, which they were close to.

DePue: How much did that overwhelming Democratic vote against it have to do with—one, that's what Daley was telling his people down in Springfield to do, and two, that's the line that Madigan was telling?

Edgar: It had nothing to do with Daley. Daley doesn't have—contrary to—he's not his dad. And he wasn't pushing that hard anyway. Madigan—no, I think they were all just, hey, we don't want to make the Chicago Teachers Union mad. We all get endorsed by them, we get money from them. We might get a primary opponent from them, because teachers in a primary are pretty effective. Downstate Democrats, those who maybe didn't go along with it, IFT supports them, and they were opposed to it. I think the IEA was kind of quiet on it because it didn't impact them. And they kind of like to see the Chicago Teachers Union, (DePue laughs) which is not part of them, kind of get it. I think officially they might have sounded like they were opposed to it because taking away right-to-strike, but privately they chuckled.

DePue: So the Chicago Teachers Union also has its own pension system, obviously.

Edgar: Yes. But no, I don't think Madigan probably had to twist too many arms, because he was voting against it, and most of the members voted, so they weren't supporting it.

DePue: And their [the unions'] money went directly to Madigan to dole out, correct?

Edgar: In some cases. Back then they probably individually got money, too. But Madigan used to always get in fights with the IEA. The Chicago Teachers Union, he would be more sympathetic to, though there were a couple times we had some issues where he kind of went against them—but not like this, this was huge. This was the basis—I mean, you're telling them, "You can't strike." You're going to abrogate a lot of these contracts and things like this. This was a huge change, and, as I said, no other school district in the country had this kind of power that they had there for the first few months they were in existence. So this was a hard one for the Chicago Teachers Union to swallow, but in a way they could swallow it because it was Republicans. If the Democrats had done this to them, there'd have been blood in the street probably.

DePue: So it's okay to say, "Okay, I'm opposed to it" but not do so vociferously; if it does pass, it's Republicans' fault? In terms of the strategy that—

Edgar: I think they thought it might work too; I think they just said, "Well, the unions can't blame us for it. We can have our cake and eat it too. We're going to keep the unions from being mad at us, but fine, they're going to be"—because I think they got tired of the Chicago schools. It's like, you've got somebody that you're representing, somebody that's important to you, and they keep asking for more and more, and even you reach a point. But at the same time, you don't want to have to be the one to tell them no. Let the other guy tell them no. But you understand why they're telling them no. My sense on this issue always was, outside of maybe a few of the African American legislators, the white Democrats in the city weren't that upset about this bill. They voted against it, but they weren't that upset over it.

DePue: Let's move to a slightly different educational issue, before we get to the big one a little bit later down the road in terms of funding education statewide. I wanted to ask you a little bit about Lincoln's ChalleNGe, because this is about the same time period that this National Guard program came into effect.

Edgar: I like to take credit that I thought that up—I didn't. The National Guard did nationally, and the guys in Illinois were astute enough to say, "This sounds like a pretty good program." Now, why did they do it? The National Guard was trying to justify their existence, I think, and there's nothing wrong with that. They thought this was something that they could do, and it would show another reason to have the National Guard and the armories and things like that. I can't remember who the adjutant general was at the time, but they came in and made this proposal, and I thought it sounded pretty good. I didn't know if it'd work, but it sounded good.

DePue: Was that Don Lynn at the time?

Edgar: I'm not sure. You'd have to look back in the time sequence to know. It probably was in our second term, wasn't it?

DePue: Yeah, I think it was. We probably should say very briefly what Lincoln's ChalleNGe is. It's basically a boot camp concept where you're taking young men and women who, for whatever reason, have dropped out of school—

Edgar: Out of high school.

DePue: —and have no direction in their life.

Edgar: They don't have a high school diploma. They're not juvenile delinquents, they're not people who are in prison, but they're kids who, for whatever reason, didn't get their high school diploma. And chances are pretty good if you don't have a high school diploma, you could end up in jail. The odds are a lot greater you're going to end up in jail than somebody that has a high school diploma. The thought was that at Rantoul, where we had excess space, barracks and everything, from closing the

airfield, they would put together kind of an academy—like you say, a boot camp—where kids would come down, learn discipline, and get their high school diploma. It really wasn't that expensive, because I think the National Guard—maybe the national [administration] might have helped pay for part of it. But it wasn't a huge cost item, and we had this facility.

We weren't sure how it would be received, how it would work, but it turned out to be one of the most successful programs we did, and I think probably one of the best in the nation. Some other states did it. A lot tried. I don't know of anybody that was any more successful than we were in Illinois, and I think a lot probably didn't get as far as we got. I don't know how many people they've graduated now, but you figure those kids have a lot better chance, not just because they got that diploma, but I think probably the boot camp part of it was very important. And I was a big supporter of boot camp-type [programs] because I'd gone through the thing with our prisons in the floods in '93, where you saw that boot camp on the prisons really made a difference on these people.<sup>41</sup> It doesn't do you any good to put a person in a prison; if you're going to do anything, you got to rehabilitate them, you got to change their attitude. And I think a lot of that's true in schools too. It's not just you got a diploma, it's you learn from dealing with people. This taught these kids discipline, and a lot of them didn't have that. A lot of them went on to college, so it was an extremely successful program.

Now, the National Guard also had a program in a lot of the armories after school. They had after-school programs, particularly in the Chicago area, where kids could come and use the gymnasium or whatever. One of the big problems in education is not kids getting in trouble in school; it's after-school hours. You've got so many [families with] both parents working now, and for some reason kids—I'm glad it didn't happen when I was in school—start so early and get out in the middle of the afternoon. I never could have got up this early and gone to school. So kids maybe get out at three o'clock, and their parents aren't home till 6:00, and that's when kids get in trouble. That's when a lot of the gangs and all that... So if you can give them an alternative... And I know the National Guard opened up those armories, particularly in Chicago, and had programs. I'd go by and see those programs.

So that's another thing other than Lincoln's ChalleNGe, but it's another example where I thought the National Guard was being very smart in trying to reach out and help in these ways, and use existing facilities. Now, the thing over in Rantoul was a little different because they didn't necessarily have that facility to start with, but...

DePue: Yeah, Chanute Air Force Base had just closed.

Edgar: It closed right when I became governor. In fact, while I was running for governor, they closed it, so we were always looking for things to do over there. Again, I'm not

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<sup>41</sup> Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 28, 2010, 14-16, 29-30.

sure what number they're up to. I went over and spoke, I think to their first class, and—

DePue: At their graduation ceremony?

Edgar: Yes. And you'd talk to the kids. It was a lot like talking to the boot campers [during the flood]. I mean, even better, because these kids, at the end, were very appreciative and felt good about themselves. So I thought it was a very successful program. Again, from my understanding, in Illinois we probably did it as well as any state in the union. I think the National Guard should get a lot of credit for that. I know I would go to National Governors Association, and whoever the guy was for the National Guard nationally would always come up and say, "Oh, we use you as the example," so that was fun.

DePue: Let's change the subject away from education after quite a bit of conversation. Like every other year, you've got to pass the budget, the fiscal year 1996 budget in '95. The economy's looking completely different than it had for the first two, three years. You remember anything distinctive about that fight?

Edgar: We got it done well before the end of the session. I just had to get Republican votes; the Democrats really didn't enter into it. The next year we kind of had a fight among the houses and between me and them, and part of that was tied with the whole tax issue. But that year, I can't remember any fight. I think it was pretty smooth.

DePue: June fifth is the day you got a budget, and I read someplace that was the earliest budget that got passed in sixty-two years.

Edgar: And I think that same year, Pate Philip got a constitutional amendment put on the ballot that you had to get the budget done by June first or you had to have an extraordinary majority.<sup>42</sup> That got approved in the next election, so my last two budgets, I think we had to approve it by the end of May, as it is now, and they used to go home pretty soon after that.

DePue: That hasn't worked lately, though, has it?

Edgar: No. No, it hasn't. Then you had a split legislature back after they did that, and we still, it seemed like to me, were able to get it done. My last four budgets were so different from my first four budgets. (laughs) As I said, I think we did fight among us, the Republicans, a little bit on the budget in '96, but we did finally resolve it in time so we didn't have to go to the Democrats and ask for their help.

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<sup>42</sup> In 1994, Illinois voters approved Philip's amendment, 1,476,615 to 667,585; a margin of 809,030 votes. The amendment changed the uniform effective date of new laws from July first to June first, thus a measure passed after May thirty-first would not take effect until June the following year, unless it was approved by three-fifths of the legislature. <http://www.ilga.gov/commission/lrb/conampro.htm>. *Chicago Tribune*, November 9, 1994.

DePue: You got lucky in one respect, Governor, in that the end of the 1990s, the national economy was definitely humming along. You had the Internet and lots of new businesses and industries starting up just because of those new innovations.<sup>43</sup>

Edgar: By the end of the nineties, yes. The middle nineties, we were slowly coming back. We created jobs in Illinois. Contrary to what happened the last ten years, we did create more jobs in Illinois, and we were one of the leaders in the nation on job creation in the mid-nineties. But the other thing was important—we had trimmed the government, and we stayed disciplined. As I talk to people today about what's going to have to happen, it's not only you've got to cut, cut a lot, and that's going to be very difficult, much more difficult than I had to deal with; you have to raise taxes, which is always difficult, but you're also going to have to stay disciplined. You're going to have to stay on **top** of the budget issue. You can't tighten your belt one year and the next year go on a spending spree. It might be a decade before you're going to be able to go on a spending spree in Illinois again. That's what we also continued to do—keep a tight rein on the budget.

Now, we could do some more things, and each year, we did a little more. By '98, we were creating KidCare and things like that, but even during those good years, I still was "Governor No." We were keeping a brake on new employees and how we were spending money. That's one of the reasons that by the end of that second term, we had a billion and a half dollar surplus. Now, we got helped by the national economy, there's no doubt about that, but if we had continued our spending ways, that's why we got the mess in '91. I inherited a mess not because we were in a recession—we weren't in a recession yet. That's a fallacy when anybody says that's... We caused it because they overspent. Same thing that happened this time. We didn't get in the mess we're in here in 2010 because of the recession; we were in a mess in 2006 when the economy was humming along on all cylinders, because we overspent.

So throughout the second term, much easier to deal on the budget—much, much easier—but at the same time, I continued to keep a pretty tight lid on that and continued to tell people no a lot.

DePue: This is a very good segue, I think, from what you were just talking about to the next subject, and that's the reorganization of government and specifically the Department of Natural Resources. I think July 1, 1995, would have been the timeframe.

Edgar: When it took effect, yes. What happens in the constitution—I call it the new—the 1970 constitution, is the chief executive can reorganize an executive branch. You put a resolution in, or you put—it's not a bill, but you put something in—and if both houses don't say no to it, then I think it goes into effect July 1. Now, when

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<sup>43</sup> The National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois played an important role in the development and popularization of the Internet. Among its many accomplishments, NCSA developed two important clients for using the Internet: Telnet and Mosaic. The latter was a path-breaking browser for the World Wide Web, and directly influenced the creation of the Netscape and Internet Explorer browsers.

I was a legislator, I insisted, when Governor Thompson was the first one to try this, that we have companion legislation to do the same thing.<sup>44</sup> There was all this legislation, but the effective date must have been July 1, if that's when it took effect.

One of the things we were looking at in the second term—we were continuing to try to figure out how we could cut costs, reorganize. We had a little more of a luxury; we could deal with some of those issues because we weren't always spending 85 percent of our time worrying about the budget. Natural Resources was the old Department of Conservation; I think we put Mines and Minerals, and I can't remember what all we put in it.

DePue: Energy and Natural Resources, Mines and Minerals, as you suggested. There's a couple that didn't make it, and I wanted to see what your reasoning for that was. I don't know how directly involved you were in some of these decisions. But here's a couple that didn't make it—Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

Edgar: Yes. The feeling was that's a different thing and those are two different entities. I don't know if we ever even thought about putting the EPA in there. Knowing Al Grosboll, who was my staffer in there, he probably would have thought that would have been a mistake. That's a regulatory agency; the other is—"service" maybe is not the right word, but it is more of a service. We thought it was better to keep those separate.<sup>45</sup>

DePue: Department of Nuclear Safety was another one that didn't end up in Natural Resources.

Edgar: Probably the same thing, the regulatory part. Probably not a strong feeling. If anything, maybe that would go in the EPA if you're ever going to throw it in—

DePue: And a third one, I'm sure you're going to say the same thing—Illinois Pollution Control Board.

Edgar: Yes. Pollution Control Board is different than EPA. The logic there always was the EPA's the one to bring charges, and Pollution Control is the one that kind of plays judge, so you never wanted those two together. That was the original thought when Ogilvie put it in, in 1970, and I think that thinking still prevails today. So it didn't make sense to put either one of those in with Conservation, which is more of a service as opposed to a regulatory agency.

DePue: Here's the one that did get incorporated, and I'm not sure it's necessarily the happiest of marriages, at least initially. I'll get your reaction to mixing the Department of Conservation and Mines and Minerals.

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<sup>44</sup> This was an important moment in Edgar's relationship with Thompson. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 9, 2009, 7, 52-56.

<sup>45</sup> This was Grosboll's explanation. Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, October 22, 2009, 43-57, especially at 53.

Edgar: Yes. Mines and Minerals was kind of sticking out there. In a way, you could say it's reg—because it basically is mine safety, but it's—

DePue: But wasn't part of it mine promotion? Here's a major industry for the southern part of the state?

Edgar: Yes, but Mines and Minerals didn't do that. Energy might have done that, and I think part of it, the Energy thing, putting all that together with Conservation. I think we also wanted to get rid of it. I think it was a pain, the director. You had to go through the coal mine folks to get it and all.

DePue: "To get rid of it," meaning get rid of the Department of Mines and Minerals? Subsume it?

Edgar: The whole director problem. I think there were some issues there. I can't remember exactly. I think there was opposition from some in the coal industry. I think we finally convinced them, and I think that it probably made sense. One of the things that Conservation did do with strip mines—we started doing a lot of set-asides. We'd take some old strip mines from coal. I forget which coal company it was. We got a big thing down in southern Illinois that we set aside for natural resources, for hunting and things like that. It was an old strip mine. Things actually worked out because you had those departments together.

DePue: Sparta, by chance?

Edgar: It seems like it was someplace over by Pinckneyville. Sparta's the gun facility. That's the thing Ryan did on the gun, where they put all the money in for the shooting complex.

DePue: I was in the National Guard at this time, and there was a lot of talk about the National Guard taking over the old Sparta area strip mine.

Edgar: That might be where they put the gun thing eventually. The one I'm thinking about, I went out and looked at it, and I was thinking it was in Pinckneyville. Sparta's farther west. Isn't that where the gun thing is that they put in?<sup>46</sup>

DePue: I don't know that.

Edgar: Yes, I'm not sure.

DePue: You picked Brent Manning as your first director, and I assume he had to go through the regular appointment process.

Edgar: Well, he was Director of Conservation.

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<sup>46</sup> Sparta is home of the World Shooting & Recreational Complex, which moved from Vandalia, Ohio, during George Ryan's tenure. The initial planning and negotiations were handled by Edgar's staff. Brent Manning, interview by Mark DePue, February 19, 2010, 55-56.

DePue: So you brought him over.

Edgar: We just brought him. Conservation was 80 percent of that department anyway. He'd done a good job as Director of Conservation and was well thought of by the conservation folks and the hunting folks and the people who kind of paid attention to that.

DePue: He had an interesting background coming from Ducks Unlimited.

Edgar: Ducks Unlimited, yes. And that wasn't an accident. He was one of the last directors I picked back in '91. There are a lot of people, political guys, who think, I could run Conservation. I said, "Nah, I need somebody that can be a cross between the sportsmen and the natural resource folks." That's a tricky thing. Well, Ducks Unlimited had that image. Yes, the hunters loved Ducks Unlimited, but it was viewed as a reputable semi-environmental kind of group, so they brought his name in. It turned out he'd gone to Eastern too. That had (DePue laughs) nothing to do with it, but it never hurt, you know. That, I thought, was a good mix. When I told George Fleischli what I was looking for, he just shook his head and said, "We'll never find somebody like that." Then about two weeks later he came back and said, "We got a guy I think maybe will fit." I said, "Yes, that's ideal." Of course, blame Ducks Unlimited for why we've got all these geese walking around now, I guess.

DePue: (laughs) That's a different matter.

Edgar: Brent did a very good job. He particularly was good with the hunting crowd, because they were always a little apprehensive about environmentalists, but he could deal with the environmentalists. He had Mary Gade, who was at EPA; she was pretty good at understanding the business side. We were pretty well covered in both areas, covered in the groups we had to deal with, and they were effective. Brent was very good at promoting conservation.

Whenever we'd get this land, or we'd open something, a lot of times I'd go for a horse ride. Brent wasn't real big on horse riding, but that's the governor, and he's there, and he'd go horse ride with me. I think we were up in Dixon or someplace—we'd bought some additional land during my second term. We were riding around that land, and a bumblebee stung his horse, threw him off, and he broke—I can't remember if he broke his arm or something. (laughs) I mean, the poor guy. He got a broken bone off of it and was going around in a cast for a while. So I think he tried to beg off any more horse rides with me at park openings.

Actually it wasn't too controversial, because you had all the interest groups pretty lined up. I think the biggest sell was to the mine companies, because they were going to lose that department.

DePue: I would think that the mining companies would have a fear of an aggressive mine reclamation program that would cost them a lot of money.

Edgar: Oh, they get a lot of that money from the state, though. I don't think that was a problem. I think they get a lot of that reimbursed from the state and stuff. They already had a pretty aggressive mine [reclamation program]. I don't think that bothered them quite as much. And I think some of them had dealt with Manning. Again, they probably weren't excited about it when it first came up, but I think in the end they were pretty well... And, you know, I did win by 30 percent, (DePue laughs) and that helped an awful lot in a lot of things. Guys weren't going to buck me too much.

DePue: Talking to other people in your administration, they have certainly conveyed to me that you had a real soft spot in your heart for conservation issues and for land management issues, so I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about your philosophy towards that part of your job.

Edgar: I love to be outdoors. I grew up at the state parks around Charleston—Lincoln Log Cabin, Fox Ridge. I think I recognized too that we've only got so much of that land available, and if we don't keep it now, it's going to be gone. I saw what we were able to do with Site M, which is extremely important. Site M you now call Panther Creek. I think the official name is Jim Edgar—

DePue: Jim Edgar Panther Creek.

Edgar: Yes. The legislators tried to be nice to me, and the Ryan people didn't want to give me much. I wish they'd just call it "Edgar Park"—they can leave the "Jim" off. That was something we purchased when we were broke. I mean, talk about a leap of faith. I remember Grosboll and Fleischli came to me and said, "We can get this land," because Commonwealth Edison, the big utility company in Chicago, which had put that parcel together, wanted to get rid of it. They didn't need to build a—

DePue: Where is this located?

Edgar: This is in Cass County.

DePue: Cass County.

Edgar: Between Cass County and the Illinois River, so it's west of Springfield.

DePue: East of Beardstown.

Edgar: Yes, east of the river. Almost goes to the river. They just said, "This is the biggest tract of land the state could ever purchase."

DePue: Fifteen thousand six hundred acres.

Edgar: Yes. I said, "Well, we don't have any money." They said, "There's federal money we get. We can move some things around and do it, but if we don't do it now, it's going to be sold privately, and we'll never get another chance. What was it, twelve

million? It wasn't a huge, huge amount. Was it that much? It was around ten million dollars, I think.<sup>47</sup>

DePue: This was a piece of land that the National Guard was going after in a strong way but ran into some serious resistance with the farmers who still work some of that land.

Edgar: Yes, yes. Well, what'd you guys need it for, war games? I don't remember the National Guard being involved in this. Farmers were worried they'd lose the ability to farm it, and not so much now, but originally a lot of it was farmed for a while longer. The other alternative was it was going to go private, and they were worried over there about their tax base and things like that. So there was some apprehension there, but it didn't take legislation; all I had to do was just sign an agreement, and that's what I did. I still have the pen in my desk at home. I keep hoping someday we'll get a lodge built over there, and I'll put that pen over there. Anyway, you saw, for really not a huge amount of money, great potential for the state. I wish it was maybe a little closer to a lot more of the people up north, but it still turned out to be a great resource. I haven't been over there for a couple years. Usually I'd take my dogs over there every year and go for a hike.

Site M whetted my appetite, I guess, a little bit. Later on, we never bought anything that large. Also, it was pointed out to me, we needed to do more linear kind of parks, along streams—not just a square, but kind of long, like a water path or whatever. So when opportunities would arise, they'd come to me, and if we could find the money some way—as I said, we got federal grants, and sometimes we could use that—we tried to continue to add on, because I just figured a hundred years from now we'd regret if we didn't do it.

DePue: There were a couple others that were pretty large as well, and part of this is also because of the federal government—

Edgar: The big one is Joliet, the arsenal.

DePue: Joliet. That one was nineteen thousand acres. I don't know that all of that came under your control.

Edgar: That's not all us. I think part of that was with the feds. They have a cemetery there, don't they?

DePue: They have a new veterans cemetery there.

Edgar: And it seemed like there was something else. Yes, that was going to be in conjunction with the feds. That was a little different. I remember spending time going up there and driving around. I saw a deer one time. I am convinced they put that deer there for me to see. I don't think that deer was actually up there.

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<sup>47</sup> For other recollections about the acquisition of Site M, see Grosboll, October 22, 2009, 71-79; Manning, February 19, 2010, 23-27; George Fleischli, interview by Mark DePue, January 27, 2010, 38-40. These three interviews are also good sources for Edgar's commitment to preservation more generally.

DePue: Another one on the Mississippi River, Savanna Army Depot, about thirteen thousand acres.

Edgar: Yes, yes. That's where we were going to build the prison. But that one, that was the old arsenal?

DePue: It was an ammunition plant as well.

Edgar: Yes, and it was coming free. But after we had that, there was a part where we were going to put a prison. There was some snail or something—I never did figure out what the animal was—but the environmentalists went after us tooth and nail on that. I was so mad. I'm convinced that one of the environmentalists had a home up on the bluff, and they didn't want to look down on a prison. That's what we really think the problem was. They did a good job of getting the media and everybody riled up, so finally I backed off, realizing I was getting the tar beat out of me. We moved the prison over to Thomson—was that the name of the place? This is the one that the feds were going to buy, or maybe they have bought it.

DePue: Yeah, I know which one you're talking about.

Edgar: Thomson. It's a little bit farther away from the river than where this was. I think we broke ground, and then Ryan, people in the financial budget, put that on hold. Or maybe they finished it, but they never did occupy it. I guess it's an empty prison.

DePue: It's only partially occupied, a very small part of it, I think.

Edgar: Yes, and then that's the one that the feds were going to build to replace Guantanamo. That's all kind of on hold. (laughs) Then I became the hero of the environmentalists again when I moved the prison.

DePue: Here's one more to list here: the Cache River State Natural Area. It's about thirty-five hundred acres.

Edgar: Yes. That is not so much size as it is uniqueness. That's very, very unique. It's kind of the last of the gulf area habitat.

DePue: Wetlands area.

Edgar: Yes. It's hard to think—the Gulf of Mexico is probably seven hundred miles south of there, and this is kind of the last remains of that. We did that in my first term as governor, because I remember taking Emy, my half-golden retriever and half-Samoyed, down there. I remember taking her on the boat; that was the first time she'd ever been on a boat. We were going through there, and they were showing it to me. You think you're back in prehistoric times because you're back there with these big cypress trees and everything. I remember some big crane flew over us, and it looked like some prehistoric bird. That is one of the really unique areas in the state. If you go down there, you think you're in the swamps, actually. So it was something that really had been worked on.

Henry Barkhausen, who had been Director of conservation for Ogilvie and was very much involved in conservation projects, actually had lived down there. My father-in-law, years ago—has nothing to do with any of this stuff, just coincidence—built his [Barkhausen's] house down in southern Illinois. He was from Lake Forest, and he had a place down there. He'd go down, and my father-in-law had built the place for him. Then he became Director of Conservation and stayed active in all these... He was the big mover on this for years, so we just kind of pushed it along. Illinois—we're used to this flat land, and everything looks kind of the same. You go down there, and you don't think you're in Illinois, you think you're in Louisiana or Mississippi or along the coast or something like that. It's a very unique area.

DePue: I don't think this applies to the Cache River area you were just talking about, but certainly Site M and Savanna and Joliet all could be agricultural areas as well, so how much resistance did you get from Department of Agriculture and farmers?

Edgar: Only from the farmers who farmed that land. The thought was, to be very truthful, some developer's going to buy that and develop it. Around Site M over there, that's pretty scenic; you've got bluffs and things. People are going to probably end up buying ten acre tracts and building homes and things like that. So I don't think it was so much a choice—do we put it back in farming or do we put a state park there—it was, do we develop it for the people of the state, or does the private sector develop it for some wealthy individuals? I think that was really... Now, saying that, there was opposition from the tenant farmers who farmed that land, because Commonwealth Edison had bought it but hadn't done anything with it, so they left it in farming. Some of it's not the greatest farmland, and some of it is okay and still being farmed, though, as I said, that was being phased out. Some of it, they were farming just to have feed for the animals, because you can hunt on certain parts of that.

DePue: But that was not an issue for either Joliet or Savanna?

Edgar: I don't remember that ever coming up at all.

DePue: Most of that had been under federal control for a long time anyway.

Edgar: Yes, I'm sure in Joliet it didn't come up, but I'm not sure about Savanna. I don't remember that being an issue. I do remember it being a little bit of an issue down in Cass County. The county officials were a little nervous about, "We're going to lose this for the tax roll." Well, the argument was, "You're going to get a lot more tourists, and things like that." I think it has. I have not been over there for a couple of years, but I remember when I was getting ready to leave office, we were still developing, and we were doing it slowly, when we had some money. I said something to Kirk Brown about, "Be sure you take care of the roads over there." About three years later I went over there, and I mean, there were more blacktop roads through that park, and I couldn't believe it. I said to Brown, "Jiminy Christmas, I can't believe it. How'd you do that with... How'd Ryan get..."

He said, “Well, you told me to take care of the roads there.” (DePue laughs) I had visions they’d probably put a gravel road in, which I hate. You know, you get dust and rocks... It’s blacktop all over that place.

DePue: Surprised you when one of your lieutenants did what you asked them to do.

Edgar: That’s right, that’s right, yes. After I was gone, too. But that is really a neat... The thing that’s unique to me about Site M, growing up in Central Illinois—Central Illinois’s flat as a pancake, but over there, because you’re close to the Illinois River, there’s actually hills. You can get a little aerobic in your hiking, and I go out west every summer to be able to do that. So that’s nice. The other thing about Site M is—I’m not a hunter, but it’s got the biggest whitetail deer in the country. People come from Colorado to hunt deer in Illinois over there. I used to take my dogs, and they said, “Be careful. People do hunt around here with bows, and especially that white dog, they might think it’s some...” (laughs) I haven’t taken my new dog over yet. I’ve got to get over there sometime when the weather is not too cold or too humid.

DePue: Horseback riding is part of the mix as well?

Edgar: When we opened it up, I rode a horse over there. I don’t ride too much anymore. But you can ride horses over there. There’s a camp there that’s especially for people bringing their horses, and they camp out there.

DePue: So how important was all of this just because of the way you like to relax—to do the trails, to hike, to bike, to horseback ride?

Edgar: I’m sure if I had been a guy who didn’t like to do any of that, we probably wouldn’t have done that, to some extent. When they’d have come in and said, “Gee, we...” I’d have said, “Well, why do we need that? Take that eight million dollars and spend it on a school in Chicago or something.” I’m sure that as someone who appreciated growing up and using the state parks, that’s an important part of state government. One of the things I tell people—we’re going to have to do a lot of cutting in the budget, and there are certain things that are higher priorities than others. There’s no doubt, a health care that’s going to keep somebody alive is about as high as you can get. Education is very important, but that doesn’t mean you just eliminate state parks so you have a little more money to put into schools. To a lot of folks, state parks are the best service they get from state government, and part of our responsibility as state government is to provide those facilities, those recreation opportunities, and preserve some natural resources. Now, maybe we don’t put as much money or a percentage of money in there as we do in education, or maybe we cut a little more from there, but still, you don’t eliminate those things. There’s no doubt that a lot of that belief comes from the fact that I grew up using those. The last governor we had in Illinois didn’t understand that.<sup>48</sup> I think that he would have

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<sup>48</sup> Edgar is referring to Rod Blagojevich.

eliminated every state park, because every time they cut, they cut state parks, to the point where you almost couldn't use them.

DePue: State parks and historic sites.

Edgar: Yes, and to me, maybe that's not your top priority, but you have a responsibility to provide those services, and you need to maintain them. He grew up on the North Side of Chicago, and he had a whole different attitude about that and didn't appreciate that. So I'm sure that I am a creature of the environment I grew up in, and part of that was every other weekend we went out to Lincoln Log Cabin or Fox Ridge, had a picnic. I spent a lot of time out in those places. And I know from some of my relatives, that's what they thought state government did—the only thing it did good for them—they provided a state park. They never did understand when they [state officials] decided to keep it natural and didn't mow everything. They thought that was terrible. They used to complain to me when I was a legislator, "You've got to mow Fox Ridge." I'd say, "I think they're trying to leave that natural habitat." "Oh, I don't care, I want it mowed. It always was mowed before." But again, I'm sure my upbringing, where I grew up, had something to do with that.

DePue: Another significant initiative in the last term was Conservation 2000.

Edgar: We had the first Conservation 2000 in my first term.

DePue: This is a meeting of people to discuss conservation issues.

Edgar: Yes. That was to bring everybody together and say, "All right, let's come up with a blueprint—what should we do in Illinois?" You had environmentalists, and you had the conservationists, you had the hunters, you had agriculture. One of the problems always with this stuff is agriculture. They don't want you to do anything to the land; they want to leave it to them, though they are, I think, conservationists at heart. Bringing them all together, we were able to work out some agreements and some priorities. But they'd just never had that happen before. I kicked it off with a speech, and they had just never had that kind of attention from a governor, or for a long, long time if they ever had it.

One of the nice things about being governor, if you show up at a function and it's called a governor's thing, it adds a little more prestige to it and people feel good about it. We'd host things over at the mansion, conferences. Well, you went to the governor's mansion; it's kind of like going to the White House on a smaller scale. It's important that the governor shows an interest in these things. It doesn't mean you're going to be there every day and know all the details—that's what you have staff for. But I think in the case of the Conservation Congress, it showed early on that in our administration, that was a concern, a priority, and that gave them an avenue to come up... More importantly, we took those recommendations and implemented a lot of them over the years.

Throughout my time as secretary of state and governor, I put together a lot of commissions and advisory groups that would recommend things. I think in most

cases, we implemented what they had recommended to us. So I think we had a good track record of not wasting people's time; that we would take what they did... I've always thought that's extremely important too, because you bring people from outside of government who many times have a much better expertise on certain matters than you could ever afford in government, and you use their expertise to come up with better laws, better rules and regulations. We had done that in the secretary of state's office in securities, and redid the security laws and the corporation laws. Those were high-powered, well-paid attorneys that we had on those advisory committees for free. We didn't have that kind of brainpower, really. We had some people who had been there a long time and were smart, but they didn't have the expertise. The same was true, I thought, on conservation and a whole host of areas.

The other thing, if you're going to do something in government, if you're going to create policy, it's very important that the people that policy's going to affect have some input on that. Now, you hope sometimes they get that through their legislators; sometimes that works, sometimes it doesn't. But with things like the Conservation Congress, you kind of went straight to these folks who really cared, were really involved, really knowledgeable, and had them sit there advising you. Then they're part of it, so when you go to implement these things, they're going to be like they had some say, they had input. That, to me, makes government work in a much more efficient manner. So Conservation Congress was a good example of that, which I think worked well and proved to be good politics as well as good government.

DePue: I'm a little fuzzy on this one, but I recall that in the second administration, there was a conscious effort to **invest** in conservation issues as well. Obviously part of that would be the new DNR building, but I think it went way beyond that.

Edgar: We acquired a lot more land. Every year we had so much money we could spend. Grosboll would always come in with me, and Manning would come in, and then some new land they wanted to buy. Grosboll would be looking for nature preserves, and Manning would be looking for places he could go fish and hunt. (DePue laughs) We tried to do a balance on them. We spent a lot of time on that. As secretary of state, I'd started, and we continue to promote, bicycle paths. We worked with the state's park association—I forget the exact name of it—on grants and things there. My philosophy was I wanted to preserve land. I was all for that. But I also wanted to make sure some of that land's going to be able to be used. I didn't want to leave it all just to the birds and the bunnies. I wanted it possible that humans could actually, without tearing it up, and maybe not all of it, have areas to recreate. Because I thought if you did that, then people get out there—particularly city folks, and maybe even rural folks who sometimes took it for granted—they'd have a better appreciation of why we need that land, why we need to preserve it. But I did think people ought to be able to enjoy it, too.

DePue: Thinking about the urban areas, there's a considerable amount of forest preserves in the Chicago area and DuPage County, and places like that as well.

Edgar: Yes. Somebody decades ago had the foresight... The forest preserve in Cook County is phenomenal how much... I've spent a little time in that. Now, I grew up in Charleston. We had a little city park and all that, and we had the state parks, but we didn't have park districts. Here in Champaign County, they've got a pretty aggressive park district. There's a little park down from where we live. So I'm glad there's some of that. In the bigger counties, you have that. In the smaller counties, you don't have that as much. Again, state parks are particularly important to give people that opportunity to go out and camp or just to go out and walk their dog.

DePue: If you were governor still today, would you be actively pursuing adding to the state park district or state lands?

Edgar: Recognizing that the state's **broke**, you probably wouldn't be able to add much. Now, if you got a Site M that came along, and there was federal money that could only be used for conservation purposes, then I might try to do that. But I wouldn't necessarily say, "We could buy some new land, but I'm going to have to take money from education." I would say, "We've got this park; we've got to maintain it." I wouldn't say, "We're not going to maintain this park so I can spend some more money in education." I think they both have a role to play.

DePue: Part of the question was addressing the issue of balance between public lands and what's for private investment, private use, and for agriculture as well—what that balance should be.

Edgar: The agriculture thing—I think that what we would preserve is justifiable, much more than building a new subdivision. Now, I'm not saying you don't build new subdivisions; I'm just saying the long-range benefit is probably more equal if we're taking that and using it as farmland. And usually the farmland you take to set aside for natural is not as great farmland.

DePue: It's their set-aside acres, perhaps.

Edgar: Yes, but unfortunately, a lot of places where you put subdivisions are prime farmland. Now, what do you tell people, that Champaign can't grow? Because you've got some of the best farmland in the world around here. I don't know how. But to me, that's a much better, valid argument than saying, "Hey, we've taken this land out of farming, and we're going to put it in a natural preserve." I think that's much more justifiable.

DePue: We're going to go into some odds and ends here. One of them that you definitely told me you wanted to address is Chicago's third airport.

Edgar: We're going back to what happened in 1995. Things were going along, and the first two, three months, we were humming. I mean, we were passing bills—not that we, within the Republican Party, always saw eye-to-eye, but things were moving pretty good. We did all those business issues, the higher education, and we did Chicago schools. We also knew we had that issue left over from the first session—the third airport, and what are we going to do about O'Hare, and all that. The city still

wanted to do something about O'Hare, and I wanted to do something about O'Hare, but I also wanted to build a third airport. A lot of the suburbanites didn't want to do anything about O'Hare unless there was a third airport that could take some of the pressure off, and they were real suspicious of the city. Part of the dilemma was that I had the two leaders, who both were from a district that had Bensenville, an area right by O'Hare. That was the hotbed of opposition to the expansion of O'Hare, so they were very much opposed or concerned—one was more opposed and the other was more concerned, I think—but they're constituents. If my two Republican leaders had been from someplace other than northeastern DuPage County, we probably wouldn't have had this big fight, and we probably would have figured out O'Hare a lot sooner than finally getting into it in the George Ryan administration.

We wanted to get on it, and we were talking to the city. So finally, Lee Daniels—because he's Speaker, and he's got control and wants to get some things done—said, "How about if we have some discussions with the city; I'll see if we can work out some of them?" I said, "Fine. I'm all for it." So we had Lee, and I can't be sure if we thought it up and got Lee to do it first, but he was agreeable. Pate didn't want to take part in it, but I think Lee did, and I don't know if anybody from the Senate came—Pate didn't come—to sit down with the city guys and see if there's something we could work out on O'Hare and a third airport. This was probably late March when they started talking, and they were having these talks. I went off to the Middle East; I went off to Israel and Jordan and Egypt.

DePue: For a personal trip?

Edgar: No. I had a joint Jewish-Arab group of business guys. I made them go together. The Jewish guys wanted me to go to Israel; the Arab guys wanted me to go to Egypt and Jordan. I said, "Fine, I'm going to go both places; you guys are coming together." Which was kind of neat, because I had these leaders in the Arab community, a lot of them Lebanese, and leaders of the Jewish group, and they never had met each other even though they were in Chicago. So we all went together.

When I got back, I was someplace and I picked up the paper, and all of a sudden Daley had signed an agreement with Gary, Indiana, about an airport—just completely undercut what those discussions were.<sup>49</sup> Lee Daniels just went **off** the wall. I don't blame him, because he'd kind of stuck his neck out with some of his constituents, trying to work on this, and they were negotiating in good faith. Now, I'm not sure they had ever worked out something, but at least they were talking. Daley, (laughs) unbeknownst to them, did this because he was afraid that we were going to do something to him. Republicans in the legislature wanted to pass a bill to take O'Hare away from the city of Chicago, and I said, "No, we're not going to do that." There would be times I'd just have to tell them no. They wanted to go punish the city or do that. I said, "No. First of all, I'm the governor for the entire state, and that's including the city, but we're not taking the airport. Now, if we can work out an agreement, which I think we should, where we're in with them, but I'm not

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<sup>49</sup> "Daley Crafts Airport Alliance With Gary: Fear of GOP Leadership Cited," *Chicago Tribune*, April 14, 1995.

going to take it away from them.” So Daley claimed that he was worried we might do something like that.

We were not going to do something like that. I had made it clear we weren't going to do that. We had these discussions going. Kirk Brown, my secretary of transportation, was working with him on it.<sup>50</sup> He said, “They've got a long way to go, but they're talking; everything's fine.” Then lo and behold, out of no place, he cuts this deal with Gary. Well, as I said, this just undercut any confidence that my suburban Republicans had in dealing with Daley on their third airport. Daniels was just furious. Of course, Pate was saying, “I told you so; you can't trust those guys from the city.”

About this time, they'd had the municipal elections up there. Daley and the city council had just been reelected, and they passed a huge pay raise—I think it was a 100 percent pay raise. Daley's salary went from maybe a hundred to two hundred thousand. The city council quadrupled—just a huge, huge, huge pay raise. (laughs) Daniels is mad, so he passes a bill, and they pass it in the Senate, too, to repeal the pay raise, because they have that power. They can do that to the city. So I've got this bill on my desk to repeal a pay raise. It was way too high. The legislators went way farther than they should have. (laughs) It was all because they were mad about the airport; that's why they did it. It actually impacted some other cities around the state, too, where they had something like a 5 percent pay raise. My feeling was the pay raise was way too high, but that's their prerogative. They're elected officials, and if they want to do that, then I don't really think as the state I ought to tell the city of Chicago what they can and can't pay. We do have guidelines on some offices, but I'm a big believer in, “You guys set your own pay.”

So I called Daniels. I said, “I'm going to veto this bill.” “Oh, no, no.” I said, “I don't agree with it. I think they made a mistake on the pay raise, and I know why you did it—it's because you're mad about the airport—but I'm just not going to sign it.” So I vetoed it. For about a week, I was a hero in Chicago city council. (laughs) I went up to the inauguration of Daley, because we were speaking at that point and he wasn't mad at me about something—even though I was ticked about the airport, but I didn't say it. I remember the inauguration that day. All the city councilmen came up and thanked me.

After we had a Republican legislature, I had to be careful to protect the city of Chicago. These Republicans, after all these years of having the Democrats run everything—and I can't say the city, the Democrats, were always friendly toward the suburbs—kind of wanted to get back at the city. I think they also thought, rightfully so in some cases, the city mismanages things; we ought to do it. My argument was, “No, we're not here to take over the city of Chicago. We might tell them no if they want money from us or something, but we're here to work with them.”

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<sup>50</sup> For background on negotiations over the third airport and O'Hare's expansion, see Kirk Brown, December 22, 2009, 101-110; Arnold Kanter, December 29, 2009, 49-56. Both interviews by Mike Czaplicki.

I always tell people that each two years, I had a different role to play in my governorship. The first two years, I had a Democratic legislature; I had to protect the suburbs, because they were just ready to stick everything to the suburbs. Then when I had a split legislature, particularly the last two years, it was Republicans and Democrats, and they were all from north of I-80. You had DuPage County leaders, and you had Chicago leaders. There wasn't anybody from downstate. I remember later, part of the education funding was for capital; they wanted to create a formula that would make it very difficult for downstate schools to be able to access the money for capital construction. I said, "No, I'll veto that bill." I think they wanted a 50 percent match, which the suburban and Chicago schools could afford, but a real poor downstate school district couldn't, so we did a sliding scale. But as governor, it was interesting—a lot of times I'd have to defend Chicago, other times I'd have to hold Chicago off from the suburbs, and other times I had to be a downstater because the four leaders I dealt with weren't from downstate, and they didn't understand those things.

But on the airport, I had to keep them from trying to take it over. Really it was unfortunate Daley did what he did. I don't know if we'd have made some progress, but maybe we could have moved ahead the whole airport thing, which languished for another six years before something finally happened. The other thing with the third airport—Daley was never going to negotiate with us on the third airport as long as he had Bill Clinton in the White House, because to do anything on airports, you had to have federal approval. Well, Clinton was not going to do something to make Daley mad at him, so we never could get the third airport approved with Clinton as president. But when George Bush got elected president, that completely changed the dynamics of the whole thing. Daley was smart enough to understand that, and George Ryan happened to be governor, so he was willing to negotiate on the runways and things like that. He didn't give up a whole lot except Meigs, which he reneged on later—but that was all because the dynamics had changed because of the president. While I was governor, the dynamics were such that he always had a veto because of the White House. The White House would never go against him on the third airport. We couldn't do anything on the third airport unless Daley would agree, and he just wasn't going to agree on anything.

DePue: Where is this on the timeline when a lot of the discussion focused on Peotone as the site of the third airport?

Edgar: That started in '92, '93, and then it continued.

DePue: So that predates Daley's discussion with Gary.

Edgar: Yes. But it kept going. The state acquired land and things like that. Again, it was kind of like Daley also knew he had the president; Clinton would not go against him, so he always had that. But once a Republican got in the White House, that changed the whole dynamic, and that's why he became more agreeable on some of what they were going to do on O'Hare and things.

DePue: I could have the timeline of this entirely wrong, but the airport that was east of the St. Louis area?

Edgar: The big airport to take Lambert's place, or the—

DePue: Yeah, it was just east of Scott Air Force Base.

Edgar: That's the one that Dixon and Costello were big on. That was Southwest Airport? What did they call that?<sup>51</sup> That was something they wanted to build. They thought that would attract aviation traffic to that part of the state. Lambert had its limits. So they piggybacked that onto Scott Air Force Base. I was supportive. I think Thompson actually started talking about it when Thompson was governor, but I was supportive. We did some things, and it was completed when I was governor. Of course, it's kind of a white elephant; unfortunately, they've never been able to get many commercial flights into there. And it sits there. It's a nice thing, but it just sits there.

DePue: It's just too far away from the metro area.

Edgar: I guess. I don't know if Lambert is still sufficient to provide what they need. Yes, the growth out there maybe hasn't been as quick as they thought it might be. Originally, back when Ogilvie was governor, there was talk about building a major airport out there that would take Lambert's place. It had moved along pretty far, but then it didn't get finalized.

DePue: A couple other issues that are definitely not—

Edgar: Then we'll talk next time, I guess, about Meigs?

DePue: Yes. Next time is Meigs.

Edgar: That takes a little more of a...

DePue: Again, following along with 1995 odds and ends as a category area, if you will. These aren't explicitly Illinois issues, but I think there's at least one of them that will have an impact, and that's April 19, the Oklahoma City bomber.

Edgar: It had an impact for me—I was born in Oklahoma. That's the first time we'd had any kind of domestic terrorism like that. That was huge.

DePue: But the state, like everybody else, has plenty of federal buildings that are seen as targets.

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<sup>51</sup> Lambert–St. Louis International Airport is the main airport serving St. Louis. In 1998, the \$313 million MidAmerica Airport opened, sharing runways with Scott Air Force Base. Edgar is referring to U.S. Sen. Alan Dixon and U.S. Rep. Jerry Costello. Brenda Edgar's mother spent some time at Scott Air Force base in World War II, teaching Morse code to army aviators, before joining the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). "A New Airport is Built, but Will It Fly?" *Chicago Tribune*, December 21, 1997. Brenda Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, August 17, 2010, 3.

Edgar: Federal buildings or just any building. Crackpots might go after anything. But I think we were all just stunned to think—in Oklahoma City. I remember we all said, “If it can happen in Oklahoma City, it can happen anyplace.” I mean, that’s the last place you’d think something like this would happen. When it happened, I had had open heart surgery, of course, less than a year before. There was a blood drive to help, and I was going to go give blood since I wanted to promote it, and I’m from Oklahoma. They said, “You’re not giving blood; you’ve still got funny things floating around in you.” (laughter) So I didn’t get to give blood.

That was a side thing. Brenda had her bears. Well, you even got to talk with her.<sup>52</sup> But one of Brenda’s big things was she had created this bear program, P.J., to give to children who go into Children and Family Services—wards of the state—because there was a feeling that a child in need needs something to hold onto, and a teddy bear is the ideal thing. So Brenda had created this with Marshall Field’s. For every bear they sold at their store, they would give one to the state to give to kids who were going into the wards of the state—basically orphans or without their families. Brenda had worked with somebody from Korea to design the bear. In fact, when we went to Korea in ’96, she went to the factory and saw it.

In ’95, after the bombing, they were going to have, we figured, some kids in the hospital. She called the First Lady of Oklahoma, who we knew, and said, “Is there anything we can do? By the way, I have these teddy bears we give out. Would that help you with some of the children?” She said, “Yeah, send some down.” So Brenda sent some down, and she called back and said, “Could you send more? We want to give them out at the memorial service.”

I don’t know if you watched the memorial service on TV. Billy Graham and Bill Clinton were there. We sat home and watched it; we’re sitting there, and everybody is clutching Brenda’s teddy bear. They had put them out to all the families—not just the kids—all the adults. You watch this ceremony, and they keep panning these adults and these kids all clutching this little teddy bear. The next day, Tom Brokaw had a thing on NBC news. Everybody went, “What are these bears,?” and they talked about Brenda and her program. They have a thing down there, I guess, in Oklahoma City—I haven’t seen it—that talks about the bears, but they misspelled (laughs) Brenda’s name, so I don’t know if they ever changed that or not.

But I guess that made that even more personal, because the bears were down there and we felt that was a... I think we checked the federal facilities [in Illinois] and started watching them. It wasn’t the same as what happened after 9/11. I mean,

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<sup>52</sup> Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols bombed the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995. Brenda Edgar arranged with Cathy Keating, the First Lady of Oklahoma, to send several hundred P.J. Huggabee bears to the memorial service held in the wake of the bombing. Brenda Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, September 14, 2010, 65-68. Also see, Billy Graham’s speech at the memorial service, at the 3:17 and 8:20 minute marks, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7enzdVTcoM>; and David Allen, “An Image from Oklahoma City,” *Journal of American History* 94 (June 2007), 172-8, <http://www.journalofamericanhistory.org/projects/americanfaces/sources/allen04.html>.

9/11 I think was even—and I was out of the governorship then, but the... I just remember though, we all just shook our heads and thought, if it could happen in Oklahoma City, it could happen anyplace.

DePue: One of the reasons for the question, though, is you thinking, okay, we've got federal buildings here in Springfield; they've got them scattered across the entire state; there's other targets as well. Was there any discussion about heightened security for some of these places?

Edgar: I think there was for a short term. I don't think it was a long-term thing that we thought as much about. I'm sure that the guys watching the building... You do have people out there checking on this stuff, federal people. We didn't have any reports of concern or additional concerns. Again, I think when 9/11 happened, though, that all changed. I think that was really... This looks like an organized—whereas McVeigh was kind of a loner in some ways. You know you've got some people out there like that. You worry about copycats, but I think the 9/11 thing was a whole different thing.

DePue: The last thing I have down here for this group of questions is, on August twentieth, a "Truth in Sentencing" bill was signed into law. Remember anything in particular about that?

Edgar: I think we tried to make that a little bit more reasonable. I had threatened to veto truth-in-sentencing, because we were getting people staying too long in prisons. But I can't remember. I know we negotiated a lot and tried to come up with a compromise. I can't remember if that's the one that [Anton] Valukas and some of the former U.S. attorneys were involved in. There was something on prisons I know we did with them.

DePue: Some of this harkens back to the beginning of the Thompson administration, with the Class X felonies and mandatory sentences in that area.

Edgar: Yes, yes. Truth-in-sentencing might have been more just what sentence you actually served. I think we had a blue-ribbon committee that worked to come up with... I thought people ought to know, I just wanted to be careful we weren't going to have people staying longer than we really ought to, because again, one of our big costs were continuing to build prisons.

DePue: I don't want to completely go through the discussion about educational reform, so I'll give you the option here, Governor. If you want to spend ten or fifteen minutes today about those things you did in 1995 to initiate the study of this issue, or do you want to do that today or do you want to hold that off for next—

Edgar: No, we can do that all at one time.

DePue: Anything else about that first year of the second administration, then?

Edgar: Travel. It was my second term; I felt (laughs) that I had won, so I was a little more... We took the group to the Middle East.

DePue: I'm wondering if A. Robert Abboud was part of that group.

Edgar: No, no. I don't think he was. A lot of these guys were involved with St. Jude—the Lebanese guys. The Jewish guys were business guys, some of them I knew.<sup>53</sup> I didn't know any of the Arabs that much. But I would say at least half of them were probably Christian Lebanese, and we had some Palestinians. That was an interesting trip, because we got into Israel, and [Shimon] Peres was the foreign minister at that time, and he met with me. Then they said that [Yitzhak] Rabin was prime minister and he wanted to meet with me. It was the last day of the Knesset. I went down to the Knesset, and it's just chaos. Every group is protesting this or that and wanting something.

I figured, jiminy, he's got more important things to do than talk to me. So I went, and he came off and spent a half hour with me. Rabin was a tough guy. You could tell this guy was an army general. I mean, he was just **boom**. He was telling me about how the United States has got to come through and give the money to Jordan as part of the peace accord, and all this and that.

DePue: And you're explaining, "Hey, I'm state governor."

Edgar: I tried to tell him. I said, "First of all, I'm state governor. The other thing, I think the federal government's kind of broke." "I don't care," you know, blah-blah-blah. (DePue laughs) It was ironic, because I went to Jordan about three days later and I had the same thing. I said, "Hey, I just had the prime minister of Israel give me this speech. You guys are closer than you think."

I had a book. Rabin had published his autobiography the first time he was prime minister, and then he got thrown out of office because of that currency problem. His wife had some money that she wasn't supposed to have or something like that. So I had actually got this book from the two-dollar table or something. But I like Israel. I've read about Israel. I did term papers on the Haganah, their military thing, when I was in school, so I knew all this stuff.<sup>54</sup> So I picked it up. I knew I had this book, so I took it with me. I have a picture—I think it's in *Meeting the Challenge*—of Rabin signing my book. He was very gracious to do that. The rest of the time he was pounding on me about the United States paying Jordan, but he was pretty good on this. I thought, that's nice of Rabin to spend all this time. Now, three months later Rabin was assassinated by one of the Israeli hardliners. Here's the picture of Rabin signing my book.

We did that, and then the Arab guys came. The Arabs in the group said, "Arafat wants to meet with you." I said, "Well, when?" He said, "On Sunday. Go to the Gaza Strip." It was Palm Sunday, and I had promised Brenda we would

<sup>53</sup> St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, which established the Children's Cancer Center of Lebanon in 2002.

<sup>54</sup> Haganah and Irgun were Jewish paramilitary groups active before the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 2.

go to church at the tomb at the Garden [of Gethsemane]. Protestants and Catholics disagree on where Jesus is buried. The Protestant one is outside the city, at this garden; the Catholic one is someplace in the city. So, being Protestants, we were going to the Garden of the Tomb to have Palm Sunday. There was no way I was going to tell Brenda, “No, we’re not. We’re going to go see Arafat in the Gaza Strip.” (laughter) I just said, “I can’t do it,” so we didn’t.

Then we went on to Jordan, and we got to go to Petra, which I only put in as one of the great wonders of the world. Petra is up there with the Taj Mahal and the Pyramids and everything else. It’s just a neat place. We go into Amman, and we get a call. The palace apologizes; King Hussein’s not available, he’s in the United States—I think he was getting cancer treatment—he can’t meet with us. Well, that’s nice. So we’re in Jordan for two days, and then we go to Egypt. We are provided a military escort throughout Cairo, and if you’ve ever been to Cairo, the only way to get around Cairo is with a military escort, because it’s chaos. They put us in a hotel out at the Pyramids. It’s the Mena House. It’s where Churchill and Roosevelt stayed. They give me this room, and I look out my window, and there’s the Great Pyramid. It’s just a beautiful room; everything’s nice.

Then they said [Hosni] Mubarak, the president of Egypt, had changed his schedule. “He was going to be out of the country, but he’s going to come back so he can meet with you.” I think, this is nice. What’s he doing? I’m just the governor of Illinois. So they whisk me downtown, and I have this meeting with Mubarak. He’s just a very charming ruthless dictator, I guess, (DePue laughs) but very charming guy. He comes out, “Oh, from Illinois. That’s near California, isn’t it?” (DePue laughs) I say, “No, that’s not close to California.” He says, “Well, you grow a lot of wheat, don’t you?” I say, “No. Have you heard of Chicago?” He says yes, and I say, “That’s where Illinois is.” He says, “Oh.” “You ever been there?” He says no, and I say, “You ought to come.” He says okay. Six months later, he came to Chicago—not because of me—and I saw him. I think it was ten below zero. I said, “What do you think?” He said, “It’s **cold**. I’m not coming back here.” (laughter)

But I had this very lively discussion with Mubarak for about a half an hour. That night, the Egyptian government hosts this reception for me, and all the cabinet’s there. Now, Mubarak’s not there, but the cabinet’s there. I’m thinking, this is really nice, but I’m just the governor of Illinois. So this guy who’s the secretary of transportation for Egypt comes up to me: “So, Governor Edgar, so nice to have you here. I understand you’re the leading possibility for vice president for Bob Dole.” Then it dawned on me why I’m getting all this treatment. The consul-generals had written back that I’m being considered for vice president on the ticket with Bob Dole. My name had been mentioned, and I was close to Dole and stuff like that.

DePue: Of course, the way they’re looking at it, this is exactly reason you’re here in the first place.

Edgar: That's right. They figure, we're going to cover ourselves. This guy might be vice president someday. People ask me, "What was it like to be mentioned?" I say, "It didn't mean a thing, except if you traveled overseas, you got good hotel rooms and you got to meet a lot of people you wouldn't (laughter) get to meet otherwise." So that was the plus to being mentioned for vice president. But the trip was interesting.

I think later that summer—the legislature must have been gone—the Economic Club of Chicago, business guys, was going to go through Europe, and they asked me to go with them. They had it put together, so I went with them. It was actually in the fall, because Elizabeth was out of school. We had Elizabeth come back to kind of travel with—because she'd been to Europe—and go with her mom. It was like twelve days, with about eight-city stops. That's the first time I had been to a lot of those places. So we did that with this business group. That's when I realized my limitations on international affairs. I have a little trouble with names. French names weren't so bad. German names were a little tougher. Polish names were impossible. Czech names were just off the scale. I learned to kind of mumble and say "Mr. President" or "Mr. Mayor" and (laughs) just leave names off. So we did that. We went to a concentration camp in Poland. It was one by Lublin; it wasn't the one by Cracow. It wasn't Auschwitz.

DePue: Treblinka?

Edgar: No, it's Lublin; I think it's called Lublin. It wasn't one of the biggies. But it made an impression on you. I remember we were over there when the O. J. Simpson decision came through, and all the Europeans thought the Americans were a bunch of wild cowboys; they couldn't believe the guy got off. Ended up in London, where I think we finished that trip. So we did that in '94. Also in '94 or '95, I'm sure I went back to Mexico and saw the president there. Again, I felt a little more free to do some of those things that year.

DePue: The trip to Mexico was after the signing of NAFTA, right? I mean, not immediately—

Edgar: In '95, it would have been, yes. I'm trying to think if I went in '95. Maybe it was '96. I know I went down there, because I had to try to explain Pat Buchanan to them, and I wasn't too good at explaining Pat Buchanan.<sup>55</sup> But I said he wasn't going to be the nominee, Bob Dole was, and he was for continuing NAFTA.

DePue: Here's the second time in the last five minutes you've mentioned Bob Dole, and people overseas thought you were the contending vice presidential candidate. Had his team approached you about that?

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<sup>55</sup> Conservative member of the Republican Party, who ran for the party's presidential nomination in 1992 and 1996. He attracted much attention for his polarizing keynote address at the 1992 Republican National Convention in Houston. Part of his speech, often known as the "culture war speech," promoted immigration restriction. For reactions to his candidacy and convention speech, see Jim Edgar, April 23, 2010, 6-7, 14-15; Mike Lawrence, April 1, 2009, 28-29. Both interviews by Mark DePue.

Edgar: If we fast-forward to '96, yes, they had. They had taken my medical records, I had been interviewed, and all this and that. Don Sipple, who had done my TV—he did George Bush's and did some others—was involved in the campaign for a little bit, and he told me later that Dole had come to him and talked to him about me, wanted to know about me and Brenda and stuff. He knew me, but he wanted to get Sipple's perspective. A couple of people on Dole's campaign had worked on some of my stuff before, too, so we had some ties. I was one of the governors who early on endorsed him. We have birthdays on the same day.

DePue: Had he already announced in the middle of 1995 or fall of '95?

Edgar: Yes, he probably announced in the fall of '95. Now, I think I didn't formally endorse him until early '96, because I think I took him to the Cub openers the day I officially endorsed him. He had been courting me. Also, my name was just out there in '95. Any governor of a major state was mentioned.

DePue: What was your thought about actually taking that on, if it was asked?

Edgar: Bill Scranton of Pennsylvania is the only guy I've ever known to turn down the vice presidency. Just think, if Scranton had taken it instead of Spiro Agnew, how different life would be in American history. But that's because he had done his thing, and he didn't want to do it. Yes, if you ever got offered the VP, you'd take it. I don't know anybody that would say no.

DePue: But usually when you're making that choice, you're trying to balance the ticket, and how balanced would the ticket be if you've got another Midwest moderate?

Edgar: No, my thought about Bob Dole always was he'd be the oldest president, and I have a bad heart. That ain't gonna happen. On the other side of that though, he needed to carry the Midwest. That was the argument being made.

DePue: But he is from the Midwest.

Edgar: He's from Kansas. (DePue laughs) That doesn't guarantee you Illinois or anything like that.

DePue: Or anything east of Illinois, huh?

Edgar: Yes. And he's maybe a moderate, but he's not as much of a moderate as I am. The thought was I'd carried Illinois big-time for governor, and if I was on the ticket, maybe they'd have a shot of carrying... Because at that point, Illinois had only gone Democrat one time for Clinton before.<sup>56</sup> So if you're going to win the presidency, you're going to have to carry some of those Midwestern states. That was part of the thought, I think, behind that. There are others I know they talked to. The day that they were going to announce [Jack] Kemp, I got a call from his [Dole's] campaign

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<sup>56</sup> During the twentieth century, Illinois had only voted for the Democratic presidential candidate eight times (1912, 1932-1948, 1960, and 1964) prior to Bill Clinton's 1992 victory.

manager. He was out in Russell, [Kansas] and he said, "I just want to call you. We're going to name, and we're going to go with Kemp, but the senator wanted me to call you and just tell you that we're sorry we're not picking you; we're going someplace else." That's fine. I never did get my financial records back. I was supposed to get my financial records, (DePue laughs) and I never got them back.

I would guess—just listening, knowing who—I might have been one of four or five guys on their list. The Kemp thing was kind of a last-minute thing in a way. My sense is that Christie Todd Whitman might have been on that list, looking for a woman. Also, Dole and I got along well. My sense about Dole was there were some people he liked and some people he didn't like; I don't think he was going to take somebody he didn't really like. Some of the governors who were mentioned, I don't think he liked them—from what I picked up—and others he liked. Again, I don't know. But I always thought the health thing was going to be a huge factor because of his age thing. Though we gave him the health—I'd had a checkup at Scripps out in the San Diego area, a major hospital. They'd given me a clean bill of health. They said the heart was fine and everything like that. It was an interesting thing to go through, but as I said, the only tangible benefit was I got good rooms and saw some interesting people in the Middle East.

DePue: That's probably a pretty good place to finish off for today.

Edgar: Okay, sure.

DePue: And the next time we'll talk about the other half of educational reform, this time about the entire state.

Edgar: I was just thinking, the last thing in '95 that was amazing was Northwestern went to the Rose Bowl, and they took me with them. I'd have never dreamed I'd have gone to the Rose Bowl with Northwestern.

DePue: Maybe University of Illinois?

Edgar: Well, I thought the chances of them going in football—they'd gone before, and I had gone with them. That was a really enjoyable trip, and they played a good game. They got beat, but... That kind of tied me in with some of the Northwestern people, because I went the next year. But that was the end of '95, and who'd have ever thought that we'd go to the Rose Bowl with Northwestern.

DePue: Thank you very much, Governor.

(end of interview 19)

Interview with Jim Edgar  
# ISG-A-L-2009-019.20  
Interview # 20: September 2, 2010

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Thursday, September 2, 2010. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today marks the twentieth session I have with Gov. Jim Edgar. Good afternoon.

Edgar: Good afternoon.

DePue: We are making progress; we're up to—

Edgar: That's right. (laughs)

DePue: —1996, but we're going to take a step back to talk about the beginning of the education reform initiative that you had. But I wanted to start with a topic we hadn't discussed at the beginning of your second administration, and that was the reorganization of your staff, whatever extent you did reorganize.

Edgar: At the start of the second term, I think historically administrations always pause: Where have we been, where are we going? Structure-wise, should we change? Some people, that's a time for them to move on. I mean, been there four years, that's a long commitment. Also, looking at what you're going to need to do the next four years, you may have a different outlook on how the staff ought to be structured. One of my thoughts was we probably didn't need as many people in the governor's office, so I began to suggest that maybe we ought to pare down there. I had some who I knew wanted to go on and do other things. Some had an interest to go in the agencies—particularly if they were in the governor's office and maybe they weren't one of the key people, being an assistant director in a department would be a plus. I remember Dave Bender, who had worked in advance and scheduling and stuff, went over to Agriculture. I think he went over as a deputy or assistant director in Agriculture. So some people did that. Again, it wasn't major change, but it was some change.

One of the things that I always thought—and one of the reasons why I eventually didn't run for a third term—you can stay too long. I also think you always have got to be careful that your staff is running on all eight cylinders too, because it's easy to get burned out in these jobs. Maybe more so for the staff than for the governor, because the governor is pampered a little bit, and you have all the

people out there cheering for you, whereas the staff just has to work around the clock and be under a lot of pressure. I think coming from a staff position myself, I was aware of that. So we did look, and we did make some changes. I can't say major changes.

One of the things that was unique about my administration was the continuity of staff, the people in my cabinet positions. We had more people that served longer than ever in the history of the state. In fact, many of them were asked to serve on in George Ryan's tenure. That, I think, was a strength, but also it was something we knew we had to be careful that people just didn't get tired and retire in office. We did have some changes in the cabinet too—again, not extensive, but some. Less than probably any other administration had had between the first (coughs) and second term.

DePue: Let's start at the top with the chief of staff position. I know Jim Reilly was there, and the assumption was upfront that he'd be there for the election year.

Edgar: Yes. (coughs) I can't remember exactly when he did finally leave. He stayed for a little bit, but he wanted to go back to the McCormick Place board. He had served well, got me through the election, and had to put up with my heart problems and things like that. But he definitely wanted to go back. He was commuting. He lived in Chicago. So he wanted to go back and do that, and that was understood. Gene Reineke, who I had thought for a while would be the person I would move in, much to the surprise of some staffers—I can remember in particular Mike Lawrence was very concerned. Mike Lawrence thought that Gene maybe was too political, and he'd worked for Thompson and all. Originally he was very apprehensive when I said that's who I wanted to bring in. A few months later, he probably became the biggest supporter of Gene on the staff. He admitted that he was wrong, and it's not often you can get (DePue laughs) Lawrence to admit he was wrong.

DePue: What did you see in Reineke?

Edgar: I thought he understood politics, which is important. You've got to understand politics to be effective in Illinois government. It doesn't mean you have to be a politician, per se, but you've got to understand politics, because that's the lubricant that makes things happen in the machinery of Illinois government. He understood that. Now, he's originally from New York; he's not a native Illinoisan. But he's a very bright guy, very well organized, and I wanted a chief of staff who was very well organized. Somebody had to make sure the *I*'s got dotted and the *T*'s got crossed.

DePue: Something of a disciplinarian with the staff, or a taskmaster?

Edgar: Taskmaster maybe more. I don't think a disciplinarian. To be very truthful, I had staff around me who had been with me a lot longer than any chief of staff was. Jim Reilly was kind of the exception because we went back as legislators together. But it wasn't so much a disciplinarian. In many ways, nobody was going to tell Mike

Lawrence what to do, and probably not tell Joan Walters what to do. They'd been around me for a long, long time. But they had to be somebody who could work with Joan Walters and work with Mike Lawrence and make sure that everything got pulled together. I think sometimes maybe a chief of staff does think he or she is the disciplinarian, and unfortunately they're not as effective at bringing people together. So it had to be somebody who was organized, who understood politics, but also had the ability to motivate and get people to do things. I thought Gene had that quality. I had not known him all that well until he started working for me in a lesser position after I became governor. He had been part of Thompson's group. He wasn't necessarily in the inner circle, but he was pretty close to it, and I think there was always a little, well, that's Thompson's crew, and I've got mine.

Now, there were some people from Thompson's crew that I had worked closely with, like Julian D'Esposito and Art Quern, who I brought in to chair Boards and Commissions, and who I relied on a lot. A lot of people who were on his staff, particularly the last few years of the Thompson administration, were not people I was especially close with, because that's not when I worked there. Reineke being the exception who we brought on, and proved to be very, very good. Another one early in my first term was Sally Jackson. Kirk Dillard had said, "We've got to have her because she's really organized," and she was real organized. Kirk wasn't as organized; Sally was. Gene kind of had both of those abilities.

As I said, I think people were surprised—I know Lawrence was, some others probably were, too—maybe worried a little bit, because I'd had Reineke over at state central, and I think that kind of enhanced his political image more than his governmental image.<sup>57</sup> He had done things both in the Thompson administration and for me governmentally, and I felt comfortable that he could handle the job. Any misgivings people had, within six months, nobody had misgivings. And I think most people would look back and say he might have been the most successful of my chiefs of staff, as far as doing what a chief of staff is supposed to do. He could get pretty fired up. (DePue laughs) I never saw Jim Reilly throw a phone, though I always heard stories about it. Reineke, I don't know if he ever threw phones, but he could get pretty upset. I saw more of him getting upset than I ever did Reilly. Reilly never got upset around me. A couple times he got a little testy (laughs) with me, but... But Gene would get a little more... I mean, he'd come in, and I think it was a little harder for him to hide it from me when he got a little upset.

Anyway, he came in as chief of staff. I think most people thought things probably worked even smoother because he was in Springfield. There was no question that he was first among equals, but they were equals. With Reilly, who went back with me a long, long way and kind of came at it from a different angle, there was probably more feeling, Reilly's kind of up here, and everybody else is

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<sup>57</sup> "State central" refers to the State Central Committee of the Illinois Republican Party. Jim Edgar, April 23, 2010, 1-3; Gene Reineke, April 16, 2010, 6-23. Both interviews by Mark DePue. 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.

down here. With Gene, I think everybody knew, Gene's here, but there were a lot of other people right there too.

DePue: Well, he was a pretty young guy at the time.

Edgar: But a lot of those guys were young. I don't know if he was much younger than [Al] Grosboll—maybe a little younger.

DePue: No, probably about the same age.

Edgar: And older than [Tom] Livingston and a lot of people I had. Now, [George] Fleischli was older. He was older than me. Lawrence and Walters were older than me. Within the staff—the staff's pretty good; they didn't come around and complain to me about other staff, so I never heard much on that.

DePue: I'm a bit confused. I have the impression that you did some kind of a structural reorganization of that next level down, and went to a deputy chief of staff and away from another structure that you had before. Can you clarify that for me?

Edgar: Probably more in appearance than in reality. I'm trying to think if we had a deputy chief of staff with Reilly. Maybe we did. We did with Dillard. We had Sally Jackson, then I think Belletire was—

DePue: Mike Belletire.

Edgar: And then I can't remember when Howard Peters was deputy chief of staff. Maybe it was with Gene.<sup>58</sup>

DePue: I have Andy Foster as well. I had both of those.

Edgar: Yes. Foster was in Chicago though, and he did more of the political outside stuff. He had been my campaign manager. Gene and him were very close; they had done political stuff together during the early part of my administration.

DePue: And of course Foster was coming off of running your campaign.

Edgar: Yes, but I think he was in Chicago. If Howard came on about that same time, Howard was probably more involved in governmental things; whereas Andy, there were probably a few departments like the Commerce Commission and things like that, but he was dealing more with outside groups in Chicago.

DePue: My impression of the first administration was you had two or three, but you divided up the various aspects of government.

Edgar: We called them superstaff. You had Fleischli, you had Grosboll, had Felicia Norwood. Belletire was floating around in that first term; we never knew for sure

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<sup>58</sup> Peters and Foster began work as deputy chiefs of staff January 16, 1995. *Illinois Issues* (January 1995), 41. See also, Howard Peters, interview by Mark DePue, January 21, 2010, 24-38.

what all he was doing. Let's see, who else did we have? I'm probably missing somebody. But we had people like that.<sup>59</sup>

DePue: But you went away from that model?

Edgar: Not really. Structurally, there might have been a chart to look different, but no. Now, Fleischli eventually left to go work for Sportsman's [Park] Racetrack. Belletire left to go to the Gaming Board, I think. He might have left even in the first term. But Felicia was still there, Al was still there. You had Tom Livingston coming up from originally being my traveling aide, to scheduler, to the higher education person.

DePue: Another name I wanted to ask you about was Mike McCormick, because that seemed to be a new kind of position for you altogether.

Edgar: That was. That was. Mike McCormick—who had been C. L. McCormick's son, who was kind of a legend in southern Illinois—had become a Republican county chairman in Johnson County, which is one of the few Republican counties in southern Illinois. Then he had been elected state's attorney, I think in 1988, very young. He was kind of my guy in Johnson County. His dad and I were always close. His dad wasn't that close to Thompson.

DePue: His father was in the legislature for many years.

Edgar: His father had been in the legislature and was very well thought of. So Mike had always been my person in Johnson County and helped in other counties. Then in '92, he got defeated for reelection for state's attorney. Part of it probably was he couldn't get as many jobs as people wanted because of *Rutan*.<sup>60</sup> Everybody said, "Well, you're supposed to be close to Edgar, and you can't get us jobs"; so that probably didn't help him any, because down there you've got prisons, and jobs are big things down there.

So he came and worked at DOT [Illinois Department of Transportation] from '92 to '94. Then when we got ready for the campaign, we brought him on and put him in charge of southern Illinois. Mike's a very personable guy, a very knowledgeable guy. I felt very good having him around. When the election was over, I brought him in because I thought he, along with Janis Cellini, probably had the best people skills of anybody I had around me. They could charm anyone as

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<sup>59</sup> During Edgar's first term as governor, he assigned broadly related policy areas to "executive assistants" who constituted a "super-cabinet." The first six executive assistants were Michael Belletire, George Fleischli, Felicia Norwood, Allen Grosboll, Erhard Chorle, and Mary Ann Louderback. In his second term, Edgar scrapped this system in favor of two deputy chiefs of staff.

<sup>60</sup> *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. For McCormick's discussion of his father's career, as well as his own 1992 defeat, see Mike McCormick, interview by Mark DePue, July 8, 2010.

they were telling them no. So I brought him up and kind of made him my— gatekeeper is what we called it. He worried about scheduling. He wasn't the scheduler, but everybody had to come through him to get in. Now, I had Sherry, too, my secretary, who—

DePue: Sherry Struck.

Edgar: —played a very important role in who got to see me and stuff like that. It's very important who lets folks in, and who you talk to if you can't see the governor and hope they'll talk to the governor and get an answer. So Sherry was good at it. We had other people before, but Mike was a much higher level, and he also would never comment unless I asked him his opinion. He was very good at not trying to intrude, but he had good observations. I think the staff all liked working with him because he was good at getting back to them when they were trying to get in to see me.

Chief counsel was always the other important position. I think by the time the election came around, Jim Montana had left.

DePue: I've got 1995, when Bill Roberts was in there.

Edgar: Bill Roberts came in, and Bill Roberts was a former U.S. attorney in downstate Illinois, and a former state's attorney in Sangamon County. Whoever was chief counsel, that was a very important position and a powerful position as far as staff went. He got along well with everybody. He had never really been in state government. He'd been in county government, been in federal government, but he understood politics well because he had run for office. When I first remember going to the annual Sangamon County Lincoln Day dinner, which was the biggest in the state, he ran that. That was one of his political chores. So he was very savvy on the political stuff. He also had been a U.S. attorney, and a good attorney, along with Jim Montana. They both, I think, were viewed as good attorneys.

I'm looking at this picture, Steve Schnorf standing there. Steve was head of a department. I think he was still head of the department unless we brought him back over.

DePue: I have him at the Bureau of the Budget from '97 to '99.

Edgar: Well, that's after Joan left at the end.

DePue: Right, so that's later.

Edgar: Yes. I think he was still director of CMS. Steve was somebody that had been a major player when I was secretary of state, but CMS was one of those agencies where you wanted your guy to be because that involved so many things.

DePue: I've got him as director of CMS through 1995.

Edgar: Then maybe we brought him over to the office to handle human resources. I'm looking at this picture now. Felicia's not in this picture. This is in '96. I don't know if it says when Felicia left. I don't think it says on the governor's staff; I think it's only on directors.<sup>61</sup>

DePue: We're looking in *Meeting the Challenge*. What page are you on?

Edgar: Oh, there's the director's page, but I'm pretty sure they didn't have when the staff—we have all the names at the back, but I don't think...

DePue: But the picture is on?

Edgar: Oh, that picture's on 159. That was taken in April 1996 at a senior staff meeting. I stopped by. Felicia's not there. Now, she could have just been gone that day. But Steve might have been brought back over to do social service. Felicia left at some point to go work for an insurance company out East, and I can't remember when that was. I know she was tired, because she had Human Services, and that was just... That meant Medicaid, the nursing homes... That in itself would be enough to put you in an early grave. Did a very good job. She's the person we talked about a long time ago; I couldn't remember the name. Probably session twelve (DePue laughs) or something like that.

DePue: Tell me a little bit more about Sherry Struck, your secretary. Had she been with you even before the administration?

Edgar: Sherry Struck actually was a neighbor of ours out in the Hyde Park subdivision—we lived south of Springfield—and Brenda and her were good friends. Originally, I met her because her husband was a lobbyist for the rural electric co-ops, and I'd known him for years. We had a neighborhood picnic. They'd moved into Hyde Park the same time we had, in the late summer of 1980. So Brenda and her got to be good friends. She was at home like Brenda was. Then Sherry did finally go work. She became a secretary for the director of the Illinois Coal Association; she did that for the latter part of the eighties.

When I got ready to run for governor, I needed people, and I needed somebody to run the campaign office. So I told Sherry I thought it was time for her to leave the Coal Association and come work for me. They gave her a leave, because they wanted to have somebody in the governor's office if I won. So she came over; she ran the campaign office and worked closely with Carter Hendren and Mike Lawrence. Then when I got elected, my longtime secretary—from when I had been a staffer, then a legislator, then secretary of state—Penny Clifford, had moved to Florida. Her husband had got a job there. In fact, one of the last things she did was the fly-around with us when I announced for governor. Then she moved a few weeks later and did not finish out that last year when I was running. I knew

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<sup>61</sup> In December 1994, Edgar named Schnorf policy director. In November 1997, Joan Walters took over as head of Public Aid and Schnorf became the new budget director, a role he maintained through George Ryan's administration. Norwood left the administration in 1994 and took a job with Aetna, Inc.

I needed somebody of the stature of Penny, somebody that I thought kind of had a sense of the politics and knew some of the people, somebody I had a great deal of trust in, and somebody I knew Brenda felt comfortable with, because, you know, the relationship between a secretary and a wife is very important. (DePue laughs) Penny and Brenda had got along, but Brenda and Sherry were like sisters, so it was a perfect match there.

So for a lot of reasons, Sherry was an ideal pick, and I think everybody agreed that she turned out to be an excellent secretary. She had a very sweet demeanor, but she could also tell people no if she had to. She was pretty good at determining who ought to get in and see me and who not. Particularly Mike [McCormick] and her worked very well together, so that gave me a very good personal front office staff. Those two took care of all the things I needed taken care of. I think Sherry probably did my checking account and things like that, because I always did it—Brenda didn't do it—and I didn't have time as governor. So she paid my bills and things—probably illegal. I probably violated some law, but it freed up a lot of time for me to be governor. She was very good. And Mike—again, those two together made for a very good pair.

DePue: Does the governor typically have an awful lot of say in the structure of the staff and the number of people—

Edgar: Oh, yes, yes.

DePue: —that are going to be paid on the staff? Is there a limit of dollars that you have to work with?

Edgar: There's a budget you get from the legislature, and you've got to live within that budget, but how you structure that is pretty much up to you. Now, there's certain positions and certain areas you're going to have people in just because everybody expects it and you need it. You're going to have somebody that's going to handle Human Resources. Chances are you're not going to have somebody handle Human Resources, which is welfare, Medicaid, and all those kind of things, and also be the person that handles Conservation. Those are usually different individuals. But how you might divide those up could differ from governor to governor—might differ within the term. Bureau of the Budget—you always have somebody that heads up the Bureau of the Budget. They call it, I think, the Office of Management, or whatever they...

DePue: Budget Management or something, yeah.

Edgar: But yes, something to try to duplicate the federal government. I think they decided to do that when they went into deficit spending. They thought they'd duplicate the federal government. But you always have that person, and that's an extremely important person. I always said, in my case, because we worried so much about the budget, probably next to the governor, that was the most powerful person in state government. That had been the same person, Joan Walters, who I always enjoyed

because she was the first woman ever. I mean, that's the most powerful position a woman's ever had in the state government, if the budget director, next to the governor, is the most powerful. I think particularly what we went through, it was. I think that's more powerful than the attorney general or any of the other offices.

DePue: She certainly had plenty of visibility, those first few years especially.

Edgar: Oh, yes, yes. The budget director usually does. [Robert] Mandeville under Thompson had a lot of visibility, but Joan had a very difficult job because she definitely was the person that said no. She said no more than I did. The thing about Joan, too, was she was a woman, and it was a good ole boy network that did the appropriations in the legislature—that's probably where we were screwed up. They really did not take to this woman coming in, who they knew as a staffer but not as their equal, kind of telling them no and not going along with some of their shenanigans as previous budget directors had.

DePue: Just a comment here on that. It's interesting to note that one of the constitutional officers she has to deal with the whole time was the comptroller, who was Dawn Clark Netsch—another pretty hard-headed woman, I guess you could say.

Edgar: Yes. Oh, and they had some battles, I think. Fortunately, I didn't have to sit in on those. (DePue laughs) Netsch would always come and want to sit down and talk with me, and I'd say, "No, go talk to Joan." Netsch, to her credit, understood stuff, and she'd get into all kinds of details, and that's fine; I just didn't have time for those details. I was worried about the big picture. But I also didn't want to sit and spend hours, so Joan had to do that, and Joan and her used to go around. But I know that Joan later commented that she had a great deal of respect for Netsch, though at times she probably wanted to strangle her, and I'm sure Netsch at times wanted to strangle Joan. Joan was a very professional, kind of self-taught—I mean, she didn't come out of a governmental background when she came to work originally in the Thompson administration. Paula Wolff had brought her on. She'd been a student of Paula's at one time. I knew her from working with her, then I took her to the legislative office when I went to the legislative office.<sup>62</sup>

Very competent, very competent person. By far the most competent person I'd ever dealt with. Now, we'd disagree at times, and she'd get mad at me and I'd get a little ticked at her, but she understood my parameters, and I always knew that she would never do anything she didn't think was the right thing to do. It wasn't politics. In fact, she sometimes disdained politics. And that was all right. Budget director, you probably needed a person like that a little bit. You needed a balance, because I had a lot of folks that understood politics and thought politics. Now, in the end, she also knew there were times we just had to do certain things. Actually, I think in some ways she was more political than [Mike] Lawrence was. Lawrence sometimes would get upset about certain cuts we were going to make, that it wasn't ethical, and Joan would say, "Nah, we can work it out." It was interesting.

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<sup>62</sup> Joan Walters, interview by Mark DePue, July 15, 2009, 26-37.

I wanted a balance on my staff. I didn't want all politicians; I didn't want all eggheads. I needed a combination. I had Janis Cellini, who, as I said, was probably one of the best people-persons I'd ever known. She worried about the county chairmen, she worried about the labor people, she worried about helping everybody out. On the other hand, I had Joan, who was thinking governmental and we've got to balance the budget; no, we can't put this person, that person's not qualified. And Lawrence, who was extremely ethical, and you don't cut corners. Then you had Gene, who understood the politics more. Grosboll probably someplace in between that. Andy Foster, a little more political. And Bill Roberts, who understood politics, for an attorney. Of all the attorneys I had, he probably had the best political sense because he'd come out of it. So that balance was very important to me. Howard Peters.

Howard Peters I think is one of the real amazing stories in my administration. Here's a guy that started out as a staffer in Corrections. I don't know if he was a prison guard; maybe he was a little higher than that, but he started out down below.

DePue: In the educational system in the Department of Corrections initially.

Edgar: Yes. He'd grown up in the projects in Memphis, Tennessee. He'd worked his way up to Corrections. When I became governor, I think he was warden of Pontiac. I worried a lot about that department, and we brought him on, much to the chagrin of a lot of people. One, he was African American, which some people thought, well, whoa. And he wasn't political in a department that hired more people than anything else, and all the county chairmen cared about that.

DePue: Especially in a lot of the southern counties where those prisons are located.

Edgar: Oh, yes. By the time I left office, Howard was the most requested person I had to go speak. One, all the county chairmen wanted him because he had all the jobs at Corrections, (DePue laughs) but two, he talked their language. He could talk about pull yourself up by the bootstrap. Proved to be a very good professional staffer. Understood government, understood the politics. Became deputy chief of staff, and then when we created the new Department of Human Resources, moved him over there. Just a very bright guy. We had a lot of folks like that, and they all meshed pretty well together. That was always important to me when I was doing my staffing; I wanted a staff that could get along. I didn't want bickering, I didn't want competition—I wanted them to work well together. If I had somebody who was very bright but couldn't get along, I'd just as soon get rid of them.

DePue: Here's a somewhat difficult question to ask you—it's maybe getting the reflections from other people—but were you looking for people who occasionally would be willing to challenge you, or did you like to keep that kind of tension away from you?

Edgar: Oh, no. No. I don't know if I went out and looked for people who I thought would tell me, "You're wrong," but I expected that from my people, and I think over the

years, both as secretary of state and as governor, everybody that worked for me felt pretty comfortable telling me when I was wrong. I think it helped that I had a few people who were older than me on the staff. I had the Lawrences and the Joan Walters, who had been around almost as long as I had been around and who felt comfortable telling me when they thought I was wrong—in a very nice way. They never came in and said, “You’re stupid.” They had enough respect for me and the office I held, but they would say, “Hey, we disagree. This is a mistake. You shouldn’t do this.” My lawyers would do that. I expected that from my lawyers, and they felt comfortable—

DePue: Did you have any occasion where you would tell somebody to do something, and because they had such an intense desire to keep you happy, they went way beyond what you had ever anticipated in the first place?

Edgar: I don’t remember, and if they did, it didn’t get us in trouble. (laughs) I would have remembered. I always remember, when I became secretary of state, one of the big changes from being a legislator, then working for Governor Thompson, where I had a lot of authority. When I became secretary of state, I found out that anything I said, people went out and did. If I’d have said, “I don’t like the look of that door,” that door would be changed within ten minutes. Now, as secretary of state, you couldn’t change the world, but within the secretary of state world, if you said something, nobody said, “Well, let’s have a committee and look into it” or “You can’t do it,” they just went and did it. So I guess maybe early on I learned be careful what you ask for, you might get it, and in some cases maybe you don’t need it. But I can’t think of any time that I said, “Hey, I want this done,” and they went and overdid it.

Now, I knew sometimes I had to watch—some people might push people a little hard to get something done. There’s a way to do it, and there’s a way not to do it. Most of these staff people had the understanding of the way to do it, the right way to do it. And if they pushed, they went to do something—“You can’t do that. We found out there’s a problem here”—then they’d usually come and tell me, and that wasn’t a huge problem.

DePue: Most people in the role that you had—governors, presidents—there’s usually a few stories out there that deal with their security staff as well. Do you have any of that?

Edgar: I’d had security since the day I was sworn in as secretary of state on January 5, 1981.

DePue: And those were—

Edgar: State troopers, from the word go.

DePue: They weren’t the—

Edgar: They weren’t secretary of state. We made the decision that we didn’t think the secretary of state police was really set up to do that, even though they had done it for [Alan] Dixon on a somewhat limited scale. Also, I didn’t have to pay for it.

(DePue laughs) That had a lot to do with it, too. I had Dan Webb, who was on my transition committee and was a former director of law enforcement in the Thompson administration, look at the secretary of state police. He had recommended strongly that I take the state police security detail, because it was set up for executive security. And I did.

So I had state policemen from January 5, 1981, to the day I left the governor's office. I had them almost all the time. As secretary of state, they'd drop me off at night and pick me up in the morning; they wouldn't be with me on Sundays when I went to church. If we went on a vacation out of state that had nothing to do with the secretary of state's office, I drove myself. Used to get real excited when they found out I was sleeping in rest areas on the way to Florida with the family. They thought, we spend all this money keeping you safe, and you sleep in rest areas. (DePue laughs) But I didn't want to pay for the motels.

As governor, I had a state policeman twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, because even when I went on vacation, as governor, you've got to have somebody with you, not just for security purposes but for information and contact. If something happens back in state, they've got to be able to get a hold of me. That's why when the governor of South Carolina supposedly was hiking in the Appalachian Trail and nobody knew where he was, I mean, I can't imagine...<sup>63</sup> Any governor has to have somebody to have contact, because you're the only guy that can call out the National Guard and do things like that. You've got to have that... So the state policemen were like part of our family.

I was big on continuity. If I had a guy and it worked out, I kept him forever. I had four state policemen when I first became secretary of state, and three of those guys stayed with me all through secretary of state into the governorship. If it hadn't have been for early retirement, they'd have probably stayed with me throughout the governorship, but we had early retirement. They qualified, and they really felt bad. They came to me and said, "We really feel bad taking early"—this is like in '91, '92. I said, "If they had early retirement for the governor, I'd take it, things are so bad." (laughter) I still see them—not often, but I see them. Then the other trooper that stayed with me, Jim O'Donnell, is who I appointed to head up the executive security detail, which surprised a lot of people, because he was kind of a rank-and-file trooper. But I wanted somebody to run it that I had complete confidence in. So he did that for the eight years.

Saying that, I do feel bad—I lived with those guys. I just saw them every day, and they're like part of the family. In fact, one of them watched our kids grow up, and he used to go to all the ballgames. This is Lou Blackerby—he retired early in my governorship. I'll never forget when I was secretary of state, Brad was playing a football game. I think it was at Quincy; I was up in the stands watching the game,

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<sup>63</sup> In June 2009, Gov. Mark Sanford, who was also chairman of the Republican Governors Association, spent a week with his mistress in Argentina. During this time, he was out of contact with the public, his family, and state officials. To cover for his absence, he had told his staff that he was going hiking on the Appalachian Trail.

and Lou was down near the end zone watching it. There was some real questionable call by the ref down by the end zone, and Brad was involved. It was terrible; it was a bad call. All of a sudden I see this guy out there yelling at the ref and the ref throwing him out, and it was Lou. (laughter) He'd gotten so excited.

I think the ref threw him out of the field, and I was laughing. But they were like that. They were very close. I talked about everything around them; I never worried about that. Brenda knew them when I was secretary of state, because she'd travel with me, but she didn't have a detail; she had no security. But when I became governor, she had her own detail, and sometimes they'd change around. The state police guys are like part of the family.

We had two guys in Chicago, two African American guys, who were super guys, and I know I used to always drive them nuts because I'd tell them where they ought to drive in Chicago. Here I am from downstate Illinois, hadn't hardly driven at all in Chicago—because the times I was in Chicago, I had a trooper—but I was the expert on how to get around in Chicago. And they'd sit there and just look at me and listen to me give them directions. One of them is on Lisa Madigan. The other one retired, but one of them I think is still with Lisa Madigan, so when I see them, it's always good, because they always look out for me, even to this day.

DePue: Is there an implicit or an explicit understanding that they can't be talking about what's going on?

Edgar: Oh, I think they understand. That's just a rule. I think before they go on executive security they're told that. I don't know of any time that anything I said was being repeated because one of the troopers said—my staff were more apt to repeat things that they weren't supposed to. The troopers knew that.

DePue: So even the press understood that?

Edgar: Yes. Now, the press would work troopers. There were some troopers under Thompson that were good sources. I think I had one maybe one time that talked a little bit too much to the media. He was a holdover, he wasn't one of my close guys, and he left with early retirement or left pretty soon. He'd been close with Thompson, and he was kind of used to dealing with the media that would travel around. But the guys I had really around me didn't want to talk to the media. They'd say hello to them, but they were very careful not to—they just didn't feel comfortable talking to the media.

DePue: Were you an easy guy to work with as far as the security was concerned, (Edgar laughs) or were you one of those guys that was trying to elude them, or—

Edgar: No, no.

DePue: —maybe Elizabeth or some of the other...

Edgar: I think Elizabeth might have tried a few times. No, I didn't try to... I had no problems with the troopers with me. I cut back on troopers. I had less of an

entourage than Thompson did. Thompson used to have the two troopers in his car, then he'd have a tail car. We never had a tail car. I think sometimes in Chicago we might have used one early, but for the most part it was a money thing, and I didn't think we needed all those troopers. I thought that we needed some, but we didn't need an army. Also, it wasn't that we could afford it, because they're expensive. So we had cut back. But I didn't try to elude them. There were times I'd just tell them, "Look, give me some distance. Let me go walk."

Now, was I a hard... I don't know. I'm sure there were times they wanted to strangle me. Because I was a stickler on trying to be on time, if we'd be late, I'd get mad at them, blaming them. It probably wasn't their fault. Or I'd say they ought to take another direction or whatever. But I don't think there were too many times that I ever tried to press them into doing anything that they shouldn't have done. In fact, I don't think there were any times. I mean, they had guns. (DePue laughs) I was a little scared of them. I felt very comfortable. And a lot of times, we'd just talk—talk about sports, we'd talk about family, we'd sometimes even talk about governmental things. They were pretty good. They were very careful to try to not give me their political thoughts, but for the most part—particularly the crew that had been around me that long, that first election for governor—they were doing all they could to make sure I won. Now, part of that was if I lost, then they wouldn't be there; they'd maybe go back on the road someplace, and Hartigan's people would come, because Hartigan had a detail. There was a little rivalry between the state troopers with Hartigan and the state troopers with me. As I said, I think we got along well. There were a couple of them that I didn't care for as well as the others, but I think for the most part they all were professional, they were nice guys, and they were friendly.

There was something—if I thought they weren't being friendly to folks, I wanted them off the detail, because for a lot of people, that's kind of who they knew; they knew the troopers more than they knew me because that's who they dealt with. Back as secretary of state, I remember at the end, in Charleston, the Catholics always knew when I was in town, because a couple of my troopers were Catholic and they'd go to Mass. They always said, "Oh, we knew you were in town, because Lou was at Mass." They knew Lou. Lou was one of these guys—if you ever met Lou Blackerby, he just knew every—he was a very friendly guy. People knew those guys, and they liked those guys, so in a way they were kind of ambassadors of me. It was important that the troopers were respectful to people, they didn't try to play heavy-handed—and they didn't. Again, that was something I would have come down on. We would have changed troopers. I did occasionally. They'd bring in people and I'd say, "No, that guy's not... Let's try somebody else." But the mainstays I had were there for many years and, I felt, like part of my family.

The day I left the governorship was the last day I had a trooper with me. I could have kept them for six months, but I didn't think I needed them, and I thought it was an unnecessary expense. I flew out to Phoenix on a private plane. One of them met me at the airport, took me to where I was going, and left the next

day. That was the last time I had a trooper. After eighteen years, that was quite a change.

DePue: How about Brenda? Did she have security the whole time?

Edgar: As First Lady, she had a security detail. Whenever she went out, she was to go with troopers. Now, every so often, she would drive—not very often—and they might follow her.

DePue: How did it work for Elizabeth when she's going to school for a couple years there in Springfield?

Edgar: In fact, Brad had taunted Elizabeth when I was secretary of state that, "Dad's become governor, and you're going to have state troopers go on dates with you." It just used to infuriate Elizabeth. Well, when I became governor, she was home for just the first three months. She was in her final semester at Chatham Glenwood as a senior in high school, so every day a trooper would drive her to school and then pick her up. They didn't stay at school with her, but she didn't drive. Fortunately, back then she didn't have a steady boyfriend, and kids—different than when I was in high school, when we all had boyfriends and girlfriends and dated—just went in groups. She would go to a party, and the deal she worked with the troopers was—they would drop her off at the party, then at a certain hour they'd come back and pick her up. Now, what we never knew for sure—did she stay at that party the whole time or did she go off? We don't know. But that was kind of the understanding. So whenever she went out in public that first three months, she usually had a trooper take her, but once she was at a function, they didn't stay around and watch. When she went off to college, she went to Miami of Ohio; so she went out of state. Part of the reason she went out of state is she wanted to get out of Illinois. Both Brad and her had gone to school out of state to get away—

DePue: To get away from the security and...

Edgar: Well, to get away from being Jim Edgar's son or daughter. Being the son of the secretary of state was a little bit of pressure on him in high school. Then Elizabeth—I mean, the governor's much more pressure. Fortunately I had an uncle who didn't have kids, and he set up a trust fund for all of his nieces' and nephews' kids to go to school. If it hadn't been for that, they'd have been living over in Charleston with their grandmother.<sup>64</sup> But they were able to go out of state, which was good. Occasionally the troopers would drive her to Miami or pick her up. They didn't always, but we never said that to people because there were a lot of Illinois kids that went to Miami of Ohio. A lot of kids thought she had security at college—she didn't—but there were times when they would go pick her up. One time she drove home with her boyfriend, and the car broke down in the middle of nowhere someplace in Indiana at midnight; we had to send state troopers after her then.

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<sup>64</sup> Edgar's hometown of Charleston is also the home of Eastern Illinois University.

In fact, that came up in the campaign for reelection. They made some comment about troopers taking my daughter to school. I didn't go into the details to say that no, they don't go very often, but occasionally they do. I said, "If people want to get mad at me about using troopers occasionally to watch my kids, they can get mad. We'll go back to when I was secretary of state and we had that threatened kidnap on Brad." The key was you didn't want to tell folks you didn't have security, because people thought they had security. So you never could tell the press exactly. It was pretty limited. Netsch raised that one day, and that got knocked down so quick nobody even talked about it after that. In fact, I probably picked up votes on it, (DePue laughs) because I became very defensive about my children. When Elizabeth would come home after that, for the most part, she didn't have security. She just didn't want to have security. We didn't think it was probably necessary. She wasn't living at home, and when she was back home, people wouldn't necessarily know she was home.

DePue: It's time to make a significant shift here.

Edgar: Oh, we don't get to talk about the fun stuff anymore.

DePue: (laughs) Well, we get to talk about educational reform.

Edgar: Yes, that's not fun.

DePue: It was a long battle for you, I know.

Edgar: It's just not as much fun as this other stuff.

DePue: Well, sorry about that, Governor, but we've got to get back to the task at hand here. We talked last time a lot about the Chicago school reform. I'm sure you saw this as an integral part of the overall school reform, that that was a necessary first step, as you saw things.

Edgar: One of the things that's important to remember—timing is everything in government. There was a whole list of things I wanted to do as governor, but I recognized there are two limits. One, you only have so much time, so many chips to use up, so much money—so you're probably not going to get everything done. Two is timing; there are some times you do things, and some times you don't. First four years I was governor, we basically were trying to keep the state from declaring bankruptcy, and we had to concentrate on dealing with the budget. So you really did not have the luxury, particularly that first term, to do those things you wanted to do. You kind of reacted to crisis after crisis. Then on top of that, we had the flood in '93. So the first four years was pretty much whatever the agenda of the day was you had to deal with, the emergency of the day.

That's one of the big changes between being governor and being secretary of state. As secretary of state, you can pick and choose what you're going to do for the most part. I mean, you have to make sure the driver's licenses and all that stuff works, but you can decide if you want to make a war against drunk driving or create

a literacy program, because you have the time, you have the resources, and you can pick and choose when you're going to do that; you're not reacting to crisis all the time. As governor, particularly those first few years, I mean, every day I used to wake up wondering, what's gone wrong today? The financial condition just kept deteriorating that first year. Every day it seemed like Joan—I finally told Joan Walters to stop coming into my office, because all she ever came in and said was, "Revenues are down more than we thought." Every day she'd come in. "I don't want to hear that. Come in when you got good news." She wouldn't have come in my office till about 1996 (DePue laughs) if that had held up.

As I said, that first four years, there wasn't the time to do a lot of things we wanted to try to do. Second term, we had a Republican legislature, the state was in much better shape—I was on a lot sounder ground. I had won by a huge margin for reelection, swept the entire Republican ticket. So that gave me a better opportunity to do some of the things I had originally wanted to do as governor, and one of those had to deal with education. Now, I as a legislator had always thought we funded our school in the wrong manner—too much reliance on property tax. I didn't think there was a correlation so much between property value and schools. Interesting—later on, I came to understand the other point of view on that. There is another side of that, which, when I was here at the university, was brought home by some superintendents who were taking a class Dr. Ikenberry was teaching. I remember them explaining their point of view. But at that point, I just felt like we relied too much on property taxes. I'm sure that was because I was a product of downstate schools where you don't have that much property value, so our schools never had the amount of money that suburban or even Chicago schools had—much less money. If we wanted to do anything for our schools, we had to go raise our property taxes, which proportionally were already pretty high considering the standard of living in downstate Illinois.

DePue: And gets farmers real nervous pretty quick.

Edgar: There are two groups that particularly don't like property taxes—farmers and senior citizens—and that's what we had a lot of in downstate school districts. In fact, when I was a state rep in Charleston and both my children were in public schools, Charleston tried to pass a referendum. We might have talked about this years ago in our early sessions. I think we had four separate referendums before we finally passed it the fourth time, and that was only because we had a snowstorm. The snowstorm didn't keep the farmers—they'd get on their tractors and go vote no—but it kept the seniors from being able to go vote no. The margin that passed by, you could tell, was about a hundred votes, and just enough seniors didn't get out to vote. It was a fall-off from the election before, because of the weather.

So when I was a legislator, I had put a proposal in to allow local schools to create a local income tax if they wanted to, in lieu of a property tax. They had to have a referendum on it—but raise an income tax locally. Just sent the Department of Revenue up the wall because they were going to have to administer it and tie to—they hated that bill. But I knew in my area of Charleston, we had a better

chance of passing an income tax than we did a property tax, because most people, even farmers and seniors, knew the schools needed the money. It was never an argument, “Schools don’t need the money,” it was just, “We can’t afford to pay any more.” The people who paid income tax in our district, in Charleston, I remember most of them said, “We understand. We’d be happy to pay because we think schools are important.” I always thought that made more sense.<sup>65</sup>

One of the reasons I supported making the surtax permanent was it went to education, and that helped provide more income tax dollars or state dollars and less reliance on the property tax. I had talked about it, in fact, as a candidate for governor one day, when I had babbled at a press conference.

DePue: In the ’90 election.

Edgar: In the ’90 election. Historically my record was always very clear—I always thought we put too much emphasis on the property tax. Well, that wasn’t anything you could deal with the first four years. Also, I knew that you never were going to deal with that issue until you did something about the Chicago schools in particular. I knew that in general, people wanted to see educational reform. They wanted to see more accountability on teachers, they wanted to see students do better, they didn’t want to throw good money after bad money, and particularly in the Chicago schools. You couldn’t do anything that’s more money for schools until you did something about the Chicago schools.

Now, Netsch, in the ’94 campaign—late in the primary, to kind of pull her election out—came out in favor of raising the income tax, lowering property taxes. She didn’t have a specific proposal, but that’s what she wanted to do. She didn’t have any reforms as part of it. In the Democratic primary, where you’ve got a lot of teachers who vote, that was enough to differentiate her from Dick Phelan, who was chairman of the county board, and Roland Burris, and she picked up support. It was one of those things that won her the primary, and some think it cost her the general election. I think there’s other things that cost her the general election. But she came up with that. Now, ironically—

DePue: If I can interject here, Governor, your campaign certainly emphasized that she was **for** raising taxes.

Edgar: We did run commercials on that, right. I will tell you that I don’t think they were half as effective—well, they weren’t a fifth as effective—as the commercial we ran against her on crime. But we did run commercials saying that her first response is to raise taxes; ours is to do other things, make cuts. And it was what we had done. We had made cuts. Never said we were opposed to—in fact, in that campaign, I was quoted in the *Tribune* saying, “I’m not promising we’re not going to raise taxes the second term like I did the first term,” and they didn’t pay much attention to it. But we did say that her first response was to raise taxes. That should be the last

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<sup>65</sup> See Jim Edgar, interview with Mark DePue, June 9, 2009, 23-28; Fred Edgar, April 22, 2009, 54.

response. But we also said, “There’s no reform in here,” and there wasn’t. Now she said later, “Well, there’d have been reform.” That wasn’t part of her package.

What was ironic was before she came out—I think it was in the fall of ’93—the person who was heading up the MacArthur Foundation and some of the other groups came to me and said, “We got to do something about school funding.” I said, “I agree, but just let me suggest to you don’t do it right before the election. Remember when Ogilvie got the income tax, they just didn’t talk about it, so nobody got locked in. If you talk about it before the election, legislators are going to run for cover.” And they did that to Netsch. Most Democrats were against her proposal. Her Democrat legislators were running away from her proposal. Right or wrong, it’s just not something you want to—you don’t deny you’re going to do it, and everybody kind of knows you might do it, but you don’t talk about it.

We never thought about Netsch getting the nomination. I said, “I can talk to Phelan. I think we can get a message to Burris—let’s just don’t talk about this issue.” I think we did. But nobody thought about Netsch making that the cornerstone (laughs) of her campaign. She was running third, and nobody thought about Netsch winning the primary. I told her, “Why are you running for governor? You should run for attorney general. That’s what you really want to be.” And she could have probably won the attorney general thing that year. Maybe not—Jim Ryan ran, and we had a landslide. In normal years, she could have won for attorney general, but she wanted to run for governor. So we’re just not going to talk about it, and then lo and behold, Netsch all of a sudden brings it up.

But no, we did respond to say that her first response was to raise taxes; that should be the last thing you do. We didn’t ever say you don’t do it. When I got asked a few times, I said, “I’m not saying I would never do that. I think you have to have reforms, and I’m not sure she’s not asking for too much.” It haunted me later when I was trying to raise the income tax.

The other thing that would later cause me some problems—In ’92, there had been a constitutional amendment to do a switch, which nobody had ever dreamed would get out of the legislature. The Democrats, just to be devilish, put it out of the legislature one day. And it wasn’t drafted right. It was technically in error, and that’s kind of what we had... Because everybody said, “You cannot raise this tax after you just made the surtax permanent.”

DePue: But the constitutional amendment was to raise income tax and at the same time lower property tax.

Edgar: Yes. I can’t remember if it said lower property tax. It might have been just do more for income tax. But it was basically a flaw. They never thought it was going to pass. They were going to amend it, but the Democrats passed it out; it was out and it was that way. In fact, in the last minute, the *Tribune* and I both came out against it. The *Tribune* agreed with me that it was flawed, even though we said we’d be for it—but just not that. So that also was something that the IEA used to beat on me about

in '94. But saying all that, my thought was, all right, after we did Chicago school reform, we now are in a position where we can go back to Republicans and say, "Hey, we're not throwing good money after bad. You've got pride of authorship now in the Chicago schools. We did reform Chicago schools, so this would be the time to look at this." And I can't remember if it was in, I think, State of the State or the budget address; I think that's when I set up the Ikenberry Commission to take on the—

DePue: Yeah, that was May 4, 1995, when the formal announcement—

Edgar: Okay, that was not in the speech, that was later. I couldn't remember.

DePue: It certainly might have been referenced in the speech, but that's the official date for launching the Ikenberry Commission. Something that occurred to me listening to you here—Chicago school reform, you got through because the Republicans suddenly got to—

Edgar: Timing is everything. Timing is everything.

DePue: But now you're doing state-level reform that's probably going to involve a lot more money and this mix between property taxes—

Edgar: The money was the key. The reform was more to make people happy; if you're going to raise taxes, you're doing reform. You always have to do reform.

DePue: But my point there is, now this is going to be the Republicans who are going to be resistant to this, and the Democrats are likely to support it.

Edgar: Yes, yes. But my hope initially was the Republicans would not be resistant to it for two reasons: one, we'd reform the Chicago schools, so this argument they usually had—"We're throwing good money after bad"—isn't true anymore because the Chicago schools are now better. Secondly, the big issue when I ran for governor in '90 was property taxes, and we talked about property tax caps—which nobody thought we'd get in, and we did.

DePue: Primarily for the collar counties?

Edgar: They were originally for the collar counties.<sup>66</sup> Eventually it went to Cook County, then you gave the option to downstate by referendum. What I didn't appreciate—how well the caps have worked. The caps, since they have been put in place, have saved property tax payers in the collar counties, and now throughout [Illinois], billions and billions of dollars in property taxes.

DePue: Just from the early nineties up to '95.

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<sup>66</sup> The collar counties refer to the five counties—Lake, McHenry, Kane, DuPage, and Will—that border Cook County.

Edgar: Well, at that point, probably a billion. I don't think it was billions and billions. But as we sit here in 2010, it's by far the most significant property tax relief ever given in Illinois. My fixation was still that people in the suburbs wanted property tax reduction. Now, they didn't get much in state aid, but we were going to give property tax reduction if we did this switch. So I thought, all right, the Chicago schools are fixed; we can go in here, and the Republicans, even though they're in control, we can get them to go along because it's property tax relief. So the Ikenberry task force—I kind of had in my own mind what I wanted them to come out with.

DePue: I want to interject a little bit more to frame this discussion, and just some specifics here. I'll let you address those, then we'll get to the creation of the Ikenberry Commission. I got most of this right from *Meeting the Challenge*. Roughly 70 percent of school funding at that time was coming from property tax, and in some districts, up to 95 percent. Some of these collar—

Edgar: Suburban, yes.

DePue: —county districts were extremely wealthy. I don't know where exactly this figure came from, but the estimate was that something like seven hundred thousand of two million Illinois students were not supported adequately. You could have some school districts where they're spending as much as fifteen thousand per student, and then some that they're spending only three thousand or less. That's the huge disparity that you're trying to deal with, and only a small fraction, maybe 25 to 30 percent, is coming from the state coffers, when in most of the states in the United States at that time, the percentage that was coming from the state was significant higher. Was that essentially what you saw as the problem, then?

Edgar: I got to tell you, I didn't have a whole lot of sympathy for the collar county or suburban districts that were wealthy and paid a lot of property tax. What I didn't like was that districts like my old district in Charleston, and around downstate particularly—and some in the suburbs—didn't have that kind of money to spend on the kids. That meant you had kids going to school who could graduate valedictorian in their high school, but they didn't have the classes they needed to get into U of I. And that wasn't fair. Whereas you had kids in schools up north that paid a lot of property taxes—they had all kinds of advantages. What upset me more than property tax is not fair—a tax is a tax, in a way—was because we used the property tax, there was this huge imbalance in how much money you had to spend on kids. That's what bothered me, the imbalance of spending, more than how you raised the tax.

But I thought the only way you were going to change that is you raise the income tax and have the money come from the state, and then you can lower the property tax. In doing this, you're going to send more money to all these poor school districts. The thing you give the suburbs to get them—why should they vote, they don't get any money from the state to speak of. They're the ones maybe getting 5 percent, and they get that in what they call the categoricals, not from the

[school aid] formula. Downstaters used to always say, “We got to change the formula.” I’d say, “You’re nuts. The formula’s the only thing you get. The formula is geared toward poor school districts. You don’t want to change the formula. You change the formula, then everybody’s going to get the same amount of money. You’ll really be in trouble because you never can keep up on property taxes.” It wasn’t the formula, as everybody used to say, it was how much money we had to put in the formula. We didn’t have much money to put in the formula, so there wasn’t that much money going to the poor school districts.

So the problem was we didn’t have the same amount of money. Now, if somebody would have said, “We’re going to have a statewide property tax, and every school’s going to get the same amount of money,” then I’d have said, “I don’t know if property tax is the right way to go. I think there’s more of a correlation with income tax than there is property when it comes to education. But that would still be an improvement over what we have.”

DePue: So if you and your team basically have an idea of what you **want** to do, why set up the Ikenberry Commission?

Edgar: You need somebody to give you cover. (DePue laughs) What I wanted from the Ikenberry Commission—it was mainly business guys—I wanted the business community to say, “We need to do this,” because people don’t believe politicians or educators when it comes to saying we want more money for education—and rightfully so. Everybody wants more money for their thing. But if you have businessmen who say, “We need to do this so we have quality schools and can economically compete, not just with other states but the rest of the world,” I thought that’s the best campaign you could have out there. So I wanted businessmen, but I also needed somebody of credibility, somebody who understood all this.

There were two people: Arnie Weber, who headed up the Civic Committee and had worked with me on Chicago schools, and Stan Ikenberry, who was getting ready to retire from U of I and had all this free time. I remember talking to him. I said, “You’re going to have all this free time.” He kind of gulped but agreed to do it. The fact was that Ikenberry was somebody of very high standing. In fact, people knew more of Ikenberry than Arnie Weber, because Northwestern was a little more removed, and it had been about three years since he’d been president of Northwestern; whereas Ikenberry was president of U of I and pretty well known statewide, and especially known in Springfield.

One of the other things I knew, and the other reason I wanted business guys and I wanted somebody like Ikenberry—I had to persuade legislators to do this. I knew part of this was going to be a tax increase, and that’s a very difficult thing to get legislators to ever do. So they hear it from me—“Yeah, but you’re probably not going to run next time.” But Ikenberry or particularly business guys, major business guys whose businesses contribute and things like that.

DePue: Contribute generally to the Republicans?

Edgar: Well, sometimes the Democrats too in Chicago. But I was more worried about the Republicans; I knew that'd be more of a problem, because Democrats usually like to do these kind of things more. So that was part of the reason I wanted the task force. Also, to be truthful, I thought the task force might come up with some good... I knew we probably needed to create some minimal funding level. I didn't know how much; I didn't know how to do that. That's one of the things they came up with. One of the most important things that came out of this exercise was we did create a foundation level. I thought if we had business leaders like the civic committee for this, and we had somebody the stature of Ikenberry leading the charge—along with the governor—using what power or influence he had, then I thought we had a decent chance of getting this done.

DePue: In the early part of the commission, then, I'm sure there was a lot of speculation what the commission was going to find and a lot of things that were being discussed. Did you get some heat from the old Netsch campaigners about, "Hey, you're doing the same thing we were pushing for?"

Edgar: No, not yet. No, no, not till we put the proposal out, no. (DePue laughs) In fact, I was surprised. They pretty well were ignored, because they talked about pretty specific and complicated issues, and that bored the media. The legislature had other things to worry about. Nobody paid any attention to it. It was kind of there, doing their thing, and...

DePue: So let's jump ahead to March 21, 1996, when the Ikenberry Commission issues its report. Do you recall the specifics?

Edgar: All hell broke loose (laughter) at that point. Well, you got to also realize this was like three days after the primary. I had purposely told Ikenberry, "We can't put this report out till after the primary, because there's no need to have these guys all run for cover right before a primary election." Most legislators get elected in primaries. After that, there aren't that many that have to worry. Now, Kustra was in a U.S. Senate primary, and I really didn't think about it bothering him, but I just didn't want it before the primary. Ikenberry had talked to the four leaders. He had personally gone and talked to all four leaders, and I had talked to the two Republicans. Ikenberry's sense was that they were receptive, and my sense was they were receptive. Lee was fine. Lee said, "Yeah, we might have to make some noises, but, eh, you know..." And Pate was okay. Not definite, but he didn't blow up or anything like that. Ikenberry, who had a good rapport with Pate, talked to him, and he came back and said, "You know, I think Pate might be okay on this." This was probably about a week before the primary. We didn't want to get to these guys too soon because they have a tendency to leak things. But we don't think they did.

But then (laughs) the Friday before the primary, the *Sun-Times* or somebody put out a story about "Edgar Prepares Tax Time Bomb After the Election." It got a little play. Maybe it was a TV thing. I don't think it got a lot of play, but poor Bob Kustra just got all bothered. He thought it cost him the primary. I don't think it did. There were other things. I don't think it was that much of a factor, but he was mad.

(laughs) The primary's Tuesday; we're going to announce this on Thursday. On Wednesday I go to the editorial boards of the two newspapers and unveil it, and they're receptive. I talk to Daley. I just say, "Now, look, just don't say anything bad about it, because this is important for you, too." The next morning the *Tribune* had a banner headline: "Edgar Plans Tax..." I used to have that around here. I don't know where it is. Do you have it?

DePue: I might. Go ahead, and I'll see if I can find it here.

Edgar: That was the headline in the *Tribune* on Thursday morning. I was in Chicago. Maybe it was Wednesday. Whenever I was talking to the editorial boards, that came out in the headline.

DePue: March 22, 1996. I think this is the headline: "Governor's School Plan: Edgar Wants Vote to Decide Tax Hike"

Edgar: No, no, no.

DePue: No?

Edgar: That's not it. That's mild. (laughs) That's mild. This was something—"Massive Tax..." I have it around here I think. I got to find it. But it was just the worst possible headline.<sup>67</sup> It may not have appeared in the Chicago edition, but it appeared in the Springfield paper. I'm in Chicago trying to talk to the editorial boards, then I'm going to fly down and meet with the Republican caucus. They're all sitting there looking at that headline going nuts. Plus there was some insecurity because Kustra had got beat in the primary by Salvi, who was kind of a Tea Partier before the Tea Party.

DePue: Al Salvi.

Edgar: Yes. So the two Republican caucuses just went bananas. They met that morning and they just went nuts over this thing. I never got a chance. By the time I got down there, they were in open revolt, and it was (laughs) not a... Then I did a special message to the legislature. I remember one of the Democratic legislators had his pool cue, signifying Netsch, (laughter) and through my whole speech he's sitting back there. And the Republicans just sat there dead silent. They didn't clap; they just sat there. It was a tough go, but—

DePue: I apologize for interrupting, but I do think it's important that we lay out the specifics of the recommendations the Ikenberry Commission reported, which you were generally then advancing to the legislature.

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<sup>67</sup> "Edgar Readies Tax Bombshell," *Chicago Tribune*, March 21, 1996. This issue came out the Thursday after the primary. The Friday before the primary, Kustra's opponent, Al Salvi referenced a TV news story to charge Edgar with delaying the release of plans for a tax increase until after the primary. *Chicago Tribune*, March 16, 1996.

Edgar: Right.

DePue: They wanted to fund at a level of \$4,225 dollars per pupil, which would come out of state taxes someplace, and the assumption is—

Edgar: They wanted to guarantee that every student would have that spent. If they weren't at that level, then the difference would come out of state sources. Now, suburban schools were already at that level, so they weren't going to get any money from the state for that part.

DePue: This part, I'm a little bit less sure about, that \$1.9 billion dollars of increase to state taxes someplace—\$1.5 billion of that would be put back into property tax cuts, and that would mean that \$400 million is available for funding schools out of state dollars.

Edgar: Right. Roughly, yes.

DePue: Guaranteed baseline support each year into the future years—so this isn't just a onetime deal, it's a formula that's going to work forever, I guess, or for the...

Edgar: I think in the final bill that passed, for the next three or four years you had a rate, and then they were to take a look and see where they needed to go. I think that was from the original, yes.

DePue: We'll get to what finally came out here a little bit later. State equalization grants for areas of low property wealth—what you alluded to before: recommended state share be raised from 30 percent or in that neighborhood to something like 50 percent. And school accountability—schools required to demonstrate the taxpayers are getting their money, so you're doing something about tenure, you're doing something about the quality of education, and things like that.

Edgar: What happened on the task force—and again, the financial part is what I talked to Dr. Ikenberry about—the reforms were something that I didn't have specifics in mind. There were certain things we thought might work, which might or might not pass. But that was something the business guys particularly wanted to put on there as part of the tradeoff. If you're going to give more money to schools, we need to see more reforms. Now, we'd seen a major reform in Chicago schools. I don't think we'd have had a prayer, and I doubt if I'd have even pushed this thing, if we hadn't had Chicago school reform, but the—

DePue: And you could see that it was already working at that time.

Edgar: At that point we felt good enough about it, yes. Secondly, we also knew we were going to have to have some state reforms in there to get people to go along. What's it going to take? We got to have the IEA's support to get this passed; certain reforms, they're going to have reservations on. So you had all these tradeoffs you knew were going to have to happen. The Ikenberry task force came up with recommendations on reforms, some of which I don't think made it, partly because

we had to have the IEA's support to try to get things passed. But it was a combination of more money...

One of the things that gets lost when people talk about this—"Well, it failed." Well, it didn't fail. The only part that failed was the property tax reform. Everything else passed. To me, the most important stuff passed. We created a minimal foundation level, which was the most important, and we put money in it. I think we had the biggest increase in one year for education ever; while we wanted to raise the income tax so high and lower property taxes, we weren't going to lower property taxes as much as we're going to raise the income tax, because we wanted to take the difference and then help the poor school districts.

DePue: What was the specific percentage that was discussed in terms of raising the income tax?

Edgar: I can't remember now. It was 1.5 or something.

DePue: I think that's where people said it failed, because there never was that increase.

Edgar: No, no, we had a specific—

DePue: No, I'm saying—

Edgar: Where it failed was we did not raise the income tax and lower property taxes; we did not have the reform. We raised as much revenue for schools in the final package as we would have in the initial package. What failed was property tax reform. We did not give property tax relief. We didn't begin a shift. What did pass, which to me was the most important, was we provided more money for poor school districts in the state, and we set the minimal foundation level, which continues to be increased. And we also passed some reforms. Now in the end, the reforms may not have been as strong as what originally was proposed, and part of that had to do with the politics of trying to get something passed, because to get the IEA on board, we had to modify some of those reforms. In the end, when the Republicans came on, we upped some of those reforms. But it was kind of a moving target on the reforms. On the finance part of it, in the end, we got the same amount of money for schools as we started out to. That was my major goal; my second goal was to do property tax reform, which we did not get in the end. But it was (laughs) very time-consuming and very stressful those next twelve months as we fought over the...

Let me tell you something else, the other reason on the timing. Why did you do this right after the primary? Because it was a constitutional amendment. This is something I think the legislators made a big mistake on, and I think later some of them realized it. This was a constitutional amendment. We were going to let the people decide, "Do you want to do this or not?"

DePue: When you say "this," exactly what would be—

Edgar: Raise the income tax, lower the property taxes. We were going to put a constitutional amendment in front of the voters, but we had to get that passed by the end of March to be on the ballot. That's why we had to move so quickly. I didn't want to do it before the primary, because I thought it'd be dead on arrival with guys all running in primaries and many of the primaries more important than the general election. But I had to do it by the end of March or sometime in early—I had a very small window to have it on the ballot in—

DePue: November.

Edgar: —1996, so then we could implement it in '97. That was why things were so packed in and I had to move quick. But my argument to the legislators was, "Look, you guys don't like this; it's up to the voters. You're just saying you're going to let the voters decide, and if they approve it, you're off the hook. If they kill it"— I thought we could pass it because we had polls showing we could pass it.

DePue: Now, to get it onto the ballot, didn't you need 60 percent?

Edgar: Three-fifths, yes. (laughter) Which was another challenge.

DePue: So you needed Republicans and Democrats.

Edgar: We needed both. (laughs) But the Republicans... Needless to say, Pate and Lee went south on us, and part of it was the caucuses. I mean, it was just the way the whole thing unfortunately got out. That story in the *Tribune* killed us. I've told—

DePue: We're going to have to find this headline.

Edgar: Oh, yes. I used to have it around here in a hard thing. I'm going to have to ask McCormick. In fact, I came here later and made a speech at the institute when they were kind of auditioning me, and I had that thing made up for that speech. I think it's "Edgar Prepares Tax Bomb," you know, something really... These legislators were nervous anyway because of the election, and they were just scared to death.

So we had to try to get a constitutional amendment out in two weeks. Unfortunately, there wasn't the time to build public support, and you had the legislators, particularly the Republicans, going south. They wouldn't call it to a vote. Then we put it in legislative form. All right, you aren't going to have a referendum by the people—pass it. But that didn't happen till we came back at the start of '97. We went ahead and did other things, and the session ended pretty mildly. But then I told them, "Guys, I'm going to come back, and since it can't be a constitutional amendment, you're just going to have to vote on it." At least this way [passing a constitutional amendment], you could have just said, "All we're doing is letting people have a choice." That would have been the way to allow everybody off the hook if they were worried about people back home. I was convinced, because we'd polled, and we thought we could pass this.

DePue: I'm confused about one thing here, and that's the mechanism for how the state could dictate that property taxes would be lowered. Isn't that a local issue?

Edgar: It is, but the schools would not receive the money unless they lowered their levy. The state doesn't have to give them the money. So to get the money, they had to lower the levy. Well, what school wouldn't lower their levy to get money? What school wouldn't lower their levy? (DePue laughs) Some suburban schools didn't like it, because what little money they thought they might get, they didn't want more—they thought they'd get more state control. That was one of their arguments. Again, I thought I would pick up more support in the suburbs than I did. Suburban mayors liked it because it took pressure off of the property taxes. But a lot of superintendents didn't like it, because what they were afraid eventually would happen is that they'd do away with their property taxes and have less; they'd be told, "You run your schools for eight thousand dollars a student." They thought, all of a sudden there would be this equity we'll be stuck with, and we don't want that. We've got our property tax, and we've got a good thing going here. We don't want to lose that. So superintendents were kind of telling their state legislators, "We want to keep what we got. We want to keep our property tax." They were afraid they'd lose it and lose control. They probably had a legitimate... I have to say, the more I went through this—there were two sides of this story. But the battle in '96 was solely on the constitutional amendment, and that happened very quickly. We lost, then we had to regroup and come back in '97, and that was purely legislation.

DePue: Especially in '96, but you can address this for both years, what was the feedback you were getting from the press and from the general public?

Edgar: The general public—they were intrigued; they kind of liked the idea. The press said, "Eh, you couldn't get members of your own party to support you," so it was one of these, "You're inept." The press very seldom ever dwelled on the merits of anything; they dwell on the politics of it, and they dwelt more on winners and losers.

DePue: Maybe that's reflected in a couple of these cartoons I'll let you see. Characteristic of the Mike Thompson cartoons, he's always got the price tag on the hairdo as well.<sup>68</sup>

Edgar: Yes. Are these '95?

DePue: I don't know what the specific dates of those are. The third one you're looking at comes right out of the *Meeting the Challenge* book here.

Edgar: Oh, yes, that's Mike Thompson, too. Yes, yes.

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<sup>68</sup> *State Journal-Register* (Springfield, IL) cartoonist Mike Thompson usually drew Edgar with a price tag in his hair. Thompson explains why he created the price tag in Mike Cramer, "Poison Pen Pals," *Illinois Issues* (August 1994), 15. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, November 17, 2009, 47.

DePue: We're going to include these, once we get all this up on the Internet, for people to see.

Edgar: Yes. You know, the Democrats kind of stuck me a little bit—"You attacked Netsch." "Wait a minute," I said, "This is different than what I attacked Netsch on." "Fine, but still, let's move ahead." There's no doubt that it came back to haunt me a little bit, though I've always told people, if you look at Netsch during the general election campaign, when she really emphasized her school plan—that was in August of 1994—she started picking up in the polls. Where she dropped in the polls is when we went after her on crime; that was in June, and she just dropped like a lead balloon. She started to come back a little bit in August on the school funding thing. Then she switched and took attacks at me on integrity and just fell apart. I mean, she had no credibility on that. We went after her, and the election was over.

As I kept telling guys, "I got to tell you, school funding has traction out there. We saw it in the election, and we're polling now, and people out there are not where you are, necessarily, on that. Now, they want reforms." When I came back, I said I was going to do something—maybe I said specifics in the budget address; maybe I said it in the State of the State, when I laid out the legislative package in '97. But in the meantime, we'd had time to begin to work the public and the media. We had several months; we didn't just have two, three weeks like in '96 when we were trying to get a constitutional amendment passed.

Then, of course, the Republicans lost control of the House. It was a big change. I always said one of the reasons was they hadn't done anything in the eyes of the public. If they had done something on school funding, I think they'd have had a better chance holding on.

DePue: But ironically, the Republicans losing control in the House gives you a little bit better chance to push something through in '97, does it not?

Edgar: I would not have got anything through if the Republicans had kept control. I would never have got Chicago school reform through if the Democrats had had control of the legislature. Timing's everything, so the timing was far better in '97, even though we're talking about a straight vote as opposed to a constitutional amendment—which I, to this day, think they blew. I think the constitutional amendment would have been (laughs) an easy way for everybody to say to the public, "Here, you decide." And if they passed it and people said, "Hey, you voted..." We gave them a choice, and the public, the majority, wants it; the majority rules. I always thought that would have been a far easier way to do it for the legislature. But anyway, they didn't. So with a Democratic House, we thought, At least we got a better shot of getting something, if we can get it out of the House, build momentum, and go to the Senate.

DePue: So January 1997, you're looking at a new legislature, and you start the campaign right from the beginning at your State of the State speech, mentioning that education funding is the top item on your agenda. Then apparently you go right out

after that and start touring the state. What was the rationale for your strategy going forward from here, then?

Edgar: Building up public support, particularly downstate Republican legislators. We figured we probably weren't going to get suburban legislators. It was obvious the suburbs wanted to keep their property tax; they didn't want state control. The educators were afraid that they would lose money in the end, and they were right. Income tax comes from the suburbs, goes to Springfield, and doesn't come back to the suburbs. We made the argument to them, "Yes, but the more you pay for education, the less you're going to pay in income tax down the road, because it's going to cut welfare cost, it's going to cut prison cost," and all these things. But we weren't making a whole lot of inroads, so we figured we were not going to get the suburban vote. The problem I had—my two Republican leaders were from the suburbs. If I'd have had a downstate leader in the House and the Senate, it would have been a whole different ballgame, I think. If Frank Watson had been the Republican leader in the Senate instead of Pate Philip at that time, it would have been a different—because Frank Watson knew he needed to vote for my proposal.

DePue: What area is Watson from?

Edgar: Frank was from Bond County. It's down near the Metro East area, but the rural area outside of it. I don't know if at that time his district came all the way up to Decatur, but it was pretty mainly rural downstate school districts. In fact, Frank was one of the senators we put pressure on the whole time because we knew his district wanted it, and he knew they needed it. So if I'd have had at least one of the Republican leaders from downstate, instead of two of them from DuPage County, who were just not excited about this proposal at all, I think I would have had a better chance getting more Republicans. But as it was, I had Lee and Pate, and they tried to outdo each other being opposed to it.

We went around the state, particularly downstate, and we went to some suburban school districts, too—there are a few poor suburban school districts—and showed what students were doing without. We went to one school district in western Illinois, where one of the classrooms was a closet because they didn't have any space, and they were using textbooks that were thirty years old. The information was inaccurate, it was so out of date. There were examples all over downstate where they didn't have the money to spend. They didn't have good textbooks, they had terrible facilities, and they couldn't teach the courses that you needed to get into U of I.

Bush the elder took Ted Sanders, who had been state superintendent of schools in the eighties, to Washington to be the deputy director of the Department of Education, and then he came back later and was president of Southern. I remember him telling me, when he was about ready to leave Illinois, that one year there were four or five valedictorians who went to U of I from downstate schools, and they all flunked out of U of I the first semester. He was just talking about the best kids coming out of our schools, and some of these downstate schools

can't make it in our flagship university because they don't have the preparation. So we hit on that as much as we could downstate.

DePue: Were you getting press coverage?

Edgar: Oh, yes, yes. Again, the governor has the bully pulpit. Particularly downstate, if the governor goes into a community, for whatever reason, the media's going to cover it. So we had the local television, we had the newspapers, and they were playing up what we had to say. That was putting pressure then on those Republican legislators down there who were not for the proposal at that point, whereas the schools were for it, the Farm Bureau was for it. Everybody down there was for it except the legislators. We're putting that pressure on, hoping to get enough Republicans. Now, Madigan had said from the word go they would support it, he would support it. He never told me how many votes, but he said they would support it.

DePue: But I know he lost a sizeable chunk of the Chicago area Democrats—or maybe that was later on?

Edgar: No, that's the final vote. I'll explain. Yes, this is a moving target.

DePue: (laughs) Okay.

Edgar: Then the Republicans in the end became my biggest allies. But at this point, it was still the property tax switch with the income tax and everything else. I even take campaign money and run TV commercials in the state.

DePue: And that's the April, May timeframe, when things are really starting to develop in the legislative session.

Edgar: Yes. We have polls showing about 60–40 in favor of this proposal. Even in the suburbs, we were getting favorable response.

DePue: Isn't this kind of a unique situation where you're using your own campaign funds?

Edgar: Nobody had known it ever happening before. Maybe in other states, but it never happened in Illinois.

DePue: Did you get a nice bump just from the fact that you're spending your own money to do this?

Edgar: I don't know if I got a bump from that, but I got a bump from the commercials. The commercials worked; people saw the commercials, and of course, (laughs) there weren't really any commercials on the other side. You could see—and the Republicans knew—they were digging in, and they knew that they were getting hit from all sides.

DePue: Nobody's running commercials contrary to this, are they?

Edgar: No, exactly. Just my things out there talking to school kids and showing school kids... My two Republican leaders were just furious with me. We were trying to carry on other business, and we did at times, but at times we didn't. I was kind of ignoring the Senate; I was concentrating the House. Now, we were quietly working the Senate, but we were really concentrating on the House. Madigan and I were meeting, and of course, Madigan kept saying, "How many Republicans you got?" I said, "I don't know. How many..." He said, "I need fifteen Republicans." And I said, "I don't know if I can get fifteen Republicans. Daniels is really putting the hammer on these guys, and we're working on it." I think in the end we got five or six.

Again, we're all over the state, we've got TV commercials, we're working it, and the pressure's—Republicans are just getting beat up too, even though they're on the other side. So finally we come to the point where we need to call the vote, and Madigan says, "How many votes you got?" And I say, "I don't know." He says, "Well, I don't know if we've got enough." I say, "Let's just run it and see." But Madigan was determined he was going to stick it to Daniels.

DePue: This is late in the regular session, I would assume—May, June timeframe?

Edgar: See, we were going to the June thing. We were in the new constitution, so we had to get out of there, I think.

DePue: Yeah, I should know the date.

Edgar: I think we were in April, late April, probably, because we still had time in that Senate. But Madigan came to me and said, "My guys are nervous that they'll vote for this and then you'll campaign against them for raising taxes. They want an endorsement." I said, "I'm not going to give them an endorsement." Finally we settled on I'd give them a letter thanking them for their support of this proposal. He came back and said, "Okay, that'll work." Anybody who votes for this will get a letter from me thanking them for their courage in voting for this important piece of legislation.

DePue: It looks like this was late May of '97.

Edgar: Was it? Oh, okay. I'm surprised, because there was, I remember, a story on the budget. I'll tell you later.

DePue: At that point in the battle, how was the school funding going to be—was that an income tax increase at that time?

Edgar: Yes. It was the switch. It was basically what we'd talked about in the constitutional amendment, but it was now in legislative form, which meant we didn't need a supermajority, we just needed [a majority] in the House.

So the day comes for the bill. Daniels really thought he had the thing stopped in the House. Everybody thought they had it stopped in the House. That was kind of

the conventional wisdom—they're not going to pass it out of the House. The vote came; Madigan put every Democrat on, and I think I got six Republicans, so we passed it with five votes to spare or something like that.<sup>69</sup> The Republicans in the legislature were shocked because they really thought they had the thing dead. Now we go to the Senate. We knew we had the votes in the Senate. I had enough downstate Republicans—like Frank Watson, who was just getting the tar beat out of him, and other guys that IEA had supported—who were going to vote for it. So we had more than thirty votes, but what I learned I didn't have, I didn't have the presiding officer. In the House, I had the presiding officer—he called the bill. He sent it to a committee that supported it.

DePue: And the presiding officer in that case is Madigan again.

Edgar: Is Madigan, who was on my side. But in the Senate, the presiding officer is Pate Philip, who's adamantly opposed to it and just **furious** (DePue laughs) that it's now in the Senate. He was hoping it'd die in the House, because he has his downstate Republicans who need to vote for it, but Pate doesn't want it to pass. He's adamant, and he's just putting all kinds of pressure on them. They're going to send it to a committee that's not the education committee, some committee they've got a lock on. This one committee, Pate had complete control of all the Republican votes. In fact, I think one guy got off because he didn't want to vote against it, but he didn't want to make Pate mad, so they changed him. All the Republicans voted against it, and they held it up in committee, but it wasn't the education committee. So we were going to try to do a discharge. The discharge we were going to do was thirty votes, which was pretty unusual, but we—

DePue: Explain the parliamentary procedure of a discharge.

Edgar: A discharge is a vote of the full members to take a bill out of a committee that hasn't passed it out, which is very hard to do in the Senate particularly, but this is a big issue. We knew we had all the Democrats, and we needed two or three Republicans to vote for a discharge. Now, this is a trickier vote than voting for it on the floor. There are some guys who just won't vote for a discharge, and we knew that. But I was down to one vote; I knew who the senator was, and I had him down in my office. At that time we were building a new prison in Illinois, and this senator came from a long family of politicians who cared about jobs.

DePue: You haven't mentioned the senator's name.

Edgar: No, I won't, but some people know who it is. I'll just say the senator is no longer alive. He's supported by the IEA, has a lot of jobs from the governor—not that we can control them as much, but in his district they really wanted this prison. I had checked with Corrections and said, "All right, I'm not going to put a prison just anywhere. There's about three different sites vying for this. This guy's got a site.

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<sup>69</sup> As a result of the 1980 Cutback Amendment, the Illinois House has 118 members. Edgar's plan passed the House 62-56, with fifty-five of the sixty Democrats and seven of the fifty-eight Republicans voting for it. *Chicago Tribune*, May 29, 1997.

Tell me, is this site as good as the other site?" And they said, "Yeah, this site's just as good as the other sites from Corrections' point of view. If you put it here, we're fine. Now, if there were some places you'd put it, we'd say it was terrible, don't do it." I said, "Okay, if you told me it was bad, then I wouldn't offer it, but if you're telling me that governmentally it's a fine place to put a prison, then that's all I need to know."

So the guy's in. I've known this guy for a long time, and families had been close and stuff. But he's close to Pate, too, and he's one of the guys—you get that caucus mentality, and they don't want to make Pate mad, and they don't want to go against their guys. A caucus mentality is nothing you can explain in a textbook; you've got to experience it. Grown, responsible men—and women—can act real strange in Springfield when they get in those caucuses. This meant, we've got to be part of the gang even though it doesn't make sense for our district. The same thing happened in the House. We had some guys vote against it in the House that were IEA, Farm Bureau members. It made (laughs) absolutely no sense. Their districts were dying, but they didn't want to make Lee—they didn't want to leave their caucus.

So in the Senate, this was going to be an important vote. We talked for a while, and I didn't say anything about the prison. I mean, we talked a little bit about the prison, but I didn't say anything. He left, and to my legislative guy, I said, "All right, go talk to him and tell him if he votes for discharge, there's a good chance that prison's going to be in his district. But I don't want to tell him. You tell him." And the guy did. The senator believed him, and he said, "All right, we have a deal." So, okay. He went back to the caucus, and they just beat the tar out of him. (laughter) Let me say, he did not vote for discharge, and that prison didn't come within a hundred miles of that legislative district when it got built. (laughter) It was so far away.<sup>70</sup>

To me it underscored again and again the power of the caucus, even over a governor. Now, a governor doesn't have what he used to have, but the governor, knowing this guy, that prison was a pretty nice thing for his district. It was a big deal. But he did not want to make... He was in a safe district. It wasn't like he had to worry about getting reelected. But it just underscored how powerful that caucus was. So we didn't get that discharge motion. I think we figured we had thirty-three to thirty-five votes in the Senate to pass that, but Pate would never call it.

DePue: Let me ask you a couple questions about the nature of the caucus, then, because this is the perfect opportunity to do it. Do members of a caucus—and we're talking about the Senate Republicans, or in Madigan's case, the lock he has on the House Democrats—pledge that they're going to vote a certain way to the caucus leader?

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<sup>70</sup> Edgar announced the new prison sites in August 1997. The Republican senators who served in 1997 and had died by the date of this interview were Marty Butler (Park Ridge), Dick Klemm (Crystal Lake), Robert A. Madigan (Lincoln), and Stanley B. Weaver (Urbana). Governor, I'm flagging this note for your review, since this is an anecdote that people will probably be curious about, and it's easy to give them a starting point now. Do you want to make it less or more work for them(??)

Edgar: No, very seldom do they ever take a caucus position saying, “We pledge we won’t vote.” They’ll take a show of hands; the leader will talk to them. It’s not so much that. Now, Bill Black here recently got—

DePue: Right.

Edgar: —and he said it wasn’t a caucus position.<sup>71</sup> I don’t know of any time they’ve ever taken a caucus position where you had to vote for it or leave the caucus. You’re sitting in there and you kind of agree you’re going to do something without taking a formal caucus position, and you have a show of hands. That’s very powerful on these people. They don’t want to... Particularly if you’re one of these guys who’s close to the leader—and Pate was very good with his members. Pate would go out of his way to help his members and give them whatever they wanted. Now, he didn’t necessarily give them something at the expense of DuPage County. If it was expansion of O’Hare Airport, or in this case the income tax, he wasn’t going to go out of the way and let them vote for it. He was good at—probably better than Lee, even—but both leaders have a lot to give their members, too. The majority of the members were there, and they want to be part of the group. It’s a group mentality, the mentality of the caucus. As I said, I’ve seen rational men do real irrational things because the caucus gets carried away; they go on these tangents and they get in those rooms, and they kind of lose sight of the outside world. For these downstate legislators, their districts were very much in favor of what I was trying to do. But in their caucus, they had this kind of atmosphere.

DePue: How much of that had to do with a lot of the [campaign] money being funneled through those four leaders?

Edgar: A good part of it. They knew they needed their leader to get reelected in some cases. But even guys that had safe districts, like this guy with the prison—he had a safe district, but he wanted comradeship, part of the club.

DePue: To be able to go to the bars afterwards.

Edgar: Yes, and be one of the guys, not have them beat on them and all that. I was amazed how hard that was to overcome. If it had been thirty years before, when Ogilvie was governor... Of course, Arrington was for it and Smith was for it, the two leaders, so you didn’t have that caucus going the other way; but still, the governor had life and death over these guys.<sup>72</sup> Governors today don’t have life and death. This one guy, I had a pretty good plum, but it wasn’t life and death. I mean, he didn’t have life and death from the governor.

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<sup>71</sup> In May 2010, William B. Black (R-Danville) and Bob Biggins (R-Elmhurst) broke ranks with Republicans to vote for a Democratic plan to pay for state pension fund contributions by borrowing \$3.7 billion. House minority leader Tom Cross (R-Oswego) stripped Biggins of his position as a minority spokesman and demoted Black from deputy minority leader to assistant minority leader. *Daily Herald* (Arlington Heights, IL), June 14, 2010. <http://saxo.dailyherald.com/article/20100612/News/306129817>.

<sup>72</sup> Referring to the income tax vote under Governor Ogilvie

But Pate never would call the bill. Again, if he'd have called the bill, if we'd ever had a vote on the Senate floor, I'm convinced we would have passed it. Pate knew that, too. I think Pate knew that he had about four, five, six guys that were going to have to vote for it in their districts, including a Frank Watson type. We had some actually out, saying publicly they're for it; they were making no bones about it. The IEA was beating on their members, and they had some Republicans that they endorse. We had all the school board people calling; we had the local business guys calling. The pressure was on, but Pate wouldn't call it. I remember Pate kept calling me, "Can we compromise, can we compromise?" I said, "No, give me a vote. You guys have been beating me up all session. All I want's a vote." "No, I'm not going to give you a vote," because he knew I had the votes.

DePue: What did he want to compromise on?

Edgar: "Is there something else we can do?" We talked. It wasn't quite like O'Hare where he was just... I wouldn't say we were on great terms at this point, but it was better than O'Hare where he wouldn't talk to me. We were talking. Because I remember I was over at the mansion, and the budget hadn't been passed either, because there were some other issues on the budget. This was after it was pretty well dead, and he came back to me, because his members were still getting beat up. We kept the pressure going a little bit on his members, and the members were still getting beat up. So he's calling me, "Can't we work out a compromise? Can't we do something?" Now it was in the Senate. The House was off the hook; the Senate was killing it, and Republicans controlled the Senate, so they were getting the blame, in downstate particularly.

Whenever you lose, you always want to be on the losing side. If you're on the winning side, people are not mad anymore. If you're on the winning side, you don't get a whole lot of credit. If you're on the losing side, people that lose are mad, and they're mad at the winners. So if you were on the winning side, which was the Republicans killing this, they've got all those people who are mad that they lost and are just putting pressure and really unhappy. So they're getting all that. They're not getting many people who come up and say, "Thank you for not raising the income tax." Now, if it had passed, they might have if they had voted...

DePue: But the rationale for voting against it is you've got to go back and face your constituents.

Edgar: Yes, right.

DePue: Then you're getting some credit for voting against it.

Edgar: No, no. Not if it failed. If it had passed and they were stuck with paying the tax, then you might get some credit for being against it, but nothing happened to anybody, except the people who wanted it—education got hurt. So educators, people who are for education, were mad; they're mad at the Republicans who, while they won, lost with the guys back home.

I was over at the mansion, shaving one morning. Pate called me and wanted to do a deal, and I said, “No, no.” So we talked about some other things on the budget. We had a civil conversation, and we worked out a couple other things on the budget. I thought the budget had to be approved, because we were still dealing with some of the budget, and we dealt with that. I said, “Pate, I’m just tired of this issue. We have fought about it, you didn’t call it. Just go home, and we’ll see what happens.” They went home, and we kept the pressure up all summer. I mean, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* was just beating on Frank Watson—and that was the one in particular, because we knew Frank was close to Pate, and we knew Frank would complain to Pate about (laughs), “We got to do something.” Because Frank kept saying, “We got to do something. We got to do something” to me. So all summer I was getting calls from the Senate Republicans—“Can’t we get together? Can’t we work out some compromise?” I said, “I don’t think so.” I was steamed because I was getting flak, because I didn’t get it through, so I was just going to let them stew in their juice for a while. All along, I thought in the back of my mind, eh, we can probably work out something, but not now. I really wanted a vote because I thought I had it. I thought I was going to get it after it got out of the House, because I knew I had the votes in the Senate. So I was not in the compromising mood yet.

Late summer, early September, Carter called me, and he said, “Pate really wants to—can’t we work out something? Our guys are just getting the tar beat out of them downstate.” (laughs) I laughed and said, “I know they’re getting the tar beat out of them, because we’re putting the pressure on them.” And he said, “Well, can’t we work out something?” I said, “I don’t know, Carter. I just don’t know. I just did not like the way you guys treated me.”

DePue: This is Carter Hendren.

Edgar: Carter Hendren, yes. He was always the go-between when I was trying to get... Carter had been kind of in favor of this; because he’s downstater, he understood. Finally I said, “All right, I’ll meet with them.”

So we go out. We have exactly what we want. We knew at that point we’re not going to get the income tax. Carter said, “You can have anything but the income tax. They’ll give you anything.” There was a whole slew of taxes I had tried to pass a year or two before, like riverboat tax and some other things, which they wouldn’t give me. We had those all down the list exactly the way we wanted it. We knew they wanted school construction. I had not put that in my original proposal because I knew that you have to give the legislature something they can get themselves, and we knew they wanted school construction; so that was no problem, but I was going to make them beg for it. Because (growls) I was livid. But I still knew, hey, I can get what I really want. The most important thing is to get this minimum foundation level. We figured we’d get as much money with these other taxes as we could have with the income tax, we just won’t get the property tax switch.

The more we got into this, the more complicated this was. Al Grosboll, who’s probably the only guy in the capitol who understood the bill, came to me several

times—because guys would want this little tweak, this little tweak. He said, “Governor, I’m not sure this is going to work. (laughs) I’m not sure we can do this switching around. This is going to be...” And Revenue was just shaking her head at me, “Ah, this is going to be really tough to administer.” I told Revenue just to keep quiet, we’d work it out. I have to say that I did begin to realize there was another side. I mean, not so much on the merits—I still thought the merits were right—but just to get this done.

The other problem we had was the differential in Chicago. One of the arguments against the bill was all this property tax relief is going to go to corporations, because in Cook County, who pays the big part of the property tax? It’s corporations, because they have the differential. The homeowner in Cook County doesn’t pay proportionally as much as a downstater does, because they have a higher rate for corporations in Cook County. It’s the only county in the state that’s allowed that differential; whereas downstate, the percent is the same for corporations as it is for individuals. So a lot of that relief was going to go to corporations. We actually had a lot of businesses in Cook County who favored this proposal—which just drove the Republicans nuts—because they realized this was a good thing for them, because they pay an inordinate amount of the property tax.

That’s why Cook County always has trouble recruiting businesses, because of this differential. The only way you ever solve that is you create equity. That means bringing up the individual property taxpayers to pay more. Well, they already think they pay too much. Everybody thinks they pay too much, even if they’re paying the lowest amount in the country; it’s just the nature of people. There’s no way you’re going to bring that up so the corporations can come down. So that’s another nightmare that always made property tax reform in Illinois so difficult—the differential between corporations and individuals in Cook County. We were looking at that, and how you administer that was a real problem. We had some kind of thing figured out where it wouldn’t be a windfall for the corporations; there was something else in Cook County. Anyway, there were some questionable things in this bill from just an administrative point of view.

So when I finally realized we’re not going to get the income tax, we’re not going to get the property tax swap, I was disappointed but at the same time probably in some way relieved. There were some things we weren’t sure were going to work, but we knew we could get the minimal foundation level. We could do what I started out to do and help poor school districts, particularly downstate school districts, in Illinois, to bring them up. Also, the Senate Republicans downstate wanted to be able to vote for something like that so they could take the heat off them, because if something didn’t pass, they were going to get blamed the next election. So we sat down with Pate and his staff, and we outlined what we wanted. They didn’t sign the dotted line, but we basically had an agreement within about a half hour.

DePue: The specifics on the taxes was an increase in cigarette taxes, phone bills—riverboat casinos I think were a big part of it—and higher penalties on late filers for state income tax.

Edgar: Um-hm. And it ended up coming up to about the same—

DePue: Four hundred and eighty-five million.

Edgar: Yes, which is about what we were doing off the income tax. Now, the one thing Carter was—they really wanted the school construction. They weren't real sure about some of those taxes, but they knew the telephone tax ought to be pretty consistent, so that was to be specifically designated to pay for the school construction bill.

DePue: That's part of it that the folks over in Revenue were a little bit nervous about?

Edgar: No, they weren't nervous about that. I think the Senate Republicans were more worried about what happens if the casino take goes down or some of these other things go down, tobacco tax goes down. And then reform. We put reforms in, and I think there were some more reforms they wanted, and we didn't care. But there was some give and take on that so the IEA wouldn't pull their support of the bill; they got upset about the final thing because of some of the reforms.

DePue: Reforms would include certification processes and changing the length to tenure.

Edgar: Yes. To be very truthful, they got watered down before it got passed, to keep the IEA there. Well, the Democrats, then they're saying, "Wait a minute, you cut a deal with the Republicans." But Chicago got a good chunk of this money, because there is always that provision in there for districts with a high proportion of low income, and that basically helped Chicago, East St. Louis, and I think Waukegan. It was three.

DePue: Waukegan?

Edgar: South Waukegan, I think. Yes, they're a very poor district. But it's a godsend to Chicago—more than they deserve, probably. So they were going to get a good chunk of this. The school construction, I remember we sat down, but for the most part then the Democrats said, "Yeah, we'll be there." The problem we started to have with the Democrats was the cigarette tax. The lobbyist for the cigarette industry was a former African American legislator who had a lot of African American friends. All of a sudden, a lot of African Americans, who were all for the school money because that helps the Chicago schools—which are predominantly African American, they have a lot of employees there—

DePue: What would this gentleman's name be?

Edgar: I can't remember his name, but he had to be good friends with these guys, (laughter) because they came off in droves. Emil, though, stayed. I can't remember

why he stayed. Oh, I think Emil did pull off. I think Emil jumped off of it, because we tried it in the Senate first, and there weren't enough votes, I think. Daley went ballistic, because they're losing money, (laughs) and he started talking about these legislators from Chicago that ought to be replaced; that scared them to death. I wish I had the newspaper clippings from that period. I can't remember for sure, but I know that Daley went after the Chicago Democrats, and they quickly jumped back in.

I remember we were sitting down with the four leaders and talking about this school construction money, and how do you access the school construction money? You need a match. The four leaders—Pate, Lee, Madigan, and Jones—had kind of talked, and they said, "We think it ought to be a 50 percent match."

DePue: Matching state funds with local funds?

Edgar: So if locals had 50 percent of the construction, they could get 50 percent from the state. Well, suburban districts had the match, the 50 percent match, and Chicago had the 50 percent match. Most downstate school districts, particularly the poor ones, didn't have anything close to a 50 percent match. The best they could probably come up with was a 25 percent match. These guys said, "No, we want 50—that's fair." And I said, "No, this bill will be vetoed. I will be opposed to this bill if you guys go with a 50... It's got to be sliding, based off income of the district. Poor districts can go down to 25 percent, wealthier ones would be 50 percent, but I'm not going to pass a schools construction bill that cuts out downstate." This is part of being the governor for downstate. There are times I had to be the governor for the suburbs and governor for the city. This was my time to be governor for downstate, because I had four leaders that weren't from downstate, and they were being very parochial, even though their members might have been upset. They cared about DuPage first and the city first. So it really wasn't too long of a discussion, and finally I convinced them of the errors of their way.

But as I said, I think we called the bill once in the Senate and the African American legislators were off, and there were some Republicans from the suburbs who weren't going to vote for it. There really wasn't a whole lot of reason for suburban legislators to vote for this, for the most part. Now, Pate voted for it, but I think a lot of the suburban guys didn't. So you needed to have a lot of Democrats and several Republicans to pass it. We had a lot of both, but we didn't have a lot of Democrats to start with. I think we got held up a little bit in the Senate. Maybe not. Again, I just haven't looked at that part of... It was going to pass. Maybe the Senate did pass it. The problem came up in the House, because this guy had been a House member. Because I think I did talk to Emil about talking to some of the House guys. I think Emil was okay, now that I think about it. I think he went along with it fine, because I think the Chicago Federation of Teachers wanted it, and he was close to them. I don't think he cared about this lobbyist as much; it wasn't his guy. But Madigan said he was having problems in the House, so I think that's when Daley went after these guys.

DePue: But the problem was focused on this one lobbyist and the cigarette tax.

Edgar: Yes, too high cigarette tax, so he wasn't going to get on it. It had nothing to do with the merits of the bill, it was personalities. This guy took them all to dinner at night and things like that, gave them... Finally that got resolved; it passed. It passed with overwhelming Republicans and Democrats, and I think in both houses. A few stayed off of it, but a far cry from the first. Republicans all took credit for it and were very excited about (laughs) school finance reform. I went around to all the schools that I had visited originally and signed it. It was the only time I ever did that—I signed it in six steps. That means you don't sign your whole name at one time. (DePue laughs) That was a tricky thing to do. I went to southern Illinois, I went to central Illinois, I went to suburbs, and the city.

DePue: You're only signing one copy of the bill?

Edgar: No, only signing part of my name.

DePue: No, I understand, but is there only one bill that gets signed?

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: Here's the eventual law that was passed. It establishes baseline support at \$4,225, the same exact number that the Ikenberry Commission had come out with. One point five billion in funds for local school construction, and you got that sliding scale? Improvement in certification and tenure. "Improvement in tenure" meaning a lengthening of the tenure process for teachers?

Edgar: Yes. The certification was questionable, because I think the IEA still controlled the board (laughs) that did the certification. It sounded better than it really was, some of those things, on the reforms.

DePue: An increase in cigarette tax and phone bills and riverboat casino, a big part of it. Guaranteed for the next couple years, so fiscal year 2000, that per pupil expense would be \$4,325; fiscal year 2001, \$4,425; and then the assumption is after that they'd have to renegotiate that figure.

Edgar: They needed to take a look and see where it was. There was nothing magical about those numbers except we just knew probably with inflation, those numbers would go up, and the Ikenberry Commission had arbitrarily come up with those numbers. The feeling was after four or five years, you needed to take another look and see where things were and what would be a reasonable level. To some extent, even that \$4,225 number was a little bit of a—who knows for sure? We kind of knew how much money we thought we could raise revenue-wise, and that kind of all fit together. But again, the feeling was that would be a substantial increase, which would allow schools to do a lot of things they couldn't do, and I think most people have agreed that has **helped**. It hasn't been a perfect solution, but it definitely has gone a long way to help the poor school districts of the state begin to pull

themselves up across the state. You didn't have to hopefully get a referendum passed, which was extremely difficult in many downstate school districts.

I felt that in the end, we got 75 percent of what we were out to get. I mean, we didn't get property tax relief. I think the media has a tendency to dwell on property tax relief. We didn't get that, but we did get the minimal foundation level, we did get more money for schools; we did get some reforms, but most importantly, we got the minimal foundation level. We helped poor school districts in the state; that was the basis of what we wanted to accomplish, and we did accomplish that.

DePue: Was part of this message that's coming out of the media in terms of not getting the property tax relief also the more tenuous nature of the tax increases that you did get? It's on casinos, and you don't have a guarantee.

Edgar: No, no, that didn't have anything to do with it, no. It was just the media has a tendency to abbreviate most stories, and this was always income tax—property tax shift. The school stuff's too complicated, in a way. I mean, the minimal foundation level... They didn't quite get into that. The talk was all about income tax and property tax. There's no doubt, the income tax is the third rail of Illinois politics. It's like Social Security is in the federal level. You can mention all these other taxes, and in the end, "Yes, okay." Pate, who had just fought me tooth and nail a couple years before on these, just, "Yeah, yeah, here, take them. We'll do it. Just stay away from that income tax."

DePue: Heck, Governor, most of the time you can figure out a way to not even call it a tax, it's just a revenue enhancement.

Edgar: Yes, yes, George Ryan tried that, and you saw what that did to his popularity. No, people view it as a tax, but for some reason they just don't get worried about the... The income tax just scares them more, and I actually think it's an easier sell than some of these. No, it was just because we didn't get the income tax increase and the property tax reduction—the swap thing. The other dilemma we had was the swap; at the end of it, people weren't going to see a whole lot of reduction in their property tax bills. We thought we had it so we could keep other local governments from going in, filling in that void, and raising theirs to make up for the... But in the end, it still wasn't going to be a huge amount, and we did have this concern that people would say, "Wait a minute. I'm paying more in income tax. I don't see much property tax relief."

Now, my numbers jumped during this whole process. It was the last bump I got before I went out of office, and it was a nice bump. I was in the sixties job approval through this whole thing at the end. Now, what would have happened if it had become law, and people paid more in income tax and said, "I don't see much property tax relief?" Then would it have shifted? It might have. Don't know. I don't think as much as some people that were opposed to it thought. But in the end, this was an issue that politically—if you look at poll numbers, you look at the average guy on the street—helped me, because most people, at least initially, never had to

pay it. But they thought this was the right way to go, and it was also showing a concern for education.

Toward the end, I came home, and maybe it was after the spring session when we had lost but hadn't gone back yet and done the final compromise. I got home late one night, and there was some national magazine dealing with the family in my inbox. I always would look at the mail before I'd go upstairs, and there was a page marked. I opened it up, and it was "Ten Heroes of the Family in the United States." They had different people, and one of the names was me, and it was for my attempt to try to get equity for school funding in Illinois. It was a little thing, but I went upstairs feeling a lot better, (laughter) because I had been getting beat up so much on that. I think there was the feeling out there—because this was very visible—that Jim Edgar cared about education, and he cared about helping the poor school districts. And I did. I was very concerned about that.

When I left office, they said, "Well, Edgar failed in his main thing. He didn't get property tax relief." The main thing I thought was the foundation level, and we got that. I think there were other things too, but the media had a tendency... But the guy in the street didn't think that, and even if they thought that, they thought, well, he tried to do the right thing. People give you more credit for trying to do the right thing than for winning. The media doesn't. The media—it's all a winners and losers kind of thing. You ought to read at the end of the legislative session. But in this case, to the guy in the street, for the most part, it was, he did the right thing, and he tried to do the right thing.

DePue: The cheap shot for you, Governor—is that the way you look at your horses when they're racing, that he was trying to win?

Edgar: I've got my trainers always telling me that. (DePue laughs) No, I want them to win. Except, if they come up, it's a big difference if they try than if they don't try. In the end, the Republicans all showed up at the bill-signing ceremony. You'd have thought they'd been (laughter) with me the whole time. It was fine. It was a compromise, and it was a classic compromise. I could not have gotten that compromise six months before if we had not gotten the bill out of the House and had the momentum to pass it. We had momentum, it was just Pate Philip wouldn't call it. As I always tell students, it's not just having the majority of the votes; you've got to have the guy with the gavel.

DePue: You mentioning it wouldn't have happened six months before—that's about the same time, August 1997, that you announce you will **not** be running for reelection.

Edgar: Actually I announced before we worked out the compromise.

DePue: Yeah, exactly. Did that factor into finally getting the momentum to get it passed?

Edgar: Oh, no, no. In fact, we worried it might hurt it. There was some concern, if you're not going to be a candidate, would you become a lame duck? Well, I didn't. I did not become a lame duck until after the election in '98. In some ways, it might have

helped to keep some Democrats there, because they figured, this isn't going to be Edgar's reelection thing. I don't think it helped.

Republicans, I think, would just as soon I had run for reelection. Even though they were maybe mad on some of this stuff, they still thought I was by far the strongest candidate. I had the county chairmen, even some that were close to George Ryan, try to talk me into running again at the state fair and things. Pate and Lee had both called me up and tried to get me to run again, or they wanted me to at least run for the U.S. Senate. Probably the U.S. Senate, because then they'd have George as governor and get what they wanted, and to have me at the top of the ticket to carry everybody in is really what they wanted.

DePue: We'll talk a lot more about that decision to retire later.

Edgar: Pleasantly surprised I did not become a lame duck then, and in fact, in some ways, with the Democrats, it probably made it easier to get them to do things because they didn't view me as somebody that was going to be heading up the ticket either on the Senate or the governor's race in a year and a half. It would have been nice to get exactly what you asked for, 100 percent; but I learned a long time ago, if you get more than half, you're ahead of the game. We got well more than half, and I think did it in a manner that was very positive.

The other good thing from all this was we didn't have any hurt feelings from this point on. The Republicans were just glad to have something they could vote for. Even in the House, they were glad to have something to vote for, because they had gotten beaten up downstate big-time. This made them feel good. They had something they could vote for and go out and talk about. You'd have thought these guys had been for school finance reform the whole time. I used to laugh, I'd listen to them. Everybody was kind of together, because it was pretty overwhelming, the final votes. As a result, doing other things, you didn't have to go make up. So that kind of helped, I think, my last year and a half as governor; I didn't have as many fights or problems because of that.

DePue: This is another parliamentary issue. I know there's a veto session that normally runs in November of the legislative year, but wasn't this a special session—

Edgar: Yes, I think so.

DePue: —and are the rules different in a special session?

Edgar: No.

DePue: Is the heat on when you make the decision as a governor to call the legislature back to a special session?

Edgar: You don't want to call them in and have nothing happen. I called it, but the four leaders wanted it, too. Everybody's in agreement—let's do this and pass it and move ahead. It puts the pressure on the members in some ways because you do

have a special session; there's nothing else for the media to look at except this one issue, so you're able to put the spotlight on this issue. I think maybe force—may not be the right word—but to get the legislature to do something, because if they don't, it's pretty obvious that they didn't get the job done, what they were there for. In this case, throughout this issue, we had overwhelming editorial support throughout the state. We had a lot of support for this, so most legislators wanted to get something done so they could say they had voted for something. The House Republicans were really in worse shape than the Senate Republicans, because they had voted no, a lot of them, and the downstaters wanted to have something to reverse that no vote when they went out that next time to run. So they wanted to be able to have a yes vote they could talk to their school people about. So that was important to them. But a special session, no. A special session—just once you get an agreement, you don't want to leave it, because somebody will get mad about something or want something else. You want to move as quick as you can, and we moved very quickly. If it hadn't passed, it would have been embarrassing for everybody, but particularly me, because it was my proposal, it was my idea. On the other hand, when we passed it, then I was able to feel good, and we'd accomplished what we wanted to get done.

DePue: December fourth, I believe, is the date that it was finally signed by you. This has been a very good discussion about what it takes to get a major piece of legislation through. I'm going to finish with this quote from Madigan: "The governor deserves the bulk of the credit because he is the one who initiated the proposal; he is the one who provided the persistence and the perseverance to get it through." Now, coming from the Democratic Speaker of the House, I would think that's pretty high praise.

Edgar: I've never heard that one. Where was that from? If I did, I forgot it.

DePue: I think I might have gotten it from the book here.

Edgar: Oh, the book? (laughs) You'd have thought I'd have read the book. Madigan and I, the last two years, developed a very close working relationship. On this issue, I think he knew, because he was down in my office a lot and everything. The "persistent" I think is very true. You got to be persistent. It probably would have been pretty easy, particularly after the constitutional amendment went down, just to say, "That's it," but I could be pretty stubborn too, as Madigan said, I think, after the end of the first session. To me, it was the right thing to do. I also thought, I'm in a position as governor—I'm through my first term, we've got things in shape, and now it's time to go do some things I want to get done, not just react to crisis. Also to recognize that you're probably not... I remember Mike Lawrence—we sat down to talk about do we compromise or not. And he said, "You know, Governor, you're going to get about everything you want. Why not compromise?" Because you got to be careful. It's really easy in the heat of battle—"By gosh, I'm going to get it my way or we're going to just forget it." That's kind of what I told him.

In May, or whenever it was when I was shaving that day and Pate called... (laughter) Pate could yell and scream, but when Pate wanted something, he could be

real nice, and he was real nice that day. He said, “Governor, now you know, we’ve had our differences on this and that, but can’t we sit down, isn’t there some way we can work something out on this?” He was just as close to pleading as Pate ever was, and, “No!” (laughter) I just kind of went back at him. I kind of had to get that out of my system a little bit. So it was probably good we had a break there, because he wasn’t going to call it. I knew he was not going to call this bill. No matter how much pressure I put on his guys, in the end he would not, because Pate thought if he did this it would kill the Republican Party and kill the Senate; they wouldn’t get re—because he’s still convinced that’s what beat Ogilvie, which I’m not. So he was just adamant in his own mind. I knew he was not going to call this bill, and there was no way I could get around that; it was obvious, when we tried everything we could. Even if you got thirty-four, thirty-five members, you just can’t get around that, because guys will vote for the bill, but they won’t vote against Pate.

Then I realized, yes, what am I... Get serious here. You’re going to get about everything you want. Why wouldn’t you do this? There’s no reason to be bull-headed about this. It’s okay to be stubborn a **little** bit, but there is a point where you got to be... So in the end, I felt very good about it. I’m convinced, as I said, if we had not persevered and gotten it out of the House, I don’t think we’d have gotten anything, because that put the pressure on the House and it put the pressure on the Senate. I know Carter was sitting there telling Pate, “We got to do something here. We can’t just leave this, because we’re getting beat up.” Carter was always somewhat sympathetic to it.

DePue: You probably need to mention a little bit about the nature of the relationship between Carter Hendren, who was Pate’s chief of staff—

Edgar: Carter was his chief of staff, but he’d been my campaign manager when I ran for governor. He’d worked on my first campaign back when he was a college student at Eastern and I ran for state rep and lost. I had recommended him to the legislative internship, which is how he got to the Senate Republicans. He ran my first race for secretary of state. He came to work for me then. He worked for me for a little bit after that. The governor’s race, he just took a leave [from Philip’s office] to come over. So Carter and I had always been close—I mean, not always agreed, and he didn’t always, I think, want to work for me. But Carter and I also came from the same part of—he was a little farther south, but we’re downstate Illinoisans. He’s a little more conservative than I am, but we probably share some common thoughts. So he was a big help for me, not just on this, but throughout the eight years, because Pate and I were different people. I mean, we were just different cultures, different backgrounds—it was completely different.

DePue: So Carter’s the guy who’s the guy in between the two of you?

Edgar: Carter often was the guy that would be able to kind of break Pate in, because Carter had worked a little bit in the governor’s office under Thompson, too, for a while.

DePue: My impression was that he was a close and trusted assistant for Philip as well.

Edgar: Oh, yes. Pate and Carter were very close. Carter didn't always agree with Pate and I think sometimes got upset with Pate and maybe embarrassed a few times, but he thought the world of Pate, and Pate thought the world of Carter. (laughs) I can get very frustrated with Pate. Pate's a very loyal guy. I give him credit. He's very loyal, and Carter was one of the guys he thought the world of. Carter was a big help throughout the eight years I was governor, trying to make sure we didn't get too far apart. Now, on O'Hare expansion, third airport, that didn't happen. He was good at explaining to Pate that what we were talking about was reasonable, and reassured him that the folks were... It helped here, too. I am convinced, though, if we hadn't got it out of the House, we would have never got this final compromise, because people don't compromise unless they have to.

DePue: When you say "getting it out of the House," you're talking about in the June timeframe?

Edgar: If we hadn't passed it in May, or whenever it was when it passed out of the House to go to the Senate, the Senate never would have wanted to compromise. The compromise came from the Senate. Lee went along, as he knew he had to do; he couldn't be out there by himself. But again, it's one of those things that you got to get everybody in a position where they know they've got to compromise. Pate at that point knew he needed a compromise to save his downstaters. I knew I had to compromise because I'd end up with nothing; to be this close, you don't want to just say, "I want it all." You've got it this close because you have persevered, and now you got to use the right judgment and take what you can get. We took what we could get, which to me was considerable and which made really the biggest difference. In the back of my mind, and I don't think I'm rationalizing, I'm not real sure (laughs) how that swap would have worked out in the end. By the end of that process, I began to appreciate a lot more just the complications of trying to do all that stuff. Also, the other fear was the folks would have said, "Wait a minute. I still have to pay a big property tax, and I'm paying more in income tax." I think it still would have been good to start that process and moved it on, but I'm not sure politically it may have been as good as I thought it might have been. I think, governmentally, what was important to get done, we got done.

DePue: By this time, you'd been in office for six and a half, seven years. You'd won a very significant couple of budget battles early on, you'd gotten through Chicago school reform; but was this particular bill, this piece of legislation, the most significant, important victory that you had legislatively?

Edgar: I think it was the most important because it took the most time, and it was drawn out. I think the budget was important, the fact we got the budget in shape; I think that whole process, which took over an eight-year period, is probably the most significant as you look back, because it's obvious it's not an easy thing to do, and it doesn't happen every year. As far as going through the battles and everything, the Chicago school reform was important, but that was kind of easy. We had the votes. You had to use some good judgment in how do you structure it; I think sitting down with Arnie Weber was extremely important for me in working that out. This one,

you'd have people for you, then against you, and then they'd turn around and be for you, then against you. The perseverance that Madigan talks about is very important when you're trying to get something done in government, because very few important things get done quickly or easily.

I will say, though, I wouldn't have gotten anyplace if Madigan had not been willing to go. Now, I always thought Madigan wanted me to pass the income tax so he could say, "Oh, the Republican governor did the income tax." (DePue laughs) At the same time, I also thought he thought it was the right thing to do, and he was willing to help. I've seen Madigan—not so much with me, but other guys—he might agree, but he's not going to do it. He doesn't like them; he's not going to do it. So he was a big help and a big comfort, because he's about the only ally I had for most of this process. He's a good ally to have. I appreciate his comments, though, because he has pretty good perceptions on things and strong feeling.

I remember Mike Lawrence had left the staff that summer to go work down at the Paul Simon Institute, and I remember one of the bill signings was in De Soto, Illinois. In fact, De Soto built an addition to their school with the money, and they named it the Jim Edgar addition. They didn't name the building after me; they just named the addition. I think that's about the most I've got off that. I went down there, and I remember Lawrence came over, and he was very excited for me because of how important it was to get that through.

DePue: This is probably a good place to make a transition and a decision for you here, Governor. We've been at this for about two and a half hours. I wanted to go back to 1996 and pick up some odds and ends in some of the issues here, but we can either finish off that way today or pick that up the next time.

Edgar: No, let's go ahead and do that.

DePue: Some of these are minor issues; some of them are the kinds of things that you like to talk about. So the first one here, January seventeenth, I believe, you commute the execution of Guinevere Garcia, who had murdered her estranged husband and **wanted** to be executed.

Edgar: Um-hm. One of the worst things about being governor is you got to deal with the death penalty. I don't think that's a reason to ignore it, as the last two governors have done, particularly the last one. I think Ryan finally convinced himself it was a bad thing. It is not a fun part of the job, but it's part of the job, and you know that when you get in. I never did enjoy dealing with the death penalty. I'm not a lawyer; I didn't want to be God. Fortunately, most of all the death penalty cases I got were pretty clear-cut, and these were extremely bad people. The first one I had was John Wayne Gacy. I don't know if we talked about that before or not.

DePue: I think we have.

Edgar: That wasn't too hard. But you'd have groups outside the mansion protesting. I even had my minister call wanting to know if I wanted to come over and pray.

I just wanted everybody to leave me alone. (laughter) Brenda would always leave the mansion during this because she didn't like to have all that pressure and stuff. But, saying all that, I had voted for the death penalty when it was reinstated my first year as a legislator. I had a lot of reservations. That's a pretty serious thing for an institution of government to decide, that they're going to take a life of a human being. I had qualms about it a little bit, but finally in the end I decided there are some cases—not many—where society has the right to take someone's life who has committed a horrendous crime, and society shouldn't have to support these people the rest of their lives. There might be a deterrent factor there—I'm not sure how you measure that. But in limited cases, and the bill I had voted for was very limited. After I became governor, they expanded, I think, who could face the death penalty. Now, the cases I dealt with, dealt with really gruesome murders, usually mass murders—really bad, bad people.

This case didn't fit that. Bill Roberts was my general counsel then, and he was a former U.S. attorney and a former state's attorney. I knew he had dealt with the death penalty. I got this and I looked at it, and what bothered me was she was drunk, and her ex-husband was drunk, and she was trying to get money off him, and she shot him. Now, that's a serious offense, but that's not a horrendous—the type of thing that I had approved the death penalty for. I realized they had expanded it, but in my mind, that wasn't what I thought was a death penalty case.

Now, that really wasn't why she was up for the death penalty. This was technically her second killing, because she'd had a child when she was younger. She had suffocated that child, and so this was considered the second. If you look back on her child, this woman had some real mental problems, and she had had at that time, I think, an abusive husband or something, and there was some concern about the safety of the baby. She was on drugs, alcohol—all kinds of problems—not justifying it, but that was a separate kind of deal compared to this one. This one, she'd taken a gun with her, but she wanted to get money off this guy who had been her husband for a while—much older. But it just didn't strike me as a mass murder kind of thing like all the others I had. The fact that she wanted to die, to me, was irrelevant. It's not her decision.

DePue: Did you recall why she wanted to die?

Edgar: Life was bad and she just didn't want to put up—she didn't want to go through the appeals, she just was tired of it, just kill her. But, as I say, society doesn't kill people because people want society to kill them. They make that decision on the death penalty based off what that person did. So my comment about her, she has nothing to say about this. She's not going to dictate to the state what we're going to do to her. Whether she said, "I want to be freed" or "I want to die," that's not her decision; it's my decision, it's the state's decision.

That got to be quite a national story. There weren't all that many death penalty cases up then. Oh, Mick Jagger's former wife Bianca showed up in town; she wanted to talk with me. I remember telling Bill Roberts, "No, I'm not going to meet

with her. I'm not going to meet with anybody." He said, "What do you think about me meeting with her?" I said, "You go ahead and meet with her." So he had cocktails with her. He loved that. (DePue laughs) It was probably the highlight of his time in the governor's office.

But I couldn't figure it out. I did something you're not supposed to do. One of the Supreme Court justices was a friend of mine, so I called him up, which you're not... I said, "**Why** is this a death penalty case? I don't claim to be a lawyer, but this just doesn't seem like a death penalty case. Yes, maybe lifetime in prison, but not a death penalty case."

DePue: Which justice was this?

Edgar: I'm not going to say. I don't think I was supposed to do this, and he probably wasn't supposed to talk to me. But I wasn't talking to all that many; anybody who knew what was going on back then would figure it out. He said, "It just seemed appropriate to us, but you're the governor. You can change that. You can change that." I said, "Well, why'd you stick it to **me**, then?" (laughs) And I said, "I just don't see"—I think there was one dissenting vote. I said, "The others you guys have sent me, I understand. This one, I just don't. Is there something I'm missing here?" And he said, "No, I don't think so." (laughs) It was obvious they just kind of passed it on; in my own mind I don't think they really thought it through. Then Bill Roberts came. I said, "Bill, you're a former state's attorney, you did the death penalty cases. Is this a death penalty case?" He kind of said, "I don't think so." And I said, "I don't think it is either." I spent a lot of time thinking about this, and as I said, the others were all very easy. This one, to me—she was guilty, but it just wasn't a death penalty case.

I had to go to the Republican Governors meeting. It was coming up, and it was in Palm Beach, at the Breakers. George Bush the elder was coming in to talk to us. He was out of the presidency. This was '96, so he was out of the presidency, but he was going to come in and talk to us that day. That was the day we had to make—that was the last moment. I'd put it off to the last just to think about it. I called them and I said, "All right, stay the execution; give her a life sentence." They said, "Okay, but you're going to announce this in Palm Beach?" I said, "Just put it out. Have Bill Roberts do a press event. He can explain. If they need to, I can do a press availability down here." Needless to say, I think I had all TV—they contracted, but I had all kinds of TV cameras. It was the hundredth anniversary of the Breakers, too, so this was a big deal down there. All the media showed up to interview me. All these other governors were kind of envious I got all this, and I said, "Yes, you guys can have them." So interviewed me on that. Of course, that was the big story all over the country that day. President Bush came in and looked at me, and he said, "Jim, all I've heard today is about you and the death penalty." I said, "Yes." All the other governors said, "You still have that power? We don't have that power anymore." That's when I found out most state governors don't have that power anymore.

DePue: Which is one of the reasons why it got so much press attention, I would assume.

Edgar: Maybe, maybe. Most of it's done by a commission. Even George Bush in Texas didn't have that. All he could do was stay an execution for sixty days. I think a commission really determined that. In Illinois, the governor not only did the death penalty—with the stroke of a pen, I could let everybody out of the prison and nobody could put them back in. Now, they might impeach me for it, but I had that... I mean, it was God when it came to somebody's... But this one, I never had any regrets.

It was interesting. After I stayed her execution, I got word through somebody that she thanked me because she didn't realize that she did want to live. I think she's been a model prisoner. I think she's helped other inmates, from what I've heard. I've never had any contact with her or anything like that. Took a lot of flak from Republicans. Pate was just enraged that I would—of course, he thought I was too soft on women. In a radio program with Eddie Vrdolyak, he said, "I just don't understand you. Sometimes [I do], you know, then you do things like this. I don't understand it." (laughs) And I said, "To me, this is pretty easy to explain." I didn't have any regrets, and I'm glad I did it. The other death penalty cases I had, I didn't like having to do it, but to me they were clear-cut, they were guilty of horrendous things; I never have had a bad night's sleep because of any of these. Now, if somebody would come and say, "Hey, this one person was really innocent," then I'd feel bad. By the time a governor in Illinois gets a death penalty case, they have been reviewed so many times, and they've had millions of dollars spent on them for attorneys. I think people can feel pretty assured these people are really guilty of a very serious crime.

What worried me after being governor and doing all these pardon and paroles I'd get, you knew that wasn't true for a lot of these people. A lot of these people got arrested, got sentenced for armed robbery or something like that, and they didn't have all this appeal process. The death penalty cases do. People will say, "Yes, but there've been people who have been found guilty and given the death penalty, then they get freed." Well, that's because the system works, because you've got this appeals process, and you do catch, I think, mistakes. Mistakes are going to be made at the lower court. Often some of these people get a public defender or they don't have much money; they don't have the best lawyer in the world, and they get found guilty. But by the time it gets to the governor, they've had attorneys come in, they've had a lot of money spent on those attorneys, and they've had all kinds of court review. The chances for mistakes are extremely small if they exist. That's not true with armed robbery. That's not true with a lot of these other crimes. We talk so much about the death penalty. I understand—philosophically, should society take a life or not? That's a legitimate debate, but that's a very philosophical debate, because you're not talking about a huge number of folks here, and these are **bad** people. But we're talking tens of thousands of people who are in prisons, and I do think we ought to spend more time talking about those folks; are they getting the right justice, and are those cases reviewed? I think that deserves the time we spend talking about the death penalty. That's where we ought to be concentrating

discussion, because I'm not convinced that the system works anything close to how it works on the death penalty. So when all these people said, "The Illinois system doesn't work," I just didn't buy that.

DePue: And of course, that all came up under George Ryan's administration.

Edgar: It came up because the *Chicago Tribune* ran a series, and you always like to make the *Chicago Tribune* happy with you. He did have one case—and that case actually came to me, then they took it back—where somebody at the last minute came forward and said, "Hey, I did it; he didn't do it." When I saw that case, no one ever raised the issue that this guy was innocent; they raised the issue that his IQ was so low he shouldn't be held responsible. Never said he was innocent. To this day, I'm not sure if that guy who came forward and said, "I did it," did it. You got people out there that say a lot of things. I just don't know. I could see that case—say, "Hey, we're going to pause and look at this. There's something wrong here." And they did pause; they looked at it, and they made all these changes. They haven't done anything since. It's probably been nine years since they made all those changes, and the thing's in limbo because the last two governors—not Quinn. I don't know if he's done anything. No, he hasn't done anything yet. They just don't want to deal with it.

DePue: The "it" being that specific—

Edgar: The death penalty.

DePue: Oh, the death penalty.

Edgar: Yes. They haven't reviewed it. We still have people being put on death row, but the last governors have not dealt with it. They ought to deal with it or they ought to repeal it. I just think this limbo is nuts.

DePue: The issue with George Ryan was that he saw these cases, and you talked about the *Tribune* series of articles where they had found this person on death row was clearly innocent, he did not commit this particular crime, and—

Edgar: Yes, but you're on death row for ten years. You have all kinds of appeals before it ever gets to the governor.

DePue: So what did you think of his decision to release everybody from death row, *carte blanche*?

Edgar: I thought it was a mistake. First of all, it was a mistake because he promised the families of the victims he wouldn't do that. Now, if he had wanted to sit down, talk to his legal people, and review each case and then make the decision, I would have said that's his right. That's a lot of work. He didn't want to do that. He just arbitrarily did it, and that, to me, is not fulfilling your responsibility as governor.

DePue: This puts you into the position of having to read his mind, but why do you think he did it?

Edgar: George voted for the death penalty with me. He was a Republican leader when the death penalty was reinstated.

DePue: Back in the late seventies.

Edgar: Yes, '77. He never expressed any—it's kind of like a lot of issues, he changed, and that's fine; you can change. But my initial reaction was, knowing George, the *Tribune* ran this series. The *Tribune* was beating him up for a lot of things. He was already beginning to have problems, and I think he wanted to kind of placate the *Tribune* a little bit. Also, death penalty cases are no fun to deal with. It's not a fun thing to have somebody's life in your hands. But again, that's one of the responsibilities. That's why you get the house, you get the plane. It's part of being governor. You know that going in. I don't think he wanted to deal with that, personally, and I think he figured the *Tribune* was beating him up, so maybe this would placate the *Tribune* a little bit. Now, that's to start with.

When he actually let everybody off death row, I think George Ryan really believed the death penalty is a bad thing. I think today he believes the death penalty is wrong, and that's fine. I don't think he started out that way, but I think he talked to a lot of folks—if you kind of spend your time in that one side, you're going to be... I think today he's opposed to the death penalty, like Dawn Clark Netsch was opposed to the death penalty, and I admire it. I always said, "You're going to have trouble as a governor." She said she wouldn't—she could put aside her personal beliefs. I don't know how you do that. That's what I kind of got on her for in the campaign. I said, "If you're opposed to the death penalty, I don't know how you could let somebody be executed when you could stop that."

And I could understand people being opposed. I've always respected the Catholic Church. They're opposed to abortion, and they're opposed to the death penalty. I've always questioned people who are opposed to abortion but in favor of the death penalty, or they're in favor of abortion—or allow that choice—but opposed to the death penalty. I understand the consistency there; I don't understand the inconsistency. Of course, I'm pro-choice, and I think in limited cases the death penalty is justified. I do think in Illinois we ought to either follow the law or get rid of it. They looked at it and they figured out all the safeguards. Now philosophically, if the majority of the people in this state—and we had a vote on that back in 1971, or whenever they voted on the new constitution; that was one of the separate issues—and people pretty overwhelmingly were in favor of a death penalty. If society philosophically is opposed to it, then we ought to repeal it. I don't think we keep what we have.

But I also think we ought to take all that debate on the death penalty and focus it on the rest of the correctional institution, because that's where most of the folks are; that's to me where a bigger problem is. Also, to work on rehabilitation. One of

the things that always bothered me was when somebody went to jail, I knew they probably were going to come out worse than when they went in. When we put them in, it makes the streets safer, and you have to do that, but those folks do come out, and we need to try to figure out some way to try to do a little better job on rehabilitation and cut down on the recidivism rate we have. We can't afford it, and if we fail... We put more people in prison in the United States than any country in the world, I think. I don't think we do a very good job with folks when they come out. Most people in prison probably had been there, and they got sent back.

Part of it is people can't find jobs. I mean, we kind of stack the deck against them. I had a case I heard the other day, somebody for white collar crime. He was found guilty; he's now ready to get out and get work. Well, every time he talks to somebody, the Justice Department—or U.S. Marshals—sends a letter saying, "This guy committed a terrible crime." They don't say, "He committed a crime, but hopefully he's rehabilitated now, and appreciate the fact you might be willing to give him..." They just basically said, "You better be real careful giving this guy any work." Well, if people don't find work, they turn to crime. I mean, it's just...

So I get on this a little bit. I think today, George Ryan—and I respect him—is opposed to the death penalty. I'm not sure [he was] to start with. Blagojevich just didn't want to deal with it. I just think you either deal with it... If you were opposed to the death penalty and you were the governor, then I think you wouldn't deal with it. I understand that. I never could understand how Netsch was going to deal with it. I think she'd have had a real problem dealing with it if she was philosophically opposed and knew that she could keep a person from being executed.

DePue: Let's move on to the next one here, property tax rates for the ninety-six downstate counties—there's a cap placed on them. I think this is sometime in 1996. Do you recall?

Edgar: I thought we gave them the option to do it by referendum. When we passed the tax caps in '91, all the Democrats were willing to give us was the collar counties; they wouldn't do Cook, and they wouldn't do the rest of the state. Collar counties are where most of the Republican legis—and that's where we had a lot of the pressure from. We'd have liked to do Cook, but we figured, again, three fourths of the loaf is better than none of the loaf. It was a compromise, and it was a big victory for us. We thought we'd get it eventually. And eventually, Cook County went along. I think it was about two or three years later. I thought at that point we then allowed downstate. There never was the pressure downstate because they hadn't seen the appreciation of property values like they had in the collar counties, and that's what was driving them. When I ran for governor in '90, home values were jumping 10, 15 percent a year and these people's tax bills were going up, but they weren't selling their house.

DePue: Wasn't farmland appreciating pretty quickly in the '90s, though?

Edgar: I can't remember how farm—farmland has a special deal.

DePue: Yeah, it's treated differently.

Edgar: Yes. Farmers got something passed a long time ago (DePue laughs) to give them a break.

DePue: I think you might remember this day as well: July 22, 1996.

Edgar: Well, it was my birthday.

DePue: Your fiftieth birthday.

Edgar: Oh, my fiftieth. Yes, that's right. I knew there was something (laughs) big about that. Yes. That was fun. We had a party—we had three parties, actually. We had a party out at the fairground the night before.

DePue: When you say “we”... The staff?

Edgar: Yes, the staff put it on, and everybody from all over the state that was involved in my campaigns and stuff came. Have you heard about the entertainment?

DePue: Oh yeah. That's why I'm asking.

Edgar: Well, here's this guy that claims I'm such a knowledgeable guy of history, particularly political history and all that. Here comes this floozy-looking woman singing “Happy Birthday.” Then she gets closer and I realize it's Joan Walters, and I'm thinking, what in the world? I guess this is... And everybody's laughing, and everything like that. It was funny.

DePue: She's dressed in a white dress.

Edgar: White dress with blond hair.

DePue: She's wearing a wig, then?

Edgar: Yes, she had a wig on. They had to tell me later about Marilyn Monroe and John Kennedy.<sup>73</sup> I never knew that. I've since read about it, but I did not have a clue. Everybody said, “Boy, you looked kind of stunned.” First of all, I couldn't figure out who it was; then I realized it was Joan. I was like, what is this? What is this about? I don't get it.

DePue: Singing “Happy Birthday” to you.

Edgar: Singing “Happy Birthday,” and it was the takeoff of when Marilyn Monroe, I think in '62, sang “Happy Birthday” to John Kennedy at some all-male party that they had for him in New York, or something like that.

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<sup>73</sup> Marilyn Monroe performed her famous rendition of “Happy Birthday, Mr. President” at John F. Kennedy's birthday gala at Madison Square Garden, May 18, 1962. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqolSvoWNck>. Joan Walters, interview by Mark DePue, August 13, 2009, 3-4.

DePue: In a real husky voice, I believe.

Edgar: Yes. I had missed that. Of course, I wasn't a big Kennedy person, so maybe I didn't follow everything on Kennedy. But I am stunned to this day that as much as I think I know about history and current events, because I was following everything back then, how I missed that. Every time I see a thing of Marilyn Monroe doing that, I just think, boy, (DePue laughs) I can't believe that I—and it wasn't because I forgot; I just never knew it.

But we had the party at the fairgrounds. Then the next day we had a luncheon for some closer folks at the mansion; I remember the municipal band came and played John Philip Sousa music for me, which I loved. Then we went up that night to Navy Pier [in Chicago] and had a big gala party there. The lead singer for the 5th Dimension (snaps fingers)—ah!

DePue: Diana Ross?

Edgar: McCoo? Marilyn McCoo, I think. She was the lead singer of the 5th Dimension, [before] she and her husband went out on their own. She was in town for a musical, and she happened to be staying in the building where we had our apartment. I said, "Hey, she's there. Boy, I'd love to have her sing 'One Last Bell to Answer.'" I think that's one of my favorite songs. So they got her to come over to sing "Happy Birthday" to me. She led the crowd in "Happy Birthday." I think her husband was with her, too. Bob Collins emceed the event, and it was a nice event. Dakota was there, who was all of a year and a half old, not quite a year and a half old.

DePue: Dakota?

Edgar: My first grandson. Because the front page of the *Sun-Times* the next day had a picture of me holding Dakota, saying, "The Governor's Fifty." (coughs) It was a fun birthday party. It didn't feel bad turning fifty. I felt pretty good. Life was going good. I was governor, I'd won reelection, and things were pretty good.

DePue: You mentioned before, it's an election year, and at the national level, it's a presidential election year, so you've got the conventions. You got the Democratic National Convention in August, the first time since '68 that one of the parties had come to Chicago. Anything special about that?

Edgar: I'd worked hard to get them. A couple years before, I had publicly said we ought to go after one of the conventions. Daley did not want to do it (DePue laughs) because he had a bad memory of what happened in '68. So he kind of—oh, we can't do this and that, and I kept talking about it because it made no sense why not to. Finally he kind of grudgingly came along. We went after both parties, but eventually we had a better shot at the Democratic Party. In fact, I did a couple fundraisers for them. I remember talking to a group of businessmen over at someone's apartment at the Four Seasons—I think it was Bill Smithburg, who had headed up Quaker Oats—to urge them to contribute. I told them, "Now, never again am I going to ask you

to give money to the Democratic Party, but in this case, you can give them money if they'll bring the convention to Chicago." I think I might have even met with some of the people from the committee. They got it. They didn't invite me to the convention, though. (DePue laughs) I felt hurt. But it was good, and it gave the city a chance to showcase just what a great place the city was. The mayor took credit for it, (laughs) but it was fine. I thought it was good, and I was glad we worked on it and glad that they got it.

The Republicans met in San Diego. I'd just as soon go to San Diego—it was a nice break, but I knew it probably wasn't going to help us any in Illinois. It was Clinton's reelection, so it wasn't like a new person. We'd hoped to get the Republican convention in 2000, but we didn't even make the final five, which I never did quite understand. The story I always heard was that one of the people on the committee and the mayor—because they had a meeting with the mayor—didn't get along, and I don't know if that's true. We ended up going to Philadelphia in 2000, which also made no sense to me. I thought Indianapolis would have been fine, but I didn't think Philadelphia was one fifth as good as Chicago would have been.

DePue: I assume you took the trip to San Diego?

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: The Republican National Convention was August twelfth through sixteenth. You were there for the whole time?

Edgar: Yes. I was the chairman of the delegation, and I was an early supporter of Bob Dole, so I was there. In fact, I flew in with Dick Duchossois because we wanted to go see Cigar race at Del Mar. If he had won that race, he would have set the all-time record for the most consecutive wins. He'd tied it at Arlington, when I'd given the trophy to Cigar. He tied Citation's record. I went to Del Mar, and I sat with the chairmen of the board—oh, he passed away; I just went blank on his first name.<sup>74</sup> I sat with him, and his horse and Cigar got into a speed duel and cooked each other. He was sitting there just saying, "This is nuts," and sure enough, Cigar got beat. But the convention was at San Diego. Bob Dole got nominated, and Jack Kemp was his running mate.

DePue: We talked a little bit last time about you being considered for running mate. Was this the timeframe when there was a lot of discussion going on?

Edgar: By that time, before they came to the convention, they knew it was going to be Jack Kemp. I forget when he announced it—it was a week or two before then—so that had ended any speculation. Conventions had changed, even between '92 and '96. I spoke at the '92 convention on the importance of free trade and NAFTA, and that

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<sup>74</sup> Richard L. Duchossois has ownership stakes in Arlington Park and Churchill Downs, major horse racing venues. Allen E. Paulson owned Cigar. For Cigar's career, see National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame, Saratoga Springs, NY, <http://www.racingmuseum.org/hall-of-fame/horses-view.asp?varID=402>.

made prime time. I gave a speech on small business in '96, which was considered the same level of speech, and I don't know if it even made cable anyplace. They'd really shrunk down how much they'd cover the conventions by that time. It's still kind of fun to go, but conventions are... I went to the other three conventions since then, but each one gets to be less of a factor.

DePue: What did you think of Dole's chances at that time?

Edgar: At that time, we knew it was going to be tough. Originally, after the '94 election, we thought Clinton could have problems. I thought Dole would—the contrast between an inexperienced president and an experienced person. He's from the Midwest; I thought that would help maybe win some of the Midwestern states. I like Bob Dole. A lot of people thought he was kind of crotchety. I thought he had a great sense of humor. He had a very dry sense of humor that I enjoyed. I did not think there was an age problem, but I misread that.

I'll never forget—during the primary, he was in Illinois, and we were trying to find something to do. So we decided we were going to take him to the Fourth Presbyterian Church—that's the church we would go to when we were in downtown Chicago. It was a big church. Not a whole lot to do on Sunday morning, and then we were going to have a couple other rallies and things later. I went over to his hotel room to pick him up, and Brenda and I were going to take him. Elizabeth, our daughter, was in town. I guess she was teaching out in Colorado; she was out of school by then. She had never met Bob Dole, so I said, "Come along and meet Bob Dole." So we went over there, we went up in his suite, and they had coffee. I sat there. I thought Bob Dole was Bob Dole—just very friendly, very good sense of humor. Then we left. I didn't see Elizabeth for about three more days. I said, "What did you think of Bob Dole?" And she said, "Oh, he's kind of gruff. He's kind of old." I said, "You think so? I didn't think so. I thought he was..." Just a generational thing. I did not see Bob Dole as old, but he came off as old.

Plus, Clinton got the upper hand. Newt Gingrich—when they did the budget, when they did the shutdown of government—didn't play that well. I'm not sure that they did the wrong thing, but they got out-PRed by Clinton. I think after that, the election was over. I think that reversed Clinton's downturn, and I think it made the Republicans look like they were just obstructionist. Dole really wasn't able to overcome that. Then he got stuck with this thing—he's old—and all this and that.

DePue: It was August twenty-second, I believe, right after the Republican convention, that Clinton signed the welfare reform legislation, which put him very definitely in the moderate Democratic camp.

Edgar: He did welfare reform, he did Medicaid reform—as I said, Clinton got Republican every time there was an election.

DePue: Because he passed those things with overwhelming Republican support in the Congress.

Edgar: Yes. Actually, Gingrich and him got together—there's a book out about how they got together to do that stuff. At the time, I don't think anybody said don't do this because you're going to get... But it was obvious that Clinton was trying to move to the center as quick as he could for that election.

DePue: I think by this time there were already lots of allegations swirling around the Lewinsky scandal.

Edgar: Not in '96. That didn't happen till '98.

DePue: I know that's when the trial was, but there were certain—

Edgar: No, no. That's when it came out. It was in January of '98, because I remember the day. I had announced I wasn't running six months before. I was just sitting in my office, and they came in and told me what happened. I said, "If that's true, he'll have to resign within a week. He can't remain in office if this is true." To this day, I have never... (laughs) Talk about misreading things. I thought the American people would run him out if the guy didn't quit. I just couldn't believe the guy had the audacity to stay, and then the American people kind of said, "Oh well."

To me—I guess because Monica Lewinsky is the same age as my daughter Elizabeth, Bill Clinton and I are a week apart in age, and she was an intern—when people work for you, especially young people, you have a certain responsibility. I just was flabbergasted that he didn't get crucified over that. To me, that was the **height** of arrogance, to think you could do something like that. If it had been a forty-year-old woman, that's his business; Hillary and he got to work that out. But this was a young girl—she was what, twenty, twenty-one?—intern, responsible to him. I mean, he has a responsibility.

The other thing is, you're the president. There are some things as president—if you want to do that, don't become president. If you're president, you've got to conduct yourself in a certain manner. The arrogance to think you can do that and be president, and that that's okay—it's just, I thought, the height of arrogance. I didn't know Bill Clinton that well. I thought he was a pretty smart guy, and he was a pretty good politician, but I lost any—I just thought that was a terrible thing; it was terrible to do that to the presidency and for the leader of our nation to... What I couldn't understand later was (laughs) how many people just said, "Well, that's his private life. That's all right." I mean, when you're the president, when you're the governor, you don't have the right just to do whatever you want to do; you've got a responsibility to conduct yourself in a manner that hopefully—maybe it doesn't bring credit, but it doesn't bring disgrace to the office you hold. That, to me, is just... Now, we're all going to make mistakes, and we're all human, and nobody's perfect; I don't want to sound righteous, but I just could not believe that.

I misread the American people. After that, I said, "It's a good thing I'm getting out of office. I don't read people anymore. I don't understand." Because to me, there was just no way he should have stayed in office; there's no way people

should think well of him after that. That just was a terrible, terrible thing—especially to have his wife have to lie for him and all that, and the cabinet members he told, who went out to defend him and found out he was lying. I just thought it was really bad. I think if he'd have just confessed and said, "Hey, I want to resign for the good of the country," then I think, fine. You do something wrong, you pay a price. But when you do something like that and you don't pay a price, to me, that's unfortunate.

DePue: We've been at this for a little over three hours today, Governor.

Edgar: I'm getting pretty wound up here, too.

DePue: (laughs) This is probably both a good and a kind of peculiar place to end for the day, but—

Edgar: (laughs) Yes. Oh, there was something else in '96.

DePue: We're going to talk about the reorganization of the Department of Human Services.

Edgar: Oh, boy, that is really dry. Yes, okay.

DePue: But that's a bigger subject that I want to leave for later. Anything else?

Edgar: Was that '96?

DePue: It's announced in March of '96. Maybe it didn't occur until a little bit later, then.

Edgar: No, but it probably was in '96.

DePue: You might be thinking about Meigs Field, but I saw that's early '97 when that dust-up with Daley occurred.

Edgar: No, I wasn't thinking... I was trying to think of what else in '96. Well, one thing on the presidential campaign. It was kind of irrelevant since Dole lost, but when they were going to have the vice president debate, Dole decided to come to Illinois, and he had me come with him. We sat with a couple, who were teachers in DuPage County, and watched the debate. Of course, all the national media was outside. That was an interesting kind of night.

DePue: I can't recall, in terms of the general consensus, who came out the winner in that vice presidential debate.

Edgar: Oh, Kemp got off on a tangent talking about the gold standard—just made no sense. (coughs) We thought that Kemp had an opportunity to really just go after Clinton, through Gore. Gore was Gore. I mean, he was just (makes sound). But Kemp, instead of taking the offensive and just shooting down Clinton, started talking about the gold standard, just talking about this stuff that was... I knew Dole had to be thinking, what in the world is he doing? And then to have to go out and say,

“I thought he did a great job.” Because I remember he called him, and he said, “Governor, here, tell the Secretary what a great job he did.”<sup>75</sup> Okay. (DePue laughs) Because Kemp could be good sometimes. Sometimes he could be, but I really thought that night, he just blew it, because I thought he could really show... First of all, he could look more mature than Gore, but it didn’t matter in a VP—you want to go after the presidential candidate. Gore left him some openings, and I thought even I could have gone through those. And he went off on some... So I don’t think anybody remembers that debate because it turned out to be irrelevant, but to me it was kind of a big deal because Dole and I were sitting there with this nice couple. They actually found two teachers in DuPage County who were Republicans (laughter) that we could sit with.

But ’96, we knew it was going to be a bad year. He didn’t come to Illinois much because they figured Illinois was doomed, and it was. Went up to Michigan. [John] Engler had something up there, and the five governors went up. Tommy Thompson (laughs) had gotten mad at the whole Dole campaign because I think they’d cut back in Wisconsin; he had blasted them, so that was all part of the discussion that day. The ’96 campaign, there wasn’t a whole lot that [happened] after the San Diego convention. I had Bob Dole at the state fair, like I had had Bush, and he was a little better with the animals. He knew them a little better, coming from Kansas. I remember we walked through the dairy barn and stuff, and he spoke to a rally.

We’ll leave it at this—politicians are asked to do strange things and very difficult things. Bob Dole, who I always found to be a very agreeable guy, is there. We go by the ethanol booth, and we’re talking. He’s a big ethanol guy. He’s probably bigger than I was. That’s how we got to know each other, ethanol rallies. But he goes to the ethanol thing, and he’s making a speech for ethanol; it’s a great thing to talk about in Illinois with the farmers. He gets done. People come up and want his autograph. A guy brings up an ear of corn, and he wants him to sign an ear of corn. Do you know how hard it is to sign an ear of corn? (DePue laughs) And poor Bob Dole, he’s only got the one hand, (DePue laughs) and he’s trying to hold...<sup>76</sup> I thought, I would have taken that ear of corn and just figured I’ll give up this one vote and thrown it at the guy. Now, Bob Dole was very good. Just very patient. It must have taken him ten minutes to sign his name on that ear of corn. I sure hope that guy saved it, because I was ready to strangle that guy. But I think that’s what I remember the most from the state fair and Bob Dole—poor Bob Dole had to sign that ear of corn. And with that, we’ll end the day.

DePue: (laughs) Very good. Thank you, Governor.

Edgar: More positive than Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky.

DePue: You bet. Thank you.

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<sup>75</sup> Kemp had served as secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development during George H.W. Bush’s administration.

<sup>76</sup> Dole was seriously wounded in World War II; his injuries left his right arm paralyzed.

(end of interview 20)

Interview with Jim Edgar  
# ISG-A-L-2009-019.21  
Interview # 21: September 9, 2010  
Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Thursday, September 9, 2010. This is Mark DePue; I'm the director of oral history with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. This is the beginning of the twenty-first session with Gov. Jim Edgar. Good morning, Governor.

Edgar: Good morning.

DePue: You said you wanted to make a quick comment here.

Edgar: Well, it may not be quick; it'll be a comment, though. We ended last time, and you asked me on the school funding, was that the most important major thing. It was important. I don't think it was the most important. I think there are a lot of things that are important. There is a tendency, if you read what the newspaper guys write when they kind of do a summary, and that's all the talk about how I didn't get the income tax raised. Unfortunately, the media has a tendency not to get into a lot of other minutia of government, just how you run it. I mean, they got into the budget just because the state was broke, but for the most part, they don't understand it, they don't track it very well.

As I indicated, I thought dealing with the budget was probably the most important because the state was in such bad shape. Unfortunately, that's not a permanent thing, as we found out a few years later. My successors pretty much got us in a worse mess. But things like the property tax caps probably had as far-reaching impact as anything, in many ways. If you think about the hundreds if not billions of dollars that were saved in property taxes, that had a huge impact that never gets mentioned—I don't see it ever mentioned when they write something. Chicago school reform, which we don't get credit for—in fact, I was reading the other day about how Daley did this. (DePue laughs) Daley didn't have anything to do with that. It was **my** administration; **my** people went around and figured out what to put in that. Arnie Weber and I sat down and came up with it, and we told

the Republican legislators this is what we had to have. I don't know if you've got Grosboll. I hope you talked to Grosboll about that.

DePue: Right.

Edgar: Because he was talking yesterday about how when we went to talk to the city hall guys, that was the only entity in Chicago that wouldn't talk. They had no comments about Chicago school reform when we were putting this together. But Daley did come into my office right before, and I said, "We're going to pass this. You're opposed to it officially. I don't know if you're that opposed to it, but officially you're opposed to it. Is there anything you need?" And he said, "The only thing I'd like is separate the operational person from the head of the board." That allowed him to have two positions. I said fine, and that was the only input he had on that bill.

But I think that was extremely important, particularly in Chicago. Property tax caps, particularly in the suburbs, had a **huge** impact. Some will say negative. I think property taxpayers would say it was good and probably kept from having a revolt in those areas. We haven't talked yet, but like adoption, I've always said probably the single most important thing.

DePue: That's a subject we'll certainly get into today.

Edgar: Yes. Just reorganizing state government—and we're going to talk about it a little later—particularly dealing with child welfare, on making the child the primary concern, not the family. That was a **huge** shift. Again, not something that gets written much. It took some time to get done, but probably had as much impact on children in need in this state as anything that had been done in a long, long time. So to go back to your question from last time, the school finance thing was important and it's one of the major things, but there were a lot of other things I think just as important—maybe some might have been even more important—that for the most part get ignored by the media. Unfortunately, that's where history comes from. Whatever's written is what gets... And it gets recycled. I was watching it get recycled on Daley, this myth about the Chicago school reform, which I just find ironic. Anyway, I just wanted to get those two bits in.

DePue: Well, in the future, history will start with these series of interviews, plus all the newspaper articles—

Edgar: No, that's too hard. No, the newspaper stories are what people read. They don't write history about Illinois. They read newspaper stories on maybe what happened in the past. They will go back and look at their files, and the same inaccuracies they originally had will be perpetuated. I mean, it would be nice, and I hope real historians—but real historians don't write too much about Illinois. There isn't much history of Illinois, if you look at it. No, I agree with you, this is a way... But you also have to take what I say with a grain of salt. Twenty years from now they're going to look and say, "The *Chicago Tribune* had to be more accurate than Jim

Edgar talking about Jim Edgar.” I don’t think the *Tribune* is that accurate a lot. As I’ve commented before, particularly the first few years, I think they were off. I think the *State Journal-Register* [Springfield] might be a little more accurate. But all the media guys have a tendency to get a theme, and they stay on that theme. My experience has been, in most things, but in government and politics, it’s much broader, it’s much more complicated than a couple of little themes that you’ll see repeated whenever they talk about individuals.

DePue: I think both you and I would agree on this, that we hope in the future when they look at these things, they take the time to go on the Internet and listen to the portions in the interviews with you, and at least get the other perspective as well.

Edgar: Oh, no, no, I think you’re probably correct, a real historian would do that. Unfortunately, there are very few real historians on Illinois history and Illinois politics. It’s rehashed stuff from the newspaper based off what they saw in the file, or they vaguely remember whatever that thing was. So that’s my little tirade today.

DePue: It’s a subject rich in potential, though, isn’t it?

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: You’ve already alluded to a couple things that we wanted to talk about today, because this morning’s focus is going to be on human services issues. In part we got to that because it was in March of 1996 when you made the announcement that you intended to reorganize a department called the Department of Human Services, and it was July 1, 1997, when it was actually launched. So I’m going to turn it over to you and ask you how that concept of reorganizing an important part of government services came about.

Edgar: A lot of the things we spent our time worrying about in state government in the nineties dealt with the human service area. You had Medicaid—huge factor, had a huge impact on the budget, and dried up money for a lot of other things like education. The first three years I was governor, probably 80 percent of my time was worrying about Medicaid. I always said at least one or two of the bypasses I had when I had my heart surgery were related to Medicaid. To this day, if you mention Medicaid, I get little goose bumps and chills just thinking about it.

DePue: We have talked about this before, especially in those early years of your administration, watching the Medicaid costs just skyrocket.

Edgar: Yes. It didn’t go away, we just got a little better handle on it. In ’95—or I guess maybe it was actually in ’96—it was right before Clinton ran for reelection, when he became a Republican (DePue laughs)—there was some Medicaid reform. There was welfare reform. Again, welfare reform got all the attention. The impact was minor compared to Medicaid. But people understand welfare; they don’t understand Medicaid. We got some changes in Medicaid, and we did away with the Boren amendments and things like that, which gave us a little more flexibility. Just dealing with Medicaid, you always knew that was the eight hundred-pound gorilla still

sitting out there. You worried about that every year; even when we began to have a little money and we had the budget under control, we just knew that Medicaid could raise its ugly head. A few years later, after I left, it did, and they didn't know how to handle it and got themselves in a real mess.

The other issue in the first term that took a huge amount of time was something the media did cover a lot. They didn't cover Medicaid too much; they covered the budget, but they never really understood Medicaid. But the thing they did cover was child abuse, child neglect—the whole child welfare issue. It wasn't unique to Illinois, though nobody knows what goes on in other states; they only know what's going on in their state. But it was a problem throughout the country. In fact, whenever I would travel around the nation, I would always be amazed that they were going through the same thing we were going through with their equivalent to the Children and Family Services department.

Now, mental health—we continued to make moves and changes in mental health. Didn't get a whole lot of coverage, but I think the mental health people always felt that was a major improvement when we went to more deinstitutionalization. In fact, I'll never forget, Netsch and I had a joint appearance before a mental health group in 1994.

DePue: Sen. Dawn Clark Netsch.

Edgar: Yes.

DePue: Or comptroller at that time.

Edgar: She was comptroller then, yes. She was running for governor, though, at that time. During the campaign, somebody asked, "What would you do differently from what Governor Edgar's done on mental health?" and she said, "Oh, I wouldn't criticize anything he's done in mental health. I think he's handled that well." Then she launched (laughs) into these other things she'd criticize. I thought that was a pretty good testimony, to have your opponent before the mental health group say, "No, he's done a good job in mental health."

A lot of things, we had dealt with. But one of the things became particularly apparent with cases in Children and Family Services. We had one terrible tragedy where a child had been killed by his birth mother. The child had been taken away by the state because there was concern that she wasn't able to take care of this child, and then the child was returned to the mother. The mother hanged the child.

DePue: Yes, this is the Baby Wallace case, or the Joseph Wallace case, in April of 1993.

Edgar: What we found out was she had a mental condition, and Mental Health was aghast that anybody would give her a child. Well, Children and Family Services didn't know that, because there was no communication between Mental Health and Children and Family Services. Part of it was their computers were different. They were on a different system; they couldn't interact like you... So the more we looked

at it, the more we realized we had a lot of cross-departmental issues. Some of these divisions were arbitrarily created years ago when you divided departments or departments were given new responsibilities. These things were all interrelated—Mental Health, Children and Family Services, Public Aid. There needed to be more coordination. Can you have coordination if you're under different directors? There is the reality that people have turf and they're jealous of their turf. What might be a priority to Children and Family Services is not a priority to Mental Health, or vice versa. So it's difficult sometimes to have the free flow of information.

The other dilemma—and this is probably even more of a problem—was that people who have needs for Mental Health might also have needs for Public Aid, but those are different departments. It's very confusing and very intimidating for people, particularly people who have needs, to come into a state agency and figure out where to go to get what they need. If that agency only provides maybe one fifth of what they need—maybe it's a Mental Health service, but they also need to get public aid, or maybe they have children that need Children and Family Services—they're so baffled just going to that one agency that they don't get the other agency, and they don't get that service. It's very difficult for them. So what we thought was needed was a one-stop agency or a one-stop place for people; when they come in and they have needs, they can go to somebody, and that person is going to be able to identify that they need these three services—which actually are in three different departments—and they get those services. Looking at it, the feeling of a lot of the staffers was we needed to have these agencies combined. Now, I was very hesitant. I'm not a big believer in big agencies. I think they get bureaucratic and they get off mission and just all kinds of problems. But finally they convinced me that we needed to look at what was called a superagency in human services.

DePue: Who's the "they" we're talking about?

Edgar: Staff.

DePue: Any particular names?

Edgar: Oh, we had a task force, and whoever the directors were at those departments—also the staff. Joan Walters was involved from the [budget] bureau. I don't know if Felicia Norwood was still with us; if she was, I know she was involved in it. She did human services. So there was that interest. We also had a guy from outside of government named Gary MacDougal—a little bit of a gadfly. He always wanted to be involved in government and politics, and he had been somewhat involved in the Bush administration. This was his area of interest, and he got involved in this, too. He thought this made sense, so he was kind of involved from the outside, and he later wrote a book and pretty much took the credit for all this. But he drove my staff nuts. They used to want to strangle him, and I'd say, "No, you can't do that." (DePue laughs) And later, it was important, he did have a rapport with Pate Philip, who was always leery of anything Joan Walters wanted to do or anything that any of "those do-gooders" (DePue laughs) wanted to do. So he did play a role, I think, in kind of convincing the Senate Republicans, particularly their leader, that this

wasn't a bad idea. But my staff just used to—because he would kind of meddle (laughs) in this stuff. He was involved.

Our first proposal—of course, a lot of the interest groups didn't like it; they like having their own agencies. Senate Republicans always kind of had another opinion on everything; it was just the nature of the... So I think our first approach got stalled. We were moving ahead but it was taking time. The final product that was passed, some of the agencies, like Public Aid, didn't get put in. There was some give and take dealing on that, particularly with the Senate Republicans, but we got 75 percent of what we wanted. The legislation, I think, has worked pretty well. One of the things we knew was when you did this, you were going to have a transition problem—any time you put agencies together.

DePue: Let me just very quickly interrupt and mention the agencies that were incorporated: Department of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, Department of Rehabilitation Services. You mentioned the Department of Public Aid was not, the Department of Public Health was not, and—

Edgar: I don't know if we originally even wanted Public Health in there. We did want Public Aid in.

DePue: Would that include Medicaid for Public Health?

Edgar: No, Public Aid does Medicaid.

DePue: And that obviously was not [included]. Also, Children and Family Services ended up not being part of this. So that requires a little bit of explanation, too—those agencies that didn't end up there.

Edgar: Children and Family Services, of course, we wanted in there. I think the feeling finally was that there were ways that we could still agree on—computerization was part of that agreement, the funding to get that done. Mental Health was the biggie. Those other agencies were smaller agencies, but Mental Health was the biggest. I think one of the fears the legislators had, Children and Family Services was such a controversial issue, had been a major concern, that they didn't want to put it in there. Public Aid—I think Medicaid was part of it, too. The Senate Republicans, I remember, were really kind of, “Death on that.”

So what was passed was maybe 75 percent—maybe a little less, actually—but it... Also, though, there was the agreement that you would work on the computerization, which sounds like it ought to be simple, but I don't know to this day if they've got that done. It's a very complex thing. I found out just recently when going to the hospital—within a hospital, they don't have everything computerized from their doctors to the hospital. One of the big challenges in the technology age, which we still haven't mastered, is trying to get all computers to talk to each other.

DePue: And that's the goal, to get these various former agencies that stood alone to be talking to each other and solving human problems?

Edgar: Talking together was basically you could punch in a person's name at Public Aid and find out what's going on with them at Children and Family Services, and things like that—or Mental Health at least. But the other thing was that individual coming in, they wouldn't have to make as many stops to get assistance. Now, alcohol and drug abuse, that often is tied closely to mental health. There's a lot of correlation there. Rehab services sometimes is tied to public aid a little more. If I remember right, one of the things we did get was the funding agreement to start making sure that with those departments that remained separate, there was more communication than there had been before.

Also, I think part of Public Aid did get switched over to that superagency. I'm trying to remember what the function was, but I thought part of it did. I'm not sure that everything stayed intact in those freestanding agencies.

DePue: I know you're right. I can't identify which portions, though.<sup>77</sup>

Edgar: Yes, but the Medicaid part, I'm pretty sure, stayed separate, and that was what they really wanted separate. It was probably the most complicated reorganization that had been done since the new constitution.

DePue: That gets to the next question, then—who is in charge of managing that reorganization? Who do you select?

Edgar: That's what the Senate Republicans kept asking me and the medical society wanted to know and all these groups wanted to know. Who's going to run this thing? I know Joan Walters wanted it, and there was a lot of opposition, particularly from Pate Philip and Senate Republicans; they wouldn't pass the bill if they thought she was going to be the head of it.

DePue: What specifically? You've alluded to things, but...

Edgar: She was a woman, a strong-willed woman who Pate didn't like. He'll probably say there were other things, but if she'd have been a man, I don't think that would have been a problem. Yes, we'll talk about that later. It was more of just a personality thing. Also, I know the medical society and some of those groups were very nervous about her because she was pretty strong-willed, and she wasn't someone who would give in or go along as well. But I always thought with Joan, a lot of it was that she was a woman and she was just a strong—she was going to show she could stand up to the men, and the men—there was a sexist thing there, there's no doubt about it.

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<sup>77</sup> Under the plan, the Department of Public Aid gave up responsibility for Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamps, and day-care services. *Chicago Tribune*, May 3, 1996.

DePue: Aren't some of these people in the department the very same people she would have been saying no to for five or six years straight?

Edgar: These are outside groups, interest groups. Yes, they dealt with her at the Bureau of the Budget, but for her to head up an agency that has pretty strong regulatory powers and a lot of other things probably made them even more nervous. In the end, the medical society backed off. But to finally get something passed, it was obvious that it wasn't going to work. She might not get confirmed. Who knows what they... And they probably wouldn't pass it. So she was disappointed, but I did make her director of Public Aid because she wanted to go run an agency. She had run the Bureau of the Budget, but she wanted to run an agency. She always wanted to run an agency. So in the end I made her director of Public Aid, which wasn't as big as this new agency, but an agency where she did very well.

Howard Peters was who we put in there.<sup>78</sup> Howard Peters had been originally my director of Corrections. He later came on the governor's staff and was deputy governor. An African American, very smooth, very good at meeting and dealing with folks. He had been involved with the task force in the office, planning and working on all this. Howard was somebody the Senate Republicans—though I think there were already some racists there—Howard had proven himself to be all right, because at Corrections, he had jobs, and he gave great... Howard was very good and much more political—I don't mean in a partisan sense, I just mean in how he deals with people. Joan got the job done, she got the job done quick, but there might be a few broken bodies; whereas Howard, if there were, they never realized Howard broke their bones. He's just very smooth. Also, he had run a department. There was no doubt in my mind that he had the ability to run that agency. I felt bad. I told Joan, "Joan, it's not going to work out." I had never promised her—I knew she wanted it, but I said, "There's just too much opposition, and we've got to get the new department off on a good footing." She understood, I think. She was disappointed, but then, about a year later, I made her director of Public Aid.

The new agency, at least when I left office, I thought it was working well. I mean, it was going through growing pains. Reorganization **never** is the silver bullet people think it is. One of the things I learned in my time in government, it's not so much the boxes and how they're drawn and how they're attached, it's the people in them. You can spend a lot of time and use up a lot of chips on reorganization, but if you don't have the right people to put into the positions to run those new organizations, it's probably not going to work. The other thing Howard had to do, he not only had to be a diplomat externally, he had to be a diplomat internally because you're bringing some people who'd been around for a long time from different agencies and meshing them together, and that was a governmental challenge. I think that would be a challenge whether it's human services or in natural resources or anything. But particularly here, because you had agencies that

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<sup>78</sup> On the plans for reorganization and his time as director, see Howard Peters, interview by Mark DePue, January 21, 2010, 29-48. 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.

had been in existence for years, and they had their own bureaucracy, and they had their own way of doing things. It was, I think, a credit to him that things did mesh as well as they did.

DePue: Do you recall any particular bumps in that process?

Edgar: You know, I'm numb to bumps at this point. (DePue laughs) No, I don't remember any major bumps. I was trying to think. There could have been. I haven't looked at any newspapers to see if they said there was a bump. I don't remember a major bump. I remember that I thought it worked pretty well. I'd been around government long enough to know that passing that bill didn't solve our problem. It gave us the opportunity to be better situated. Basically, when I left office, I was pretty pleased with it; I thought it worked pretty well. Not that we'd resolved everything—the computer thing was taking forever—but it had worked better than I think most people internally thought it was going to work. A lot of—"resistance" may be not the right word—I think a lot of anxiety in these agencies that were getting put together, and I think for the most part people felt like it had worked pretty well.

DePue: The next thing I want to go through is a series of initiatives and—

Edgar: But one thing that's important is I thought we did a good job of planning before we ever made the proposal; we did a good job of planning the transition. That's probably as important as how you line up the boxes—the process. You come up with what you're going to do, then you pass it, then the really tough work begins—implementation. A lot of thought went into implementation. We had people from these agencies together throughout this process, trying to get their ideas, as we always did, but also to try to make them feel like they were part of it, so when it did happen they wouldn't say, "Gee, they're taking all my power." So I thought the process we used was good. It wasn't perfect, and nobody would say that agency's perfect today, but I think overall it was better than what we had before. I give a lot of credit to Howard in how they implemented that. The start is so important on an agency like that, so I think it worked pretty well.

DePue: I'm going to go through a series of other human service-related issues here, and start with August 22, 1997, which is when President Clinton signs his landmark welfare reform. Now, you've already mentioned this and stressed that you thought Medicaid was much more important, but—

Edgar: Well, for the states it was more important. Basically what he did in welfare reform, most states were doing already. It was kind of a copycat of what states had been doing.

DePue: Having mentioned that you'd made initiatives years and years before on welfare reform, do you think Illinois in particular didn't get as much credit in that area?

Edgar: We were good on defense in our PR; we weren't that good on offense. I never thought we were good when it came to getting our story out. I thought we were pretty good at defending ourselves.

DePue: Talk about the underlying principles in the initiatives that you put in place '91-'92.

Edgar: We were like a lot of states; we were broke, and we had to figure out ways to cut things. We tried to make it easier for families on welfare to go to work. You weren't penalized. We allowed a father to go to work, and he didn't have to leave home. So the kids could still get Aid to Dependent Children, which had been going on for years, which broke up the family and caused a lot of problems. We had to get waivers from the federal government; we got waivers to allow fathers to stay at home. There was one silver bullet, but there were a lot of littler things. I was trying to think, there was something else on schools, too; we were able to do something with Public Aid that helped.

What we'd have to do is go to the federal government and get a waiver, and it'd usually take you three, four months before you got the waiver. Now, in most cases, we got the waiver; that's what happened in Wisconsin and some other states that were involved in doing that, too. There were a lot of things we had already begun to do. After the federal legislation passed, we didn't have to go get waivers, and it made it a lot quicker if we wanted to implement things. The biggest thing we wanted was to get people on welfare to work, but we realized if they came off welfare if they got a job, they weren't going to go work. Usually you started out in entry level, it didn't pay that well, and most importantly, you'd lose Medicaid. I mean, public aid was important—not so much what you were paid in public aid dollars, as that you were covered under Medicaid, so you had health care. So we started trying to get people on to work, but at the same time they could continue to get their welfare checks.

Gary MacDougal was on the board of directors of UPS<sup>79</sup>, the freight thing. They have a huge facility in Chicago, and they were very good at bringing on people from welfare, giving them temporary jobs. The way they set up, everybody starts out kind of in temporary jobs and works their way up. United Airlines had it, I remember. I think we signed the bill, a major overhaul in welfare legislation, in '96—maybe it was '97—that we had worked out with the Republicans in the legislature, and we signed it at United because they had put on people. We went to corporations around the state to get them to hire people on public aid and stuff. So in a way, a lot of the philosophy was a continuation of what we did that first session when we did away with public aid for able-bodied men and women. They could keep it for six months if they went to job training. Recognizing that people couldn't just go off, cold turkey; you'd give them a gradual way to work themselves off welfare and get the Medicaid coverage. Because most of the jobs they started out with, they'd end up taking a pay cut. You gave them time, and they kind of worked themselves up. Also, to get some of these big corporations to go out of their way to hire people who were on public aid, we had people that we sent to them. So that was very important, and these big corporations kind of served as an example.

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<sup>79</sup> UPS is the acronym for United Parcel Service. By this time it was almost universally known by the acronym.

The other thing we found with welfare reform, there are three big problems. One is they don't want to lose their public aid and their Medicaid. The other thing is they need childcare. The mothers go to work—you can't leave the kids at home. And the other is transportation. Most of the jobs aren't in the inner city where a lot of folks on welfare are; they're in the suburbs. So we came up with subsidies for child support and transportation, because we thought in the long run it was still a lot cheaper providing that, to get them started in a job, than it was to keep them on welfare and pay Medicaid, too. I was amazed at how much transportation and childcare were the big impediments to people getting jobs. It wasn't that they couldn't find them, it wasn't that they didn't have the skills, actually—though we had a lot of people that didn't have the skills—it was they didn't have child care and they couldn't get to the jobs. The transit system in Chicago is all a way to bring people into downtown Chicago; it's not to take people from outlying parts of Chicago to someplace in the suburbs. It's all kind of a spoke, and it all goes down to Chicago and you go out, but you can't go across. That's one of the things—our transportation field—we worked on, trying to get more suburban rail that went from suburb to suburb, not from the suburbs to the city that had always happened before. So those were things we worked on. The welfare reform, as far as the national welfare reform, just made it a lot easier for us to move quicker. We had moved before, it just took longer. In some ways it allowed us to broaden our welfare reform, there's no doubt about it.

Tommy Thompson was a pretty good salesman, and he got a lot of visibility on his stuff.<sup>80</sup> We used to always laugh. Most of it was all pilot projects that maybe only applied to about three square blocks someplace in Milwaukee, but (laughs) he was good. That's a smart way—a lot of the stuff we did was pilot, too, because you don't know what's going to work and what's not, and you've got to prove to the feds this makes sense. There was a study done by Princeton, I think, after welfare reform in states—a lot of states had done things. It was probably in '97 or '98. It came out, and Illinois was ranked as by far the most humane welfare reform in the Midwest. I always thought that was good, because it basically said that you had welfare reform but you didn't penalize people; I mean, you helped people. That's what we were after. We weren't bragging we threw three hundred thousand people off the welfare rolls—what we wanted to say is we got two hundred thousand people working, and also did it in a manner that did not make it hard on them. We didn't penalize them to go get a job. I think that, at least by the time I left office, we had several hundred thousand people that had moved off welfare, and we thought we did it in the right manner. Again, when that study came out, I always felt good, because that's the only one I know that really went in and looked at the welfare system state by state, and we ranked well.

DePue: This is one of those questions that would be very tough to answer, but I'll just ask for your gut feeling. We're talking '97, '98. Obviously your program's been in place long before that time, but by the '97-'98 timeframe, the American economy

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<sup>80</sup> Tommy Thompson was governor of Wisconsin, and he attracted national attention for his state's experiments with welfare reform.

is cooking along pretty well; we're at somewhere between 4 and 5 percent unemployment. So how much of the success of dramatically reducing welfare rolls in those last couple years was due to the economy?

Edgar: Oh, I don't know how large, but a considerable part, there's no doubt. It's tough when you have a recession. A lot of people that are able-bodied and everything going for them, they can't find a job, so it'd be even tougher to find jobs for people who maybe don't have all the skills and don't have the work history. The other problem—a lot of employers were real nervous about hiring somebody that didn't have a record of being able to work, and a successful work record. There's no doubt the economy helped.

But I think the flexibility we went after—through the waiver procedure before, then later, when they did pass the federal welfare reform bill—helped a lot, too. Also, we knew a lot more by '97, '98, even '96, what worked and what didn't work, and where were the real impediments? Like I said, childcare, transportation—huge impediments. If you'd asked me in 1991, "What keeps people from working?" I don't think I'd have ever guessed those two, and those two are probably as big a factor as anything else. We do know from when we did away with welfare for able-bodied men and women and put them in these job training [programs], a lot of people just didn't have basic skills. But there were a lot of people who had skills, who didn't work, that were on public aid too, because they couldn't get to the jobs or didn't have somebody to take care of their kids.

DePue: The next one, you've already mentioned as well—the huge budget challenge of Medicaid. Many sessions ago, we talked a little bit about when you were in the budget fights for the first couple years, and the challenges you had with the federal government in working some kind of arrangement so you could do the kind of innovations in Medicaid that the state needed.<sup>81</sup> In 1995—so we're taking a step back a couple years—you're asked to chair the Medicaid task force at the Republican Governors Association [RGA]. Can you recap what you had done before and the implications?

Edgar: Medicaid for Illinois was a particularly big challenge because we only got a 50 percent match from the federal government. Most other states got more than a 50 percent match. Even Ohio and Michigan—which I always thought were kind of equivalent—I think they got a 55 percent match or something from the federal government. People say, "Well, that's not much." It's huge when you're talking billions of dollars and you're talking a difference of 5 percent. So the Medicaid cost to our budget—it affected every state, but it really hit us. When I'd go to the national governors meeting, I always worried about Medicaid and I always worried about what little tricks could we get to get us some additional money. We had a matching thing where hospitals got money. It was a trick, but it was a loophole

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<sup>81</sup> Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, November 17, 2009, 30-44; Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 29, 2009, 37-41.

in the law that we were able to take advantage of. In '91-'92, while Bush was still president, I spent a lot of time fighting with his OMB office—

DePue: Management and Budget.

Edgar: —over that. Finally, politically we were able to persuade the Bush people to go along. But that was a huge factor to keep us solvent in '92 and '93. So I'd always had an interest. I think George Voinovich might have been the head of the RGA, and that's how I—

DePue: Would he be Ohio at the time?

Edgar: Yes. I'm not sure he was head of the RGA at the time. No, I think Mike Leavitt was, now that I think about it.<sup>82</sup> I got appointed to do that for a year. The important thing was that we also had a Republican Congress for the first time since Eisenhower's first term in office in 1953, so the feeling was, we can get things done now, because all the opposition and the problems had been from the Democrats. I spent a lot of time with [Newt] Gingrich and [Pete] Domenici, who was chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. The guy—and I'm blank right now—he was from Virginia—he was head of the House committee that Medicaid went to.<sup>83</sup> He'd taken [Henry] Waxman's place. Boy, I'm blank on his name. He was a subcommittee, I think, of Ways and Means. I spent a lot of time with those guys.

What was interesting—Republicans were always for states' rights and let the states have the control and blah-blah-blah, so we figure this is going to be easy. We're just going to go in there, we're going to have these plans, and we're going to give this all back—the decision-making—to the states. And there was opposition (laughs) in the Republican Congress because first of all, these committee chairmen now had the power, and they didn't necessarily want to give that power up to states. John Kasich was chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, and I had to deal with him some too.<sup>84</sup> They really didn't want to give up power. There were all these conservative Republicans and states' rights, but they weren't real sure.

I'll never forget, I went and testified before the Senate committee. I was testifying about why we ought to be given this, and Sen. Kit Bond, who was a former governor, a Republican from Missouri, said, "Well, how do we know we can trust the states to do this?" I heard that also from [Jay] Rockefeller from West Virginia. In fact, I got asked the same question that Waxman asked me in the House. They had written it down and given it to him. I mean, these guys never have their own questions—they got to have the staff hand them stuff. The identical question that I got asked in the House by Waxman, Rockefeller asked me when

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<sup>82</sup> Leavitt was governor of Utah.

<sup>83</sup> Newt Gingrich (R-GA) was Speaker of the House. Thomas J. Bliley Jr. (R-VA) replaced John D. Dingell (D-MI) as chairman of the full House Committee on Energy and Commerce, while Michael Bilirakis (R-FL) replaced Waxman (D-CA) as chairman of the Subcommittee on Health and Environment, which had jurisdiction over Medicaid.

<sup>84</sup> Kasich (R-OH) was chairman of the House Budget Committee.

I went before the Senate committee.<sup>85</sup> He didn't even change a word in it. He was reading; you could tell he didn't have a clue what he was talking about. But Bond, I just was dumbfounded. Here's a Republican, a former governor, saying, "Well, we don't know if we can trust you states." I thought, he's been in Washington too long.

It was also interesting to work around Gingrich. Gingrich, I'd developed a great deal of respect for. I was very apprehensive when he became Speaker. I thought, he's too right-wing and he's controversial. He's much more pragmatic than I thought. He's not as right-wing. His members are, but he was much more pragmatic, very good at understanding the issues. Spent a lot of time with Bob Dole. Of course, Dole was the Senate leader at that point. Dole was supportive, but I think he was more supportive because he wanted all those governors to endorse him for president. (laughs) He didn't understand the nuances, the details, like Gingrich did. Gingrich was with us because he really believed states could probably do a better job.

DePue: Was that the essence of the proposal?

Edgar: It gave us a lot more authority. We could do more things. The big issue was something I talked about before, called the Boren Amendment. The Boren Amendment was named after David Boren, who was then a senator from Oklahoma; he's now the president of the University of Oklahoma. His intent was this would put a ceiling on how much medical providers could charge for Medicaid services, but the courts interpreted it not as a ceiling but as a floor. What it meant was we could not work any deals or require providers—say, "You can only charge three hundred dollars." If any place paid five hundred dollars in the system, we had to pay five hundred or more. I mean, it was the opposite of what Boren... But it was on the books, and that's how it had been interpreted. Waxman—while the Democrats controlled things, they weren't going to let that be changed. So if you ever got the governors together and got in a closed meeting, the Democratic governors were just as mad about the Boren Amendment as the Republican governors were. You wouldn't know the difference in a closed meeting.

So that was something we wanted changed—we wanted the Boren Amendment repealed. That was a **huge** thing. We just wanted more flexibility. I did that for a year, then I got removed and they brought somebody else in the next year. What finally got resolved was welfare was pretty much turned over to the states in many ways; Medicaid, they didn't go that far.<sup>86</sup> They gave us a lot more flexibility, but still it wasn't as flexible as they did on welfare. But it did do away with the Boren Amendment.

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<sup>85</sup> Unlike Bond, both men were Democrats.

<sup>86</sup> Congress restructured the American welfare system by passing the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, which ended the federally designed Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program in favor of a system of block grants distributed to state-designed welfare programs. The new system is called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Congress repealed the Boren Amendment in 1997.

On public aid, I remember Gingrich's office called me, and he said, "We're having trouble. Can you talk to some of your Illinois guys?" And I had to talk to Henry Hyde. I mean, Henry Hyde—here was this pillar of the conservatives. I called him, and I said, "Henry, welfare." He said, "You think it'll work?" I said, "Yes, I think it'll help us." He said, "All right, if you think so. I'm just not sure, you know. These guys out here, I just..." Of course, these congressmen would get interest groups pressuring them, and even the conservative Republicans had these groups saying, "Hey, we don't want to turn this over to the state." And there was this attitude—one, they didn't want to give up power, but two, can the states really do this? This Kit Bond thing—as I said, it's just obvious after you're in Washington so long. I'm sure at the state level, local governments think we have the same attitude about, well, we don't want to let local government have control; we're going to tell them from Springfield what to do. So you ran into that, and it was interesting that even with Republicans who had always said they were for states' rights, when it came to it, it was **tough**. We had to push on them to get them to give that power to us.

DePue: The words you used were "the next year, you were removed." Is there a story there?

Edgar: Not that I know of; it's just we had a new head of the RGA, and they brought in different people. But I was glad, too, (DePue laughs) because I don't like spending a lot of time in Washington. Some of those guys loved to go to Washington, like John Engler used to love to go to Washington from Michigan. I just did not like to go there. Now, I have to say, my experience was that those two years, particularly '95, was the best time to go there, because you actually did get some things from Congress. You did have a new Congress; the Republicans did give you—there was some hope. The other six years particularly—even later, the Republicans became very—nothing happened. You just went out there and testified before committees, and nothing ever happened. But that first year or two with the Republican Congress, it was, from a state's point of view, a great opportunity to begin to get some things we had been trying to get for a long time.

DePue: The next issue is 1996, when the state begins issuing Link cards. Was that something that came out of an initiative in the administration?

Edgar: I'm trying to think what Link cards were.

DePue: The cards that people on welfare used like a credit card, or your food stamps and things like that.

Edgar: Yes. That was something we came up with. I think part of the problem was people lost food stamps and—it made it easier, but also there was more security involved or something. I can't remember it now.

DePue: Do you recall if was there an issue of the embarrassment that people would have, if this would alleviate some of that as well?

Edgar: It could have been. I think it was more security and fraud. It might have been part of that; I just don't remember.

DePue: This might be another one that's fairly obscure, maybe not—1998, Refugee and Immigration Citizenship Initiative.

Edgar: Throughout my time as governor, we'd had a good relationship with the immigration groups out there, working with them and setting up programs helping them become naturalized citizens. I think in '98, we might have got something passed, but we'd been doing things for years. In fact, I still have close ties with the immigration groups based off what we did as governor. Illinois was probably the leading state as far as the state assisting groups to try to naturalize people and work with them.<sup>87</sup> We had a good record. I'm surprised the legislation was that late, because we'd been doing things and had this ongoing relationship—

DePue: Where did you see the need for doing this to begin with, then?

Edgar: We had a lot of folks in the state that could become naturalized citizens but didn't have the assistance, and we gave them the assistance to work with these groups, to help them get these people naturalized so they could be American citizens.

DePue: So we're talking legal immigrants who just wanted a faster track towards the naturalization process?

Edgar: Yes. That was the thing we started with them originally that was important. We knew there was illegal immigration and immigrants in Illinois; we weren't out to try to catch them and throw them out. I was always a big supporter of immigration reform. I remember in probably '96 or '97, the Senate Republicans in Washington were going to change something where **legal** immigrants—not citizens, but legal immigrants—were going to have difficulty getting Medicaid and other social service benefits. I remember George W. Bush, Christie Todd Whitman in New Jersey, and myself were probably the three most vocal Republican governors saying, "Hey, you can't do this. This is terrible." One, it's terrible policy-wise. These are legal people who ought to be able to get these benefits. And two, politically it's terrible. I mean, we're sending the wrong message.

DePue: By this time, Illinois, like a lot of states, had a large Hispanic immigrant population, but there had to be a huge population in the Chicago area of a lot of eastern Europeans at the time.

Edgar: A lot of Asians, too. Yes, we had a lot of eastern Europeans and we had a lot of Asians, as well as Hispanics. People don't realize that, when I was governor, Chicago had the second-largest Mexican American population of any city in the United States.

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<sup>87</sup> An early example of Edgar's efforts on behalf of immigrants was his policy on licensing while secretary of state; see Jim Edgar, June 22, 2009, 78. For more general thoughts on immigration, Illinois, and the Republican Party, see Jim Edgar, June 18, 2010, 2-3, and December 14, 2010, 36-38. All interviews by Mark DePue.

DePue: Behind L.A.?

Edgar: Behind L.A. And the reason they were second, it's a big city. Percentage-wise, San Antonio and places like that had a lot more, but actual raw number, we had (coughs) more in Chicago. We had a huge Hispanic presence, we had a big Asian, and we had a big eastern European. There were a lot of eastern Europeans, particularly Poles, that never spoke English in their life. People had been here all their life—I don't think they ever spoke it—and then we had a lot coming over. I just remember Bush and Whitman didn't show up—I forget who came—but I had to go meet with Trent Lott, who was now the leader. Dole had resigned to go run for president. This might have even been after the election, when I went out there, but I sat down with about six Senate Republicans, and we actually got in a shouting match. Trent Lott is a really easy guy to get along with, and I just remember we were yelling (laughs) at each other. I thought, This has been a waste of time, because I'm sitting here arguing with these guys. About two weeks later they backed off and did what we wanted. So I guess it worked, but we had a difficult time with Republicans on those issues back then.

I always thought it was a plus for our state to have the immigrants, because I thought all the immigrants wanted to work, a lot of them brought skills, and if you could find them jobs, there was no problem. If people don't have jobs, then that's when you begin to have the problems. That's what I think is unfortunate about the current situation. We've got twelve million people kind of in limbo out there. If people can't get jobs, then they turn to crime, and you've got other problems. We didn't have that problem in Illinois. The crime rates among our immigrants were very low. Of course, the economy was going good, but they were working; they were an important part of the workforce. I felt like we needed to do all we could to assist them, and particularly help those who could become citizens become citizens.

DePue: The next area is mental health. Nineteen ninety-two, ACLU had a lawsuit against the state, against the conditions and management and the care of mental health patients in the state.

Edgar: Was that first filed in '92, is that when the judge...

DePue: Yes, and I think I got that from the book here. The lawsuit was eventually dropped in 1997. So what happened in the interim there in terms of mental health? Because that was also one of those areas that I'm sure was a headache for almost every governor out there in the country.

Edgar: Illinois had been probably the last state to deinstitutionalize. We were really behind most other states. As a result, we had a caseload that was high, as far as people versus employees. We started more deinstitutionalizing. And the ones we did keep, the facilities we kept open, were for those really very severely afflicted people that you just couldn't put out at a halfway house or in a community setting. We put resources as far as manpower, but also we were able to reduce some of the facilities

in size. We didn't have the caseload there, but we did more with community groups and putting people out there.

DePue: Did you get some budget savings on top of that?

Edgar: We might have gotten some. In the end, I think it was just that you were able to solve the problem without costing you more and more money. It wasn't so much you were going to save a lot of money.

Now, one thing we kind of forgot to mention when we were talking about Medicaid and welfare—the economy gets good, people get jobs, you don't have as many people on Medicaid. First, they're off welfare, but if you're off welfare, you're off Medicaid. So we didn't have to spend as much on Medicaid. Now, in Mental Health, I don't think we probably saved a lot of money. We were probably able to put more resources in those facilities where we were being sued than we were able to before—but my guess, the bottom line of Mental Health probably didn't change a whole lot. Just sitting here fifteen years later and trying to remember. It was more that we wanted to provide better service to those people we did have institutionalized. With the other people not being institutionalized and being back in their community, we still had to pay for them, but it wasn't as costly as putting them in an institution.

DePue: Another one of the initiatives that I read was that the personnel who worked in these institutions received more rigorous training.

Edgar: Yes. That was, I'm sure, part of what the lawsuit was complaining about. That was true not just in Mental Health, that was true in Children and Family Services and all these areas where you had people dealing with folks in need. I don't know if we'll talk about it later, but with Children and Family Services, the big problem was they just had too many cases. You reduced their cases, but then at the same time you tried to make sure that they caught things when they went there, and the people they dealt with. Of course, then we changed the whole emphasis. Now, Mental Health, it was just, yes, training them, and by having fewer people we were able to provide better care. I'm sure that was part of the reason that the lawsuit was dropped. I know when I went for reelection in '94, mental health people were very happy in Illinois toward state government. As I said, that comment about Netsch. I remember going before that group—and I don't know if I would say they're all Democrats, but there probably is a tendency to be a little more Democratic. I don't know why she showed up that day, (laughter) because that was definitely my group.

Now, Felicia worried about that, but Mike Lawrence had a personal interest in mental health back from when he covered something, so he was like my special assistant to mental health. He spent a lot of time in the mental health stuff. I think that always helped a little bit because it kept those issues in the governor's office, whereas Felicia had to worry about Medicaid, Children and Family Services—all these other things. Mike always kind of kept an eye on mental health. He used to deal with a lot of those folks, too. He'd liaison with them. So I gave him a lot of

credit for his involvement that helped us deal with the mental health issue, and deal with it in a manner that I think improved the situation. But we also got a lot of credit politically for doing that.

DePue: The next area is very similar, I think, in terms of the trend towards deinstitutionalizing, and that's for disabled and home services programs.

Edgar: Yes. Again, it costs so much to institutionalize a person. The trend around the nation had been to deinstitutionalize. Illinois had resisted. I don't know if part of that was the unions were afraid they were going to lose jobs or what. There was some resistance, even when we did Mental Health, in communities that relied on those jobs. I think there were some parents that had children or that had members of their family [institutionalized]. They were a little concerned, too—what's this going to mean? But I think in the long run, it worked better.

Now, you did have the problem of a lot of folks who were just turned out around the country, and you had a lot more homeless people. So you had to make sure that you just weren't turning people out, that if you were going to put them into a community setting, they got the proper care. That particularly meant medication—that they took their meds. We had groups out there, not-for-profit groups and for-profit groups, that wanted those people, and we worked with them; we had to make sure they were providing good service. We have a lot more people in nursing homes now that used to be in mental institutions. People say, "That may not be an improvement." Well, it is an improvement for them, actually, but it's also not as costly as institutionalizing them. We spent a lot of time watching those nursing homes and making sure that they provided adequate service. There's always controversy on that. I think most people would agree that we had a lot of people in state institutions, and we were about the only state that had those kind of people in state institutions.

DePue: This is the last question I'll ask you this morning, because we're going to hold off for the discussion on Children and Family Services this afternoon, if you don't mind. The question is on KidCare and the health care initiative. Do you recall when that occurred and the rationale for that?

Edgar: Yes. At the end of my administration we finally had some money. We recognized all along that there were a lot of people out there that weren't on welfare and didn't have health care. That was a real need, particularly children. I said earlier that I made the call when I first became governor—if I had to choose between a senior and a kid, I was going to choose the kid. We just knew that we needed to do something here, but we didn't have any money. Blagojevich proposed all these great things in this area. He never had any money, but it didn't stop him; he still promised it. We were a little more responsible; we knew we had to have the money.

This probably happened in '97, and we passed it in '98. It probably became obvious in '97 it was going to happen. The federal government said, with the money we've saved on welfare reform—and there was money saved—we're going

to spend that on creating a new program to provide health care for children of the working poor, and we're going to give you a decent match. I'm not sure what it was—it was 65 percent match for the federal government. It was huge compared to the 50 percent we usually got. Maybe it was 70 percent. This was a great deal. They're going to pay most of it. We had to come up with some of it, but we were going to be able to cover children whose families were just above the poverty line. They didn't qualify for welfare, but maybe they were working in jobs that did not provide health care. They had real difficulty being able to pay if a child got sick.

So as we always did, we put together a legislative task force to work with us, to kind of start planning to bring everybody on board. The biggest problem, as usual, were the Senate Republicans. Their concerns were, I thought, legitimate too. They were afraid we were going to create a new entitlement. We made clear throughout this—this is not an entitlement, this is a benefit. A benefit can be taken away. An entitlement—that's their god-given right, and you never can take it away. They were very nervous about, all right, what happens if the federal match goes away, because there was no guarantee that'd be there forever. So we had to convince them that we had the resources, because we'd saved some money. Our welfare bill cost was down. Part of it was the reform, part of it was, like you said, the economy was better, but we had some money. We felt like we ought to take some of the savings in welfare and Medicaid and put it into something like this. Also, we thought we couldn't pass up that chance to get 65 or 70 percent match from the federal government.

I think it was the right way to deal with legislation. You don't just come in and say, "Here's our plan, take it or leave it." Before we formally introduced it, we had this task force of House and Senate, both Republicans and Democrats, working and coming up with something we could all agree on. And we got agreement. I always tell the press students when I talk to them about this, "This is a big initiative. This is one of the biggest initiatives we've ever had because we're talking about expanding and providing health care coverage for kids that never had it." It was very significant. Of course, we'd never had any money all the time I'd been governor till now. So this was the other fun thing about the last two years—I actually had some money. I said, "This is a big, major announcement. We need to do it in Chicago because a lot of people affected are more in the Chicago area. The media's up there; we'll get a bigger bang for our buck." But we also knew, the Chicago media—this is basic government, this is not somebody's been indicted or somebody's announced they're running or something that they like to cover. My experience had always been if you go to Chicago and you do something like this, they yawn. If it doesn't have anything to do with a fight with Mayor Daley, they're not going to cover it. (DePue laughs)

But Lawrence had taught me, though Lawrence was gone now, maybe you need to leak it to one of the media so they'll play it up. We knew if one of the newspapers played it up, television would come. Television always followed whatever they read in the newspaper in Chicago. So we leaked it to the *Tribune*. The *Tribune*, the day of the news conference that morning, had this big story:

“Governor’s Expected to Unveil a New Health Program for Children.” Every TV station showed up. I think we did it at Children’s Memorial Hospital in Chicago. The *Sun-Times* didn’t cover that story for at least two weeks (laughter) because the *Tribune* had the exclusive. But we got a good media turnout, which was unusual on an issue dealing in the social service field when there has not been a scandal. Now, if it had been something with Children and Family Services back in the mid-nineties when we were having all these tragedies—and the *Tribune* was trying to win the Pulitzer that year on Children and Family Services, so they were running stories all the time—we’d have got TV out for that. On something that hadn’t been a controversy and wasn’t a scandal, it was hard to get them, but they showed up.

The challenge on that program wasn’t so much (laughs) getting the legislature to pass it, which was a little bit of a challenge, but parents had to sign up their kids. I think to this day that has been a challenge. We never got the numbers we thought. We estimated how many were out there. I don’t think they ever got the number because parents wouldn’t sign their kids up. They’re not tracking. They just don’t know what’s going on. We had to spend a lot of time and effort, and I know the Ryan administration did the same thing, just trying to advertise and get out there and get people signed up, which was something that I don’t think when we first started we realized was going to be such a problem. In fact, the Senate Republicans were worried we were going to have all these people, and we couldn’t afford it. We never got all those people because we couldn’t get them signed up. Now, what’s happened in recent years, when Blagojevich got in, every year he’d announce he’s raising the threshold. The threshold’s pretty high. I think he wanted to give sixty thousand dollars a year, or some number that sounded like a lot of money.

DePue: The initial threshold?

Edgar: No, the initial threshold was probably twenty thousand—something just a little bit above the poverty line. But he kept raising the threshold. I’m not sure he ever did get those other people in. You get up to sixty thousand, those folks might be paying attention, so they might come. But that was part of the controversy on his—it was way too high, and we didn’t have any money to pay for it anyway. The big challenge was to get these families to sign up. Joan Walters, because Public Aid was involved in this, spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to get kids signed up. But that was one of those things—any time you go to implement a new program, it’s always more challenging than actually passing the new program. Something’s going to go wrong, but you’re never real sure what it is. In this case, it was just getting those families in. I think we might have got half of what we thought we were going to get that first year.

DePue: The next area that I already mentioned is Children and Family Services, and I think that’s going to take a little bit longer for us to dissect. Do you want to take a break now and come back?

Edgar: Have you got adoption down?

DePue: That's going to be part of Children and Family Services, if that makes sense to you.

Edgar: Okay.

(end of interview 21)

Interview with Jim Edgar  
# ISG-A-L-2009-019.22  
Interview # 22: September 9, 2010  
Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: It is the afternoon of September 9, 2010. I'm back with Gov. Jim Edgar.  
Good afternoon, Governor.

Edgar: Good afternoon.

DePue: We had an excellent session this morning on a lot of issues dealing with human services, but one of the areas I wanted to hold off and spend a little bit more time on is the Department of Children and Family Services. So if you'll permit me, I want to take just a couple minutes to lay out a little bit of background; most of this we have already discussed in one way or another.

Nineteen eighty-eight, even before you're in office, the ACLU filed a class-action lawsuit against the state on behalf of abused and neglected children. So here was an issue that had been problematic for the state for many, many years. DCFS at that time was placed under court supervision. You just mentioned this one this morning: April of 1993, three-year-old Joseph Wallace is hung by his mother; we talked about that because of the mental health issues. About a year later, February 1994, is the Keystone Kids situation where nineteen children are found in an apartment that is cold, filthy, with about six different mothers—a very dysfunctional kind of an arrangement that made all kinds of press, I think not just statewide but nationwide. And then, of course, you talked extensively about the Baby Richard case, another issue that dealt with children. So these are things that galvanized public attention like practically nothing else in your administration. Having said all that, I want to start with the question: At the beginning of your administration, what did you want to do with that lawsuit?

Edgar: We were getting sued by the federal government on everything, it seemed like. We had federal judges trying to run everything. We wanted to settle it. That wasn't the only lawsuit that we had or federal intervention attempted by the courts. We knew it was out there. It was going to take money. We didn't have a lot of money; the state was broke. So it was an ongoing challenge to figure out how you could deal with what the courts wanted us to do and have the resources to do it. People used to talk about me getting sued, and I said I got sued so much as governor, I never worried about it till it was maybe at the Supreme Court level. But in this case, that had already been done before we came in, during the Thompson years; basically it was a federal judge taking over Children and Family Services.<sup>88</sup> There wasn't a whole lot we could do with it; we could just try to see if we could work our way out of that court supervision, as it was.

DePue: So much of the problem with DCFS at that time—correct me if I'm wrong—was the mammoth caseloads that the caseworkers were under.

Edgar: That was a huge problem. Actually, I think it turned out to be two problems. You had too big a caseload, meaning you didn't have enough caseworkers for all the cases, because more and more kids were coming into the system. It wasn't unique to Illinois; that was happening throughout the nation. It was a breakdown of the family, or we were just more conscious of the fact that children were being abused and neglected. We went into a recession, which was happening nationwide. We were already under court supervision prior to the recession, but that probably added to some of the problems.

But the other problem, and I don't think we realized it until probably by the time we got to '94, was the state's philosophy that you basically made all effort to keep the natural family together. This was something that had been adopted during the Thompson years. I think what became obvious to us was that's not in the best interest of the child, and the best interest of the child should be the paramount concern. So we had too many cases for each caseworker, but I think we had a flawed philosophy that really wasn't in the best interest of the child. In some cases we kept families together that shouldn't have been kept together. I mean, the Wallace case is a prime example of a child that should have never been returned to the mother. Part of that, as we talked earlier, was that Children and Family Services didn't know her mental health record, because Mental Health and Children and Family Services computers couldn't talk to each other. But I also think it was part of the Children and Family Service need to return this child to the natural mother. That was the priority, and I think that as well as the heavy case loads were flaws in the system.

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<sup>88</sup> In August 1990, DCFS head Jess McDonald started talks with the various groups that had filed lawsuits against DCFS, seeking to consolidate and settle the suits out of court through a consent decree. The ACLU's suit, filed in 1988, was the most broad ranging, and it was finally settled in August 1991, when U.S. District Judge John Grady gave preliminary approval to the 69-page consent decree that outlined a comprehensive reform of DCFS. *Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1990, and August 30, 1991. Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 29, 2009, 44-45. 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.

Now, that didn't take money. Fortunately, during the next three years we began to change that. One of the things we learned that we knew already—you can't change a philosophy; you can't change a way of doing business overnight. It took several months; it took intensive retraining. One of the things that helped us when we got

to that point was we did free up some money, particularly as the economy got a little bit better and we had our budget under control; we weren't spending like drunken sailors as they had prior to my coming into office. We were able to hire new caseworkers. Those new caseworkers were a little easier to train in the new approach--the best interest of the child--as opposed to maybe some existing caseworkers that were used to working under the old philosophy. But that took time. So I think it was not just the caseloads, I think it was the philosophy that the department and the state were following at that time.

DePue: Did that change in philosophy require legislation? I would think the courts have a voice in that as well; you've got to convince the courts that the new philosophy is right.

Edgar: Yes, very right. It did take change in legislation—some of the rules and regulations in the department—but you had to change the court's attitude. These tragedies we dealt with.

DePue: The Baby Richard case is maybe the prime example.

Edgar: Yes, but we had already moved in that direction. I think it just emphasized that was the right direction to go. But the case of the nineteen children—

DePue: The Keystone Kids, the newspapers deemed it.

Edgar: Maybe I mentioned it in previous discussions.<sup>89</sup> I found out about that at the president's prayer breakfast in Washington when Bill Clinton talked about what happened in Illinois. I'm just, well, great. You leave the state, and what happens? (DePue laughs) The ironic thing was, those nineteen kids, they checked them. They all were in pretty good shape health-wise. It was a terrible situation, but as much publicity as they got, as terrible as that sounded, fortunately that wasn't as bad-ending a story as the case of the Wallace boy, which was a tragedy.

We really had to make some changes and do some things. One of the things [was] we brought on Anne Burke to be kind of the inspector general in Children and Family Services. Anne Burke was a lawyer in the Chicago area who had been involved in children's issues. Her husband is the alderman Ed Burke, well-known. She came on. It also helped a little bit that she was a known Democrat. It kind of took out some of the partisan bickering a little bit—not completely. But she also knew all the judges in Cook County. So as you mentioned, one of the important

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<sup>89</sup> For Edgar's earlier discussion of the Keystone Kids and the Baby Richard case, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 18, 2010, 34-47. For additional discussion about dealing with DCFS, see Jim Edgar, May 28, 2010, 2-10, and Mike Lawrence, April 1, 2009, 30-37. Both interviews by Mark DePue.

things for us to change was not only the laws and our procedures and reeducate our people, we had to change the court's attitude, because the courts had the final say in many of these cases. She was a big help working with the courts and getting them on board to agree to this new philosophy.

Again, that took time. But the courts and the department began to change, and by the latter part of the nineties, I think we were doing much better. We also had more resources, so caseworkers had much smaller caseloads. I'm not sure when that federal judge finally went away, but the last four years of my term, he was much happier with us than he probably was the first four years. You're right about it; the courts had to get changed, and society had to change. I think in many ways society changed quicker than the laws and the courts did, but eventually everybody changed.

DePue: But as you already alluded, you were dealing with some deep-rooted societal problems that led to the much higher need for this in the first place. You had the breakdown in the family. By the 1990s, there was a much higher percentage of illegitimate births, of fatherless homes. The crack cocaine epidemic was going on at the time, and you still had your regular drug and alcohol abuse problems that had been there for decades and decades before. So a lot of things were trending against what you were trying to accomplish.

Edgar: Right. And again, it was not unique to Illinois. For some reason I was in a conference or something in Arizona; I picked up the local paper, and the headline looked like it could have been straight out of the *Chicago Tribune*. The *Tribune* was a big help, too; every year, the *Tribune* picks out some issue to try to win the Pulitzer for, and that year it was Children and Family Services and all the terrible things. So we didn't get many breaks. Anything that happened there would get blown up in the front page, which caused a lot of morale problems in the department. So that added to the dilemma. Once you're down, it's hard to get up when every day, every... Some of the things were legitimate, very legitimate; others, I thought they had to have a story that day. But it put a lot of pressure on that department and made it extremely difficult to get the morale and everybody feeling good about what they were about.

We went through a couple directors. Then Jess McDonald came on, and he, I thought, did an excellent job of turning that department around. Anne Burke did a good job of helping us--particularly externally--work with agencies and groups, and also to keep an eye and give her opinion of what was happening internally. It took a team effort, but by '97, '98, I think most people agreed that Children and Family Services was running on all cylinders and was one of the best departments in state government, and probably one of the best children's agencies in the country at that point.

DePue: Are you willing to talk a little bit about the first few years and the directors there?

Edgar: First, Sue Suter came in. She was director of Public Aid for a while under Thompson and had good marks, at least that was the public perception and everything I could tell. She'd been a candidate for state comptroller. We recruited her to run, she lost, and I said, "Would you be interested in going in the cabinet?" She wanted Children and Family Services. So based off what I understood her record to be at Public Aid, I thought she could handle that. She came in, in a difficult situation. We already had the court injunction trying to tell us what to do. We had a rise in case loads. I think she found it to not be maybe as enjoyable a job as she thought, and after a while, she left. She was only there for maybe a year and a half. Then we brought in a temporary person who I think was a good administrator. He wasn't as good at dealing with the public and dealing with the media, and by that time—

DePue: This is Sterling Ryder?

Edgar: Yes. He was a longtime government employee, had been kind of a troubleshooter. Again, I think he did a good job, but he was not a PR person. By that time, the media was on the department, and I don't think that that was his cup of tea. He left, and we asked Jess McDonald, who we had brought in to head up Mental Health early in my administration, to move over from Mental Health to Children and Family Services.<sup>90</sup> He had worked for Thompson before, and he'd been acting director of Children and Family Services at the end of Thompson's administration. He knew the department, was a good administrator, but also had the skill--better than the previous directors--to be able to deal with the media and deal with the outside world. There was a lot to deal with there, particularly with the news media; I thought he handled that. Not that they particularly got off our back, but they began to at least give credit that we were making progress. By '95, '96, I think, everybody felt like we had made significant progress, and Jess gets a lot of the credit for that. We were able to get much more resources. That was a priority.

Every year we did the budget to make sure we could increase the number of caseworkers, and that would mean reduce the caseload. It was very difficult for these caseworkers to really adequately supervise many of these cases when they had too many cases. They didn't get around to see them enough, and then sometimes even when they were there, they were so hurried or they weren't maybe trained in the right manner to look for certain things.

DePue: Were there cases of poorly motivated, untrained caseworkers?

Edgar: I don't know if you'd call them untrained—maybe mistrained. I think everybody was motivated to start with, but after you have huge caseloads, you read in the paper how bad you are every day, your department and your... I think that took

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<sup>90</sup> Suter resigned from DCFS on August 5, 1992. Her last day of work, August 31, 1992, was the same day Edgar appointed executive deputy director and general counsel Sterling "Mac" Ryder acting director. On February 1, 1993, Edgar made Ryder director. Following Ryder's resignation on May 17, 1994, Edgar appointed McDonald director two weeks later. *Chicago Tribune*, August 6, 1992; February 6, 1993; and June 2, 1994.

a toll on a lot of the workers. People are human; if you keep reading and hearing about how lousy you are, you begin to think, maybe I am lousy, or, why make the effort, or just, all I'm going to do is cover myself. I'm sure there was part of that going on. I can't stress how important morale is in any type of employment, but particularly among public employees. You don't go into public jobs to get rich. Part of that has got to be you want to make the world a better place; you want to help people. If every morning you're getting up and picking up the papers and hearing about how terrible a job you're doing, that's going to cause you to do a terrible job even if you weren't doing a terrible job, I think. So that was a huge challenge in that department.

DePue: They're also dealing with some of the darkest sides of humanity in their job.

Edgar: Oh, there's no doubt. You're going into situations that are very...Most of us can't imagine living in those situations. But you've got to remember, until we made the switch, the philosophy was, no matter how bad, you want to hold that family together; that's the natural, that's the right thing to do. And finally I think it began to dawn on everybody, that's not the right thing to do. By 1994, we had made the switch. Now, we hadn't convinced everybody. We had a little trouble with the supreme court, which we never did resolve, but we did—

DePue: The state-level supreme court.

Edgar: State, yes, on the Baby Richard case, which to me was the example that **vividly** underscored the problem in the old philosophy and the need to go to the new philosophy.

DePue: Is that where you can begin to win over public agreement with that as well?

Edgar: That's when I think the public really took notice. I think the public probably kind of understood before with some of these other cases, but the Baby Richard case was such a stark breakdown of common sense and the right thing to do. I don't know of anything that ever happened in my experience in government that affected me emotionally more than that. Even losing an election didn't quite affect me. To this day, that still just really bothers me very, very much, because I thought it was a failure of government, just common sense and the right thing. I think 99.9 percent of the people in the state say, the right thing to do is they should take what's best for the child, not this concept of a natural family that never really existed. I think after that, everyone realized, we can't ever let that happen again. Unfortunately, that happened.

The only consolation from that is it probably prevented other cases like that from happening in the future. The supreme court never said, "Gee, we made a mistake," but I think most of those justices had to recognize this wasn't the right way to go. And I think society recognized we can't do that. So the whole concept of the best interest of the child, I think, was driven home. We've got to make sure that happens. I don't know of any other incidents like that that happened after Baby

Richard. But to this day, that still haunts me. That just shouldn't have happened. I always said the system failed in this case. In this case, it was the courts that I think failed miserably. No matter what some jurist might say theoretically based on a law, it just failed.

DePue: I have started to interview Jess McDonald, and I wanted to paraphrase something he said that dealt with that decision you made early on in the administration to settle the 1988 lawsuit. He characterized that decision as courageous, because the natural tendency was to defend yourself and to focus the energies of the department on winning the case instead of settling the case.

Edgar: I think most of us agreed they were probably right. I mean, our caseloads were way too high, we weren't providing the service we needed to provide, and we need to move on. (laughs) There were a lot of times the federal courts intervened; in most cases, they probably had a point and we tried to move on. Also, you learned some of those things you're going to spend a lot of money [on] and not win. Today I'm on some boards, and every so often when they're worried about getting sued, I'll say, "I never get excited about getting sued until it's made its way to the supreme court; after that, you got to start worrying you might have to do something." The other thing that probably helped a little bit; the lawsuit wasn't filed under our watch.

It was something we inherited, and our feeling was we wanted to move on. We had that in some other areas. We had that on personnel matters, on the whole question of patronage; we'd had a lawsuit filed there, too. So there were a lot of things we tried to settle and move on.

We recognized we needed to make changes in Children and Family Services. We knew we weren't going to make it maybe as fast as the courts wanted to make it; a lot of the discussion that went on was trying to give us some time. Of course the judge wanted it done now; we said, We can't. Fortunately, after we demonstrated in this case and some other cases where we were dealing with federal judges, like in Mental Health, that what we were about was the right thing—and after they realized that we weren't just trying to stall them, we were actually trying to make improvements—they began to give us a little more flexibility.

DePue: Going back to Jess McDonald—he got there in 1994—kind of break down a couple of the areas where there were significant initiatives going on. The first one was the role of foster parents and increasing the availability of foster parents. Do you remember any of the specifics in terms of increasing that area?

Edgar: We needed more foster parents. We had children that we knew shouldn't stay with their natural parent. In most cases it was **parent**, it wasn't parents; usually it was a single mother. We needed to find places to place those children, but we also needed to make sure those environments were going to be an improvement. You had some horror stories about some foster parents, but most foster parents were very dedicated folks who were trying to serve a purpose. Some maybe were in it for the money, but most weren't. I didn't think the money was enough to get

somebody motivated to go into that. But we had to find foster parents, and we had to improvise. We worked with some, like Catholic Charities and some of the others, to come up with ways that we could work with them. Some were—“institutionalized” is not the right word—but there were some where they would go in and there’d be multi-children in a setting that maybe would be run by one of the charities.

We also had to fund it, too. It took some flexibility in how we funded. One of the problems the state had when I became governor was we were broke, and one of the tricks--how you dealt when you were broke—you don’t pay your bills. Well, it’s hard to get people that want to provide services when you don’t pay. We needed to make sure with foster care, those people got paid, because they needed the money to buy food and provide shelter and things for the children. So a lot of effort was made to find more opportunities for foster care. But we also recognized that wasn’t the last stop. Foster care is only a temporary thing; we still needed to go on and find permanent homes. Adoption was always part of the agenda, though at that point we needed to do a speed-up on foster care, and we needed to make sure that that foster care was safe and adequate.

DePue: Were there particular areas of the community that you targeted to find more foster parents?

Edgar: You wanted to try to have foster care for children that shared maybe environment, culture a little bit. To be very truthful, it was hard to take a minority child from the inner city and place him in rural downstate Illinois in an all-white community. That wasn’t a natural thing. You also were limited in what you could do. But the most important thing was to find a place to put that child where the child would be cared for in a safe manner.

DePue: This is an area where there are a lot of private charities and other private institutions involved in the same exact thing. How important was getting that relationship between public and private right?

Edgar: It was important because that was where you could find a lot of new opportunities to place children, as opposed to just one family at a time. It was important that they felt comfortable they were getting fairly reimbursed, and we had to feel comfortable that they were providing a safe—“loving” may not be the right word in some of these places—but at least adequate facility for these children.

DePue: Some of these private institutions had the notion that they could do these services better than the state could.

Edgar: Well, the state really didn’t have facilities per se for most of these children. There was a lot of talk about we ought to create orphanages again, that those were good. We kicked that around. Jess was very much opposed to that, if I remember right. We didn’t do that, and in hindsight it probably was good we didn’t. Orphanages had had this kind of bad reputation, but then people were getting to think maybe

they weren't so bad. Boys Town and those kinds of places had a good connotation. But I think the feeling was that foster care was a better approach, and that's kind of where we put our emphasis. I think it proved to be correct. We'll probably talk about this later in this discussion, but that wasn't the final stop. The final stop was to try to find a permanent, loving, adequate home for these children.

DePue: Then let's go into that, because that's very much the next thing on the list.

Edgar: Throughout, from when we were campaigning for governor in 1990, we talked about adoption. Part of that, I have to say, was a reaction to my pro-choice position. We thought to some extent if we'd talk about adoption, maybe that's common ground we could find between illegalizing abortion and legalized abortion—more adoption--and giving that opportunity. Brenda had been kind of the point person, even in the campaign, and she created a program called HEART. I'm trying to remember (laughs) what all those letters stood for.<sup>91</sup>

DePue: Helping to Ease Adoption Red Tape.

Edgar: Okay, you've got it down there.

DePue: Project HEART.

Edgar: Yes, you have that written down; that's why you know. (DePue laughs) Anyway, in my first State of the State or first budget message, we established that; she headed that up and had a group. What they basically were working on were regulations. How can we make it easier to adopt children? It was very difficult in Illinois in 1991 to adopt a child. We had the lowest number of adoptions of any of the fifty states in 1991.

DePue: Percentage population?

Edgar: Is it that, or was it actual number?

DePue: That's what I'm asking.

Edgar: I just know we were the lowest, and I can't remember if it was per capita or whatever, but it was atrocious.

DePue: I mean, Illinois is huge compared to places like Wyoming and Montana.

Edgar: I know, but (laughs) we didn't have many. Yes. Now we'll fast-forward. When I left office, we were number one in the nation. We'd gone from last to number one, and a lot of that had to do with Brenda's efforts and efforts on trying to change regulation. It not only took change in state regulation but change in the courts again, because they have final say. An example: Gene Reineke, who's one of my chiefs of staff. They had always had some foster children, and they had their own children.

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<sup>91</sup> Brenda Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, September 14, 2010, 55.

They had one they wanted to adopt. They went through four years trying to adopt this child. In the meantime, they were getting paid by the state because they were foster parents. They wanted to adopt that child, which meant they wouldn't have gotten paid. But they wanted to adopt the child. He used to tell me they would have a court appearance, and when they were supposed to go, somebody wouldn't show up, and it'd be six months before they'd have another court date. Here he is, chief of staff of the governor, and he couldn't get this thing finalized. I think he finally did get it finalized, and they adopted the child. But that was an example to me of how this process just took forever.

In the early nineties, of course, there was this concern about taking away parents' rights, and we appreciated that. I think the courts went way too far in the Baby Richard thing. But a lot of it just takes forever. If one lawyer didn't show up, if one part of the original family that needed to be in court didn't show up, it got put back for six months. It wasn't like: Here's all the facts; we can make a decision. For no good reason it got delayed and delayed and delayed. So there was an effort to change whatever rules or regulations or laws that were antiquated, and just impediments that needed to be removed—there were recommendations to remove them. Slowly and surely, we began to chip away at a lot of the road barriers. By the end of my term as governor, we'd gone from last to first.

One of the things we recognized, too: with adoption, you don't want to take a child completely out of their environment. It's very difficult for a child, no matter how well-intended the new parents are. So one of the things that we encouraged was for relatives of these children to adopt. It might be a grandmother, it might be an aunt, but somebody who had the love of that child and had stability as far as a family situation. That child maybe already was old enough to know that new parent and feel comfortable—it wasn't like going to a new world—so that would prove to be successful. And we provided some financial benefit, too, to help. Because in some cases, maybe one of the relatives or somebody wanted to adopt and just couldn't afford it; with some help from the state, they could afford it. So we instituted programs in that area that proved to be very successful as far as getting some of these children placed in these permanent situations.

My feeling was there was nothing more important government could do, of all the things we did—build highways, build parks, buy land for parks, provide money for education—than actually get a child placed into a loving, permanent home. Government does a lot of wonderful things, but it doesn't take the place of the family. If we could put that child in a situation where they could be loved and grow up in a family situation, to me, that was the most important thing we could accomplish. So people always said, "What was the most important thing you did as governor? The budget, school funding—what was it?" I said it was adoption. Because we're talking about going from I think less than a couple hundred to over five thousand adoptions a year in Illinois, when we went from first to last. Now, maybe all those weren't perfect, but I got to think they **all** were better from where they came from, and most of them were good. Most of us have been fortunate; we had a loving family to grow up in, and I don't think there's any doubt we are the

creatures of our environment. While there's a lot to be said about DNA and all those (laughs) kinds of things that are set by birth, there's still an awful lot to be said about the environment you grew up in.

So to me, that was extremely important, and I give Brenda a lot of credit—that's something she just kind of kept working at—and I give people credit in Children and Family Services. Steve Schnorf's wife Jane Elmore worked on this hard, and other people did, working with the courts to get people to change philosophies and be willing to do something different. It was a joint effort, particularly in Cook County, where a lot of these cases went, working with the courts up there. Sometimes we'd get a little frustrated with the Cook County courts, but in this case I think they saw the need to do things differently. So with everybody working together, I think we made a lot of progress.

One of the awards we got—again, got hardly any press attention on this. About a month before we went out of office, Brenda and I got invited to come to the White House and get an award from the Clinton administration for what we had done on adoption. That was nice. That was kind of significant. Never got a story on that back home. But I think there were five different things that were done by people, and we were one of the five.

DePue: Did you take the opportunity then to remind the president about that time you were there and the Keystone Kids story popped?

Edgar: No, no, no. I didn't, (laughter) I didn't. I just didn't want to bring that up anymore.

DePue: You've already mentioned it, but this is probably a good point to talk about other things that Brenda was doing in this and other areas.

Edgar: The other area that she was very active in was women's health. I remember when she held her press conference to announce the initiative in women's health, she said that as she was approaching fifty, she realized her body wasn't the same as it used to be. There were all kinds of things going on inside her that she could not control any longer, and that that was probably not unique to her, that was a phenomenon in women. Unfortunately, a lot of health care was oriented towards men, and there were a lot of unique challenges women faced that maybe didn't get that much attention. Heart disease was fast becoming the number one cause of death among women, but most heart care and attention was towards males, not towards women. So a variety of issues—

DePue: To include her husband, to a certain extent.

Edgar: Yes, yes. But a variety of issues she thought needed to be looked at, so she started this initiative. For some reason she had influence with the sitting governor at that time, (DePue laughs) who with a rather tight budget was able to find some money

to put into Public Health to create this division of women's health.<sup>92</sup> Sharon Green was—I don't know if she was the first director--but she was the main director while Brenda... They did a very good job of promoting that, looking at that, calling attention. One of the things that was very important about the governor and, in this case, the First Lady: you have a bully pulpit. If you want to hit home on an issue, you have that opportunity, and this was one of her issues. Brenda—who, we've talked about before, really did not dream about being First Lady, did not have a great desire; she'd just as soon just been a housewife and not have to ever make a speech—proved to be very effective, because she's a very sincere person. She did a very good job of going out and promoting this issue, traveling around the state and getting help from various groups. So that was an important initiative for her. Now, that was one of the few--I won't say selfish things--but she kind of knew this [issue].

But most of the other things she did were with children. That was her main emphasis. Also, she went around promoting that kids ought to get their shots, except Brenda cannot stand shots. (DePue laughs) There was a picture that appeared in the paper—I don't know if it's in *Meeting the Challenge* or not—of this child getting its shot, and this face on Brenda, just like it's killing her. So I said, "I'm not sure you're the best promoter of that." But anything to do with children.

DePue: Another one I think was child safety seats?

Edgar: Yes, she promoted that. That had been on the scene for a while, back when I was secretary of state. She promoted and helped locate groups that would give child seats and things like that. Anything to help protect a child, she was very much involved in. But women's health is something that, again, I don't think would have happened without her. Adoption; there's no way I had the time to put all the emphasis as much as she was able to do. It helped the agencies know that the governor cared about these things—the fact she was out there talking and promoting and also nudging her husband along.

I don't know if I've told you this story, but one of the big issues when I was governor was HMOs [Health Maintenance Organizations]. That was, we hoped, the solution to the runaway health care cost. The legislature used to always want to have exemptions, and the HMOs had to cover this, had to cover that. They kept wanting to add all these things. My philosophy was if you keep adding all these things, we're not going to have an HMO, so I used to veto them all. Well, I remember one came up to require HMOs to require women to have mammograms. Brenda, for the most part, just did not talk to me about what's going on at the legislature, or try to tell me to do this or that or anything; not only politically, she wasn't philosophically that much wrapped up in it. She could care less if you're a liberal or conservative. But one day she said, "You've got a bill on your desk saying

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<sup>92</sup> On June 10, 1997, Brenda Edgar announced the Office of Women's Health had been created within the Illinois Department of Public Health. The new office focused on women aged forty and older. *Chicago Tribune*, June 11, 1997.

they've passed this mammogram [bill]. What are you going to do with that?" I said, "Well, I've always vetoed all the others." She said, "Well, you're not vetoing this one." (DePue laughs) I mean, she just didn't make any bones; she said, (laughs) "You're not going to veto this one." I didn't. I was a coward. There were times she was the only person who was nice to me, and I had to... So I didn't veto that.

For the most part, it was children's issues that she really zeroed in on and spent a lot of time—little things--like she was active with the 4-H on things they would do. She enjoyed being around small kids. We also got involved—she got involved and then I got involved—there was a charity on the West Side of Chicago called the Off the Street Club. It's in one of the toughest neighborhoods in Chicago. The West Side of Chicago is a lot tougher, more problems, than the South Side of Chicago. This was a club that had been there for years.<sup>93</sup> I think it had originally started out when the neighborhood was all white; it's now all African American. It's a place kids can come after school and get off the street, get away from the drug dealers; they have teams and they have various programs, and just a very successful club that relies on support. I don't think it gets any government grants to speak of, but it's a charity. Brenda had gotten involved, so I got involved. We used to take kids from Off the Street Club and we'd go to ball games, go to the NBA playoffs with the Bulls. I remember taking one, one time, and he was about from here to that window from Michael Jordan on the floor. I mean, the kid was just beside himself. And it was fun. In fact, we had a surprise fiftieth birthday party for Brenda at the Off the Street Club. That was the thing she did a lot as First Lady, and helped a lot of groups; again, I think she used that bully pulpit in a very effective manner. But most of it had to do with children. The women's health thing was maybe an exception to that.

DePue: Did she warm to the role of being First Lady, then?

Edgar: Oh, I think she did. I think she very much enjoyed the fact that she could make a difference. I think that's something she's really missed the last twelve years since we've been out, because she doesn't feel like she can make a difference. It's not like she's the First Lady and can go and publicize some cause that needs to be publicized. She got to be much more comfortable making speeches. Though she's still a nervous wreck to this day when she's going to make a speech, you wouldn't know that listening to her. I think she became much more comfortable in the Chicago world. When I first was running for governor, she just didn't know how she could ever mingle with the rich and famous in Chicago. Here she was, a girl from rural southern Illinois—and that's really rural, (laughs) when you're from southern Illinois rural—and she just didn't think she... At that point, she did not have a college degree; she just thought she couldn't deal in that world. And she did fine. As I always said, in '94, I think there were probably as many people voting for her as they were voting for me in that election. By the end of the time, '98, she was very comfortable, very effective in the Chicago area.

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<sup>93</sup> Located in the West Garfield Park neighborhood, the club has been in operation since 1900. Off the Street Club, "About Us," <http://www.otsc.org/about-us.php>.

We were out of office about two years. We were going to fly out to Colorado to see the kids. We were flying out of Midway Airport that day, and we were getting a round-trip ticket. Brenda needed her ticket changed; she was going to come back a different time. I said, "I'll go up and take care of your ticket." I went up to the counter. You know, Midway Airport is not a Republican stronghold. That's the southwest side of Chicago. That's Mike Madigan's ward, and that's a pretty Democratic area. The lady behind the counter was an African American. Now, you can usually guess that most African Americans in Chicago are Democrats. I got 25 percent of the vote, and that was the high water of the Republicans getting African American votes. So you run into an African American, you figure if they're political, the chances are they're going to be a Democrat.

So I go up to this lady, and I have my ticket there. I've been out of office two years, and I've noticed that after two years, people begin to forget who you are. I hand her the ticket, and she looks at me and says, "Don't I know you?" And I'm thinking, good, she hasn't completely forgotten, (DePue laughs) even though she's probably not a Republican and she's from this Democratic stronghold and all. I say, "Look at the ticket." She kind of looks at the ticket, she looks back, and she says, "Now, I know you from someplace." I say, "Well, look at the ticket." She says, "Well, the ticket's Brenda Edgar. I know her; she's famous. But who are you?" (DePue laughs) I told this story to Brenda, and it made her trip. I don't think she ever knew she was on an airplane; she just was floating the whole way to Colorado.

But Brenda was probably better-known in the Chicago area than she was downstate, because she was up there so much and had opportunities to do TV and stuff. She was on a lot of the TV programs, on the women's stuff and the children's stuff. And of course her bears, which I think we talked about before. That made her famous in '94, '95, and from then on, I think that gave her her identity. She was probably the most visible First Lady the state has ever had, because she was out and about and had her own things.

DePue: We decided at lunch that that subject probably came up when we talked about the Oklahoma City bombing, but the initiative had started two or three years before—P.J. Huggabee.

Edgar: Huggabee, yes. It was a stuffed bear.

DePue: Why P.J. Huggabee?

Edgar: I'm not sure. You'll have to ask her why that name. She's told me, but I'm not sure why. She had read someplace that teddy bears were a good comfort, and we had all these children going into foster care and Children and Family Services. The thought was we needed to give something to them to help them. Because that's a very scary thing when you leave the environment where you've been to go into some strange place. The feeling was these teddy bears were a way to give them something to hold onto. She had talked to some different corporations, and finally Marshall Field's agreed to do a match: for every bear bought, they would give one free to Children

and Family Services. I think they sold fifty thousand of those bears, at least. So Children and Family Services had a lot of bears and used to give them to children that went into foster care.

Of course, the one that got the national publicity was when they had the Oklahoma City bombing. Cathy Keating, who was the First Lady of Oklahoma—her husband was governor—Brenda called her right after and said, “Is there anything we can do to help? You might have some children that need some... We have these bears.” And she said, “Send the bears down.” So Brenda sent a few boxes of bears. She called back and said, “Could you send us some more bears?” It was a weekend, and I remember they had to get the head of Marshall Field’s, which had some. I don’t know if Children and Family Services didn’t have some right there or what, but they got him on the golf course. He called somebody at Marshall Field’s warehouse, they got them to the airport and got them down to Oklahoma City, and they gave them to all the families of the victims of the Oklahoma City bombing.

We happened to be home that Sunday afternoon and we watched the ceremony, which was a very sad ceremony. You had President Clinton and Billy Graham and everybody. But the thing we noticed, everybody had the bears, holding the bears. That’s what they kept showing on TV, people clutching—these were adults. These weren’t the kids, these were the parents clutching these bears. And the next night on NBC news, Tom Brokaw said, “A lot of people are wondering about these bears,” and then he went and told about Brenda and how she started the bears. So that was Brenda’s big publicity, but there were a lot of things she was involved in that were very effective. But the bear is the one she probably had the most fun with, too, because she designed the bear and pushed that and got it done. To this day, we still have some bears around the house; (DePue laughs) we have them for all the grandkids.

DePue: Did the Chicago Bears get involved with this as well?

Edgar: They did. The Bears were involved in doing charity work, so a lot of them would, and she got some of the Bears involved when she promoted the bears. It really wasn’t because of the Bears (laughs) we had the teddy bears, but they did get involved.

DePue: It’s a natural.

Edgar: Yes, yes.

DePue: One other area in this vicinity is dealing with deadbeat parents, because in reading, you took a couple initiatives in that area that seemed kind of unique. Well, one of them’s not necessarily unique—it’s certainly a good campaign issue—tough enforcement of child support payments.

Edgar: If they don’t get child support, a lot of them end up on public aid. Part of it was we needed to cut public aid costs, so that was good. But the other thing was just—

DePue: That was something in the first term as well?

Edgar: Yes, but it was also just what's right. I mean fathers ought to pay for what they're responsible for. We tried to close loopholes or find ways to make sure that fathers met their obligation. I think a lot of states did that; I don't think it was unique to Illinois.

DePue: The next thing, though—maybe I'm dead wrong in this, but it did seem a little bit unique—is identifying paternity for a lot of these unwed mothers in hospitals, when they're in the childbirth process.

Edgar: One of the advantages of DNA was you could begin to do things like that. We wanted to try to locate these fathers and identify...

DePue: So once the father's identified, then what?

Edgar: You can garnish a wage or they go to jail. You'd just as soon they not go to jail; you don't get the money, and it costs to have them in jail. You've got to prove that they are the parent, and sometimes it's difficult, but with that test, it was pretty conclusive that they were the parents. That was an important tool when we were trying to make sure they met their responsibility.

DePue: So that deadbeat father could be identified in this process, and the state would garnish the wage, and—

Edgar: They could, or they could go after them in whatever way, whether it's garnishing their wage or putting their names in the paper if they didn't. It was a tool, and again, I don't know if we were unique in Illinois. I think other states probably did it too. Because the facts were there were a lot of deadbeat fathers, and unfortunately those families were ending up on welfare. So not only the fathers weren't meeting their responsibility, taxpayers had to come across with money, and that never was adequate anyway. There were a whole host of reasons why you wanted to go after these people.

DePue: But that kind of initiative, I would think, requires legislation.

Edgar: It probably did. I can't remember if it did or not. There were very few votes against anything going after deadbeat dads. We had a few, but for the most part, those were pretty easy things to get. It's really hard to try to defend a deadbeat dad.

DePue: Was the lieutenant governor involved in this?

Edgar: I don't remember Bob being involved. Bob was involved in a lot. Bob was involved in a lot of our education initiative. The second term, he did a lot in economic development. I can't remember on this one, though; I don't know.

DePue: I've got down the Child Support Enforcement Task Force, and I thought that's—

Edgar: Did he chair it?

DePue: Yeah, that's where this was going.

Edgar: Every so often, we'd give him different things, but the main thing he did was education. He did a major thing on the Illinois River, on a clean-up there.<sup>94</sup> He chaired a task force we put together. He might of on this, I just don't remember. Bob was a very active lieutenant governor with me. One of the things was I'd picked him, and that helps. I think it's a mistake for these people to run for governor and not pick their running mates; then you're kind of stuck with the luck of the draw, and that may or may not be good, because the lieutenant governor is a pretty useless position unless the governor will give the lieutenant governor things to do. Bob was a big help to me. He was a very knowledgeable guy, very articulate, knew education particularly well, and had a lot of enthusiasm. We gave him a lot of things to do in our administration. But education, the first four years—the clean up of the Illinois River was an environmental thing we gave him; the second term he was very involved in economic development. After Art Quern was killed in a plane crash, Bob asked if he could be named chairman of the Board of Higher Education, which in my administration was an extremely important agency, very important in higher education, and I agreed to do that. He did a good job there, too, and he always said that probably helped him end up president of Boise State more than being lieutenant governor did.

DePue: One final question in this area, and that would be dealing with senior citizen care. Were there any particular initiatives or measures that were taken on that?

Edgar: I'm sure we had initiatives; I'm just trying to remember back to what they might have been in that area. One of the things we recognized: we wanted to see seniors be able to stay in their home as long as they could. Again, it's good government and humane—I won't say "good politics," but probably good politics, too. It's much better to keep seniors in their homes, in cost if we don't institutionalize them, and it's just better for them. I think we tried to make sure home health care, home hot meals—

DePue: Meals on Wheels.

Edgar: Meals on Wheels, yes. Those kinds of things were adequately funded as much as we could, because we thought it was a way they could stay at home. That was an important thing to us.

DePue: I think I'm going to finish off with this and give you the opportunity, if you'd like, of taking a look at a few charts that dealt with Children and Family Services trends—primarily on adoption, foster care, and caseload trends. Then we'll move on to some other issues here.

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<sup>94</sup> See Bob Kustra, February 1, 2011, for his Illinois River conservation efforts, as well as his work on education reform. For his work on economic development, see Bob Kustra, January 28, 2011. Both interviews by Mike Czaplicki.

Edgar: Okay. (pause)

DePue: While you're looking at those, those are charts that I got from Jess McDonald, which certainly show the dramatic turnaround that you've been talking about in a lot of these issues, especially those last couple years in '97 and '98.

Edgar: Yes, the adoption one's like a straight line up from about fiscal '95, which would have been '94, to when we left office.

DePue: Something like that doesn't occur without legislative changes that loosened everything up.

Edgar: Yes, but more importantly, again, legislation is important—

DePue: Brenda as an advocate?

Edgar: It's the department just really pushed it. How you implement a law is more important than passing the law, in many ways. You've got to pass the law, but just passing the law doesn't guarantee—like KidCare. Just passing that law didn't mean... You've got to go out and implement. In adoption that was especially true. There was a huge effort in Children and Family Services to try to increase adoption and really make that a priority. There's no doubt, changing the law and getting the court to have a different attitude created an environment where that worked. If Children and Family Services had said we're going to make this a priority four years before, but you hadn't changed the laws, you hadn't changed court's attitude, it wouldn't have done any good. But it took both. I think sometimes you can pass a law and fall down on the implementation; then the law doesn't work. You've got to have both. You've got to pass the law or change the rules, but then you've got to have an effective implementation.

That's something just as a general philosophy we learned in the secretary of state's office. One of the good things about being in the secretary of state's office, as far as the governorship, was you had some experience of smaller scale. Having advisory committees, trying to get public opinion, getting sample folks who are involved in these things and using their expertise, coming up with the proposals, passing them, and then implementing them, and making sure the implementation [was effective]. Too often I think you pass something and say, "We've won the war, let's not worry about it anymore." This is an example where not only we got the changes, but then the department implemented well. You need to do both.

DePue: Time to move on and pick up some loose ends for 1997. This is one that I think you've been wanting to talk about before, a couple times. January of '97 is the timeframe you reached a compromise with Mayor Daley on Meigs Field.

Edgar: (laughs) Yes. What do you want to talk about, Meigs Airfield?

DePue: Yeah.

Edgar: Meigs Airfield was always a bone of contention between the mayor and me. We had a lot of bones, but that was one that I think really bothered him because I was trying to tell him what to do with **his** airport, and I was trying to point out that it's **our** airport.

DePue: What did he want to do with **his** airport?

Edgar: He wanted to close it. He wanted to create another park. That's just what they needed, a new park in Chicago. As early as 1991 or '92, when we were working on the third airport, I remember meeting one night with Bill Daley and trying to work out an agreement on what we could agree on. When we got done, I said, "Bill, there's one other thing we need to talk about. I hear rumors your brother wants to close Meigs Airfield. It makes absolutely no sense, not only because we use it, but just a lot of people use it."

DePue: The business community uses it, I would think.

Edgar: Yes, yes. And Bill Daley, I remember him saying, "You've got to talk to my brother. I'm not getting in the middle of that." (laughter) Nothing happened for a couple years, and I think it was the start of my second term. I remember Daley and I had been out. We had kicked off a new business or something—I think Eli's Cheesecake had built a new facility out in the northwest side of the city, and we were out there for the groundbreaking. Somebody raised that about Meigs. I hadn't heard he was thinking about that again. He was talking about how he wanted to close Meigs Airfield. I just said, "I think that'd be a mistake. A lot of people use that, not just the state; I used it every day I came to Chicago. A lot of businesspeople fly in and do business in Chicago." Well, he was adamant. We kept having back conversations, not so much with him, but my staff talking to his staff, but they just said he's adamant on this thing.

So sometime in '96, he closed it; he put these big Xs on the runway. I had an apartment in Chicago that overlooked Grant Park, and I could see Meigs Airfield; I could see these big X's on this... (laughs) He had done it. By gosh, it's his airport. Well, we still had a Republican legislature at that point, so we put a bill in saying that Meigs Airfield is going to be run by the state, and part of our justification was we'd paid for it. We had money that came to the state, and we could distribute it, and we distributed money to Meigs Airfield. So we said that this is something that the state has a vested interest in, and you just can't arbitrarily close it. Needless to say, they opposed it in the legislature, but we had control of the legislature. What was interesting—a lot of the Democratic legislators all told me privately, "We hope you win, because we all fly out of Meigs Airfield to come to Springfield, (DePue laughs) including Madigan." But they said, "We can't vote for it." We passed it, and the city went to court. I think I'm dead. I mean, we're going to Cook County court, and the courts in Cook County are not known for being nonpartisan on any issue. Our argument was we've got a document that Daley signed saying he'd keep it open for ten or twenty years. Now, it was autopenned, I'm sure, but it was his signature, and his staff had done that, and it was to get the money from us for

Meigs. That was our argument and why we could do this—he'd violated a... So I figure I'm dead. Democrats control the courts; I'll lose in the courts. Lo and behold, we win at the first level. I'm shocked.

I also knew that most people in Chicago thought it was crazy to close Meigs Airfield. One, they didn't need another park. We had a lot of parks, and they didn't think they took care of them that well anyway. But Meigs Airfield probably makes sense, helps business. And the business community was just up in arms. It wasn't the big jets, like Daley used to say, "Oh, these CEOs and their big jets." They didn't fly to Meigs; you couldn't fly there. It was small. It was King Air-type planes. And it wasn't so much the Chicago businessmen flying out of Meigs; it was a lot of businesspeople from around the Midwest—who would fly into Chicago to do business with lawyers or accountants or whatever, or go to McCormick Place—that would fly those planes into Meigs. They could be downtown in the Loop in fifteen minutes. Now, if you go to Midway, even on a good day it'd probably take you forty-five minutes by the time you got in a car; and if the traffic was bad, which it usually was, it'd take you an hour and a half. A lot of people would say it'd be easier to go to Cleveland. They've got an airport in the lake and they don't want to close it. I can go do business...

The other thing that was interesting, apparently the way a lot of people learn to fly, there's a certain thing they get, and it's practice in landing at Meigs Airfield. So every commercial pilot and general aviation pilot in the country knows Meigs Airfield because they learned it when they were taking this preparation to pass their test.<sup>95</sup> Every place I went, people said, "You can't close Meigs." I said, "I don't want to close Meigs. It's the mayor." So we're now getting close to Christmas, and the appellate court quickly takes this issue up. I figure, I'm dead here, but they rule in our favor. We had this document saying he [Daley] signed.

DePue: Is this going through the state court system?

Edgar: Yes, the state. This is the Cook County court—these are Chicago lawyers; these are judges who have been put in there by Mike Madigan. These guys are about as political as they come, but they're ruling in our favor. I think we had the merit on our side, but that doesn't mean anything in these kinds of cases, usually. And the public opinion: I saw polls that 75 percent of the people thought Daley was wrong, that they ought to keep Meigs open and shouldn't make it into a park. As I said, all the legislators were privately telling me, "We hope you win." Nobody was on his side except some park people. The business community—Lester Crown and some

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<sup>95</sup> Edgar was thinking of Microsoft's *Flight Simulator*, which is a very popular program for home computers. Until Meigs was closed permanently in 2003, the program's default airport was Meigs Field. Also, although Daley did close Meigs for a brief period in 1996, he did not order the X's plowed into the runway until 2003. For other recollections of airport politics during Edgar's administration, see Kirk Brown, December 22, 2009, 101-110, and Arnold Kanter, December 29, 2009, 49-56. Both interviews by Mike Czaplicki.

of these real heavyweights (laughs) had gone in and told him, “This is a mistake,” and pounded on the table.<sup>96</sup> He got real mad, so he didn’t like them either.

So I think Daley began to realize he’s going to lose. I mean, I’m winning in his courts, and the supreme court ought to be easier because you have some Republicans at least on the supreme court. I won the circuit and the appellate, and we had this document that had him dead to rights. We kept saying to his people, “Hey, you guys want to work out a compromise; we don’t need to go to war over this. We don’t want to go to war, but we’re not going to...” Our people and their people talked every day. No matter how mad Daley would get at me, our people were always talking because there was a lot of business between the state and the city on all issues, whether it was the football stadium or whatever.

I was at the Northwestern-Tennessee game at the Citrus Bowl. This was right around New Year’s, and they called and said, “We got a deal.” I said, “What’s the deal?” Meigs will stay open for ten years, and then after that the state gives up any right to Meigs. I said, “Ten years. Good heavens. Hopefully he’ll be onto something else in ten years and (DePue laughs) everybody can save face here.” I also figured Daley’s out on a limb on this and he didn’t want to back off; that’s just not his nature. As guys were telling me at that time, “You know what Irish Alzheimer’s is?” I said, “What’s that?” “They forget everything but their grudges.” (DePue laughs) I had Irishmen telling me this about Daley. I was figuring, All right, ten years from now, this will long be history. People will just move on, not worry about it. So I thought, ten years, fine. First of all, (laughs) I’ll be out of office, so at least I can get done flying to Chicago. But this makes no sense, and if he’s still mayor, he’ll be worrying about something else. So we signed it. I can’t say we had a joint signing, but we signed it.

I think one of the most fun days I had as governor was when I flew in the first plane that returned (DePue laughs) when they reopened Meigs. I didn’t ever think it’d be reopened. I thought it was done, but fortunately he hadn’t torn it up, he’d just put an X on the runway. I remember I landed at Meigs, and all the reporters were there and said, “What do you think?” I said, “I now know how MacArthur felt when he returned to the Philippines.”<sup>97</sup> (laughter) But Daley, he was always mad about that, never got over that because he basically perceived I had beat him on that. And I had. I got it reopened. Ten years seems like a long time, and we thought it would be set. I think it was ten years. I can’t remember exactly. Maybe it was seven, but I think it was ten.

But that stayed until George negotiated something on O’Hare. To his credit, George made sure—maybe it was less than ten—George made sure part of the agreement was that Meigs stayed open. Apparently the agreement didn’t have a

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<sup>96</sup> The Crowns are a prominent Chicago family with extensive business interests, including General Dynamics, one of the world’s largest defense contractors.

<sup>97</sup> In 1942, after being forced to flee to Australia by Japan’s successful invasion of the Philippines, U.S. Army general Douglas MacArthur famously pledged, “I shall return.” In the fall of 1944, he made good on his promise, wading ashore as allied forces began their campaign to retake the Philippines.

time thing on it, because I think as soon as Blagojevich got in as governor in 2003, Daley went in and tore up Meigs that night, which I think in some ways was the beginning of the end for Daley. Up to that point, while the business guys were mad about Meigs, the public and everybody had pretty much—Oh, he's a good mayor. Nobody ever questioned, even though he would arbitrarily do... When he did Meigs in the middle of the night and tore it up and left those planes on there, I think a lot of people at that time said, "Wait a minute, this is abuse of power." I think that was the first time that people began to think Daley went a little too far and maybe there needed to be more of a check. I've always thought that definitely hurt him in a lot of people's eyes, that before thought positive of him.

DePue: Well, you say that, Governor, but in today's headlines you see that Mayor Daley decided to not run for a seventh term. So he's been there for a long time, and he got elected after that.

Edgar: Oh, he did. But you got to understand, he didn't run against anybody. If you looked at the *Tribune* poll this last summer, for the first time he dropped below 53 percent didn't think he should run again. That didn't used to exist. I think if you go back to 2003 and you start tracking—well, he'd get ups—for the first time I think people began to say, "Well, maybe..." I mean, Daley did a lot of positive things, and I think people still view he's been a good mayor. That was the first thing that stuck that was negative about Daley, at least in my experience. But the Meigs thing, I got to say, never made any sense to me. Any other city would have loved to have an airport like that, which made it accessible to businesspeople. Daley had this thing about wanting a park, but I think what he was really mad about was he didn't want anybody telling him what he could do with his airport. He resented the fact that I said, "You can't do that." He probably resented even more that, at least short-term, we won.

DePue: One other question as far as Daley's concerned, then, because in previous sessions you made the point rather clearly that, yes, Daley's powerful, but he's not Richard J. Daley; he doesn't wield the same amount of power. Yet in this story, you're illustrating that the legislators did not want to cross Daley.

Edgar: Oh, they didn't want to make him mad. The Chicago Democrats didn't want to make him mad. They had to go back to Chicago. Now, in Chicago, he was all-powerful. He very seldom ever came to Springfield, very seldom ever tried to get involved in what happened in Springfield.

DePue: So in that way he wasn't like his father, who had control of the entire state.

Edgar: No, the whole agenda, what the Democrats were going to do that session, would have been run by the old man. This Daley just didn't want to do that. I think part of his philosophy—probably right—if he got involved, then he had to give them something, and he didn't want to have to give anybody anything. He very seldom would ever come... Madigan, on the other hand, was the Democrat who ran things in Springfield. It wasn't Daley. When his dad was mayor, he ran things in

Springfield from afar; if Daley decided he wanted to do something, Mike Madigan wasn't going to just drop and do what he wanted to do. Now, on Meigs, Madigan would go along with him, but they weren't making any attempts to pull Republicans off that, and sometimes they could pull Republicans off. I mean, they all voted against, they'd get out and speak against it, but they all privately hoped it would pass. It was because they had to go back to the city and deal with him. There still is the aura, there's no doubt, about a Daley as mayor.

And I want to say this: He's very popular up there, even though I think his popularity is not what it used to be. I will argue you can almost begin to see it begin to hurt from that point forward. He was not that politically involved in what went on statewide at all. He did not take an active role in statewide campaigns. Now, he might get involved in an aldermanic race in Chicago, but Mayor [Richard J.] Daley used to determine who would run for state treasurer on the Democratic ticket. I don't think he [Richard M. Daley] ever got involved. He didn't get involved in gubernatorial races; even when he had people that were considered close to him, he wouldn't get involved. That's the difference.

DePue: Of course, Richard J. Daley also wielded some power at the national level.

Edgar: Yes, yes, he did, but it's all state. There is no national. National is all fifty states combined. Richard Daley wielded his power because they thought, we got to get Daley on our side to carry Illinois. It wasn't that Daley was going to help them carry Indiana, but they had to get Daley on their side to carry Illinois... Dan Rostenkowski was Daley's guy in Washington, and that helped him kind of move along. If Daley went to Washington, guys, especially Democrats, were going to help Mayor Daley get what he wanted because they knew how important Illinois is to the presidential race. They knew that Illinois had these guys like Rostenkowski—you used to have Kluczynski, who headed up the public works for years—and things like that.<sup>98</sup> Daley, the son, was influential, but it was a different kind of influence. He wasn't as politically involved as his father was, particularly in Springfield. My eight years as governor, I can't think of any issue that he ever came down on, really, and had a major impact. There might be some issues on Chicago funding he cared about, but not anything like when his dad was there. If his dad was there, boy, you knew who was running the show.

DePue: I think the rest of these things for 1997, we can move through fairly quickly. You signed a piece of legislation that year, creating the tax-exempt prepaid tuition plan for higher education.

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<sup>98</sup> Daniel Rostenkowski (January 2, 1928–August 11, 2010; D-Chicago) served in the Illinois House from 1953 to 1955, and in the Illinois Senate from 1955 to 1959, before beginning his long tenure (1959-1995) as a representative in Congress. He eventually became chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee and was one of the most powerful figures in the Democratic Party. John Kluczynski (February 15, 1896–January 26, 1975; D-Chicago) also started his career in the Illinois legislature, serving from 1933 to 1949. He was a representative in Congress from 1951 to 1975, and the federal building in Chicago is named for him. *Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, 1774-Present*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.

Edgar: Yes. Again, that was something happening throughout the nation, I think. We weren't unique, but that was something we did like everybody else. To me, the most important thing we did in that area of higher education wasn't that; it was that Illinois, in my last few years as governor, led the nation in providing financial assistance to students going to higher education, something unfortunately we've fallen way off of in the last ten years. Part of that was getting the privates and the publics together to work out a compromise on how you funded that, because it went to students who went to private school as well as public schools. That had been a bone of contention among them, but we pulled them together and got everybody to sit down and finally come up with an agreement.

I used to host these dinners at the mansion my second term when I had a little free time, and we had all the public university presidents and their wives at the mansion. That was the first time the husbands and the wives had ever dined together that anybody could remember, and these were not the private universities, these were the public. They had never... Then I had the privates over, and they might have dined before, but it always amazed me to think about the public: all of them had never been together before with their wives on a social kind of thing.

Higher education was a priority. We talked about reorganization, but when the budget got better, we started putting more funding in. I think higher education will tell you that the golden age of higher education for them was probably the last part of the 1990s. They had a governor who cared about higher education, who talked to them and was on their campuses, and they got funding, they had input on what happened. I think the community colleges began to feel that they were getting the proper attention; they weren't always the stepchild of the Board of Higher Education. That thing you mentioned is important, but it's something that I think happened around the country at that time. I think overall, Illinois, higher education had a much higher priority than it had and definitely has had since. It's something that, again, we made a special effort to do.

DePue: The next thing very much ties into the discussion that we've had today, and that's at the National Governors Association, you get awarded the Building Block Award for the efforts that Illinois had done in both welfare reform and child care. Recall anything about that?

Edgar: No, I don't. (laughter)

DePue: See, I thought that would have been a special event, for Brenda, especially.

Edgar: No, I don't even remember that, to be truthful. I wonder how many states got that.

DePue: Here's one I think you do remember. In an upcoming session we're going to talk about your decision to retire, but one of the things that happens when you get to the time when, okay, I'm not going to be governor for the next term, people in the administration start looking ahead and say, "I want to be moving on to something else." Mike Lawrence was one of those people who moved on in '97.

Edgar: I don't think it was because he thought I **wasn't** going to run; I think he was afraid I **was** going to run.

DePue: (laughs) What was your thought when Mike approached you and told you he was moving on?

Edgar: I was disappointed. Mike was a good friend, confidant—more than just a press secretary. In fact, I could tell he was getting kind of tired of dealing with the press anyway. He in many ways was probably more valuable as an advisor and just kind of keeping an eye on what was going on internally. Mike was pretty good at defense; he wasn't one who wanted to go out and promote. That's just not his thing. I was disappointed but also understood. I mean, he'd been with me ten years. He was getting to the point where he was getting a little frustrated. I remember one time Joan wanted to do something. We were trying to work out a budget the year before. The Senate Republicans wanted to make some cut and she said, "We can do it," and Mike thought it was terrible, thought people were going to die. Joan assured me nobody was going to die, and we could work around it. He was upset about it. Every so often, Mike, because he takes things very serious... But also, he'd been there so long; he knew that he probably had one more stop, and he needed to figure out what that was going to be.

I don't know if he was thinking, gee, he's going to quit after this, because the thought always was I'd probably go to the U.S. Senate. Now, he probably didn't want to go to Washington and be a press secretary for one of a hundred U.S. senators. At that point I think there was more thought of that than me running for a third term. Later, there got to be a lot more thought about me running for a third term, but at that point there was probably more, well, he'll run for the U.S. Senate.

It was a loss and something that I'd just as soon not happen, but it wasn't something where I felt like, gee, he left too soon. He'd been with me ten years, and I could appreciate it. We stayed very close even when he left. He would come back on things and advise, and help write things.

DePue: Did you get concerned that you would start to lose some of your other talent in these directorates and in the senior staff level?

Edgar: I thought there was a possibility. In fact, I was surprised I hardly lost anybody. Even after I announced I wasn't going to run, I think Gene Reineke was really the only guy. Tom Hardy went too, and Hardy of course had just come. Poor Hardy. He'd come about six months before I announced I wasn't going to run, though I told him, "Now, I don't know what I'm going to do. Don't take it for granted I'm going to run for the U.S. Senate or I'm going to run for governor again. I just don't know." So he always admitted he walked in there with his eyes open because I had told him that.

You do worry about that. That's also one of the reasons I think you can stay too long, because you not only get tired, your staff gets tired; they might get tired

sooner because they've got to work harder. Also, you don't necessarily feel comfortable having to break in new people. You get very comfortable with the people you had. So I felt very fortunate that as many people stayed as long as they did. Even after I did announce I wasn't going to run, I had very few people exit. But the Lawrence thing, I knew it was coming; I could just tell that for the last year, he was getting tired of dealing with what he was dealing with. I can't remember if he made the decision after he knew about the Simon thing or not. I'm not sure.<sup>99</sup>

DePue: Mike and I did talk about that in our interview. I can't recall off the top of my head.

Edgar: I know there are some other things he thought about. He might have already kind of decided he was going to leave before the Simon thing came up.

DePue: The next thing on the list here is very much *People Magazine's* version of important historical events, but I'll just throw it out there to see if you have a comment, and that's Princess Diana's death in late August.

Edgar: Oh, well, (laughs) one of the big events was when Princess Di came to Illinois in 1996. Northwestern had got her some way to come do a charity thing; it might have been on breast cancer. So she came into Chicago. She was going to be there for two or three days. I mean, this was the second coming. I have **never** seen (laughs) grown people as excited and giddy as when Princess Di came to Chicago. Michael Jordan had been on the front page of the Chicago papers for five days straight—I don't remember what was going on exactly then. She knocked Michael Jordan off while she was there, and this was the height of Michael Jordan's popularity. Northwestern had a reception when she came in, and they invited Brenda and me to come. We'd gotten to know Northwestern when we went to the Rose Bowl, and they'd invited us to come up to this gathering of their big contributors someplace—I don't think it was the president's house. It might have been the president's house. It was some house, I remember. So that was my evening to chat with Princess Di. She was a very tall lady, bigger than I realized. She was not petite. She was not fat, but she was just a tall lady. I think there's a picture in *Meeting the Challenge* of Daley and his wife, Brenda and me—and perhaps the president of Northwestern and his wife—and Princess Di.

She worked the crowd. I watched her work the crowd. We were in this room. When she got done, she came over and stood where I was standing, and somebody else was there—it wasn't Daley—we were standing there. We were just chitchatting. I said, "I don't know if your sons follow basketball, but the big thing is Michael Jordan." She said, "Oh yes, I've heard of him." "Just tell your kids that you knocked Michael Jordan off the front page of the paper." And she said, "No, I don't want to do that. They'll say, 'Oh, Mom, what have you done now to be in the paper?'" (DePue laughs) The way she said it was just, you know... She

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<sup>99</sup> Paul Simon Public Policy Institute at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, July 2, 2009, 66-71.

basically was over there, and I said, “Are you tired?” She said, “Yes, I’m a little tired. My feet are a little sore.” I said, “Well, you’ve been up all—I mean, you flew over and you’ve done this.” And she said, “Yes, but when I’m done here I get to go back, take a bath, and just take it easy.” So that’s my thing with Princess Di.

Now, they had this luncheon, the breast cancer thing, so they had a deal where Brenda invited a bunch of first ladies from around the country that wanted to come, and they had a private meeting with Princess Di. Brenda has—maybe it is in here—a picture of about ten first ladies that came to Illinois just to see Princess Di. I think Stacey might have been there.<sup>100</sup> So Brenda got to be with her a couple times. She enjoyed her, and she found her to be very down-to-earth.

She stayed in this suite at the Drake Hotel. I saw a thing on her about a year or two later, and it showed this suite at the Drake Hotel, and it was a beautiful. So for Brenda’s fiftieth birthday, I got a hold of the Drake Hotel and I said, “Now, you have the suite that Princess Di stayed when she was in Chicago a couple years ago?” They said yes. I said, “It’s Brenda’s fiftieth birthday, and I want to surprise her. Is that available for a night?” They said, “Oh yes, it’ll be on”—and they didn’t charge me, which was really a good thing. (laughter) Probably broke—couldn’t do that today. After we surprised Brenda at the Off the Street Club, we went into the Drake Hotel and surprised her. I said, “You’re going to stay in”—when we watch it, we always call it the Princess Di suite—“in the Princess Diana suite.”

But that was meeting her. Now, we’d met Prince Charles back at the end of when I was secretary of state; he was very charming, too. I always think he gets a bum rap. Very personable guy. But she was very down-to-earth, I thought, in my brief time with her. Daley and Maggie are someplace here, and so is the president of...

DePue: Okay, we found another picture of her in the book.

Edgar: That’s that thing at Northwestern, yes. I remember Brenda was quite distraught—in the eighties, Brenda and Elizabeth had gotten up at four o’clock in the morning to watch them get married; we were on a trip someplace, and they got up and watched that. And then she was killed the first part of ’97?

DePue: I think it was August.

Edgar: August ’97. Then we were in Paris a month later, because we went by the hotel. We had to go by the hotel, and we had to go find the tunnel and everything when we were there. Brenda insisted we go do that. Princess Di, she was a phenomenon. She was the ultimate rock star to hit Chicago. She was very down-to-earth in the small amount of time I spent with her. Brenda talked to her a little more when she had all the first ladies in, and she said she was very cordial about it.

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<sup>100</sup> Stacey Nehring had married Edgar’s son Brad in 1994.

DePue: I want to talk to you a little bit more about some of the travels you did around the country and especially the world. The other big topic is MSI, but I think that's going to take a little bit of time here, so—

Edgar: Well, I can get done with MSI in twenty minutes, (DePue laughs) easy, easy.

DePue: You'd much prefer that, huh?

Edgar: Yes, let's just do MSI; just get it over with.

DePue: But Governor, I wanted to spend more time than twenty minutes on MSI.

Edgar: I don't think MSI deserves more than twenty minutes, but go ahead. We can spend more time on it if you don't get everything done.

DePue: Okay. To set the stage on this: July 1991, you're brand new in the administration, and you're facing some huge challenges as far as the budget is concerned, as we've talked about in detail. The Department of Public Aid contracts with Management Services of Illinois to find people receiving Medicaid who are also getting private health insurance—in other words, some double payments or possible fraud. They get a three-year contract, and 19 percent of the payments that MSI recovers goes to them. So it's a way for MSI to make some money and for the state to save some money, obviously. I'm going to turn it over to you from that.

Edgar: Yes, in '91 we were trying to figure out any way to cut Medicaid costs. I mean, it was killing us. We were trying all kinds of things, and one of them was trying to find people who ought to be on Medicare instead of Medicaid, because the [federal] government pays 100 percent of that and we don't have to deal with that, people who could be on disability instead of Medicaid, people who shouldn't have been on Medicaid. They were a group out there that had this ability, they said, to do that, and they did. They saved the state tens of millions of dollars. Saved the state far more than was involved in the questionable part of the contract, but still, the contract that later came up was questionable. At that point, anything we could do to try to cut Medicaid costs, and that was one of the things.

DePue: Were you involved at that point in time with any of the negotiations with MSI?

Edgar: No, no, no.

DePue: Did you know any of the people in MSI?

Edgar: I knew Terry Bedgood. Terry Bedgood is a person who I first knew when he was George Ryan's assistant, when he [Ryan] was a legislator. Then he worked for Jim Thompson; he was in his legislative office. When I headed up the legislative office, he was there for one year. Then Thompson took him and he did labor relations for Thompson and did some other things for Thompson. So I had known him for years, liked him, and found him to be kind of an unorthodox kind of guy, but smart, good. When he left the Thompson administration—though with Thompson he did some

contractual stuff—he got hooked up with these guys. He had been the appropriations staff person for George Ryan, head of the appropriations staff, so he knew budgets; he knew Medicaid. He got hooked up with these guys, who I think came to him and said, “We have something to do”—because he did some lobbying, not so much the legislature, but in the executive branch. So I’m sure he was involved with approaching Department of Public Aid to look to them [MSI] to do this service.

I knew Terry. How I knew these guys later on—I had dinner with them one night—was because Terry asked me to. They were contributors, but the main reason I did it was because I knew Terry, I liked Terry.

DePue: And he was part of the management for MSI at the time?

Edgar: I don’t know if he was management. He had an interest in it. He was involved with them. I don’t know what his specific role... He got a percent, I’m sure, of whatever they made off the state.

DePue: From 1991 to ’95, MSI was paid something like \$16.2 million, but the interesting thing was \$15.5 million of that was for the eighteen months preceding the election, basically; so the vast majority of the money they had received in the last couple years of that contract. The next step that comes in here is the donations part of it to your reelection campaign for ’94. Co-owners Michael Martin and William Ladd between themselves donated over \$31,000 dollars in cash, and the other thing was—I’m sure this is all familiar turf to you—\$105,000 dollars in computer services to the election campaign.

Edgar: Right.

DePue: Any comments as far as that?

Edgar: I always thought the computer was overpriced. (laughs) The cash—how many guys were there? Three guys you mentioned?

DePue: Two guys that I mentioned.

Edgar: Just two of them? Cash, that would have been a decent contribution. It probably wasn’t in the top twenty at all. They were always viewed as my top contributors.

DePue: We probably should mention, for the state of Illinois there were no cash limits on campaign donations.

Edgar: No. No cash, no saying if you do business with the state... You just use common sense; you don’t give people, who don’t do anything for the state, business so you can get a campaign contribution. But they were people who had saved us a lot of money. I mean, their service was very good. They contributed, but a lot of other people contributed, a lot of other folks, until maybe two years ago when they changed the law. Highway contractors probably even contributed more, and

probably made less than they [MSI] did from the state. The question always was, are they providing us a worthwhile service for what they're getting paid? The feeling I always had was they were, from what I knew about it. I didn't deal with the contract. The only contact I ever had with them, I had dinner with them one night in I think '94.

DePue: This is Martin and Ladd you're talking about?

Edgar: Yes, I had dinner with them at Terry Bedgood's request. I did it because Bedgood had asked. There were a lot of people contributing I didn't have dinner with and some I did. We'd had a reception for the people who were building McCormick Place. I was in a fundraising mode. That was during the campaign, and every night I had several fundraising things. I had dinner with these guys that night, and we talked mainly about what they did. I didn't really know what they did. I knew they were involved in computers. I actually thought they were more involved in computers than they were. I found out later that they had programs, but this was in the nineties, and I was not computer literate, so I really didn't know. They didn't ask for anything. The only thing they might have asked for is like everyone else, "Can we get paid on time?" because nobody was getting paid on time. I don't think they asked for any more business, because they had the business. And I didn't really think a whole lot about it.

DePue: When you say they were talking about what they did, was this to explain the relationship they had with the state in going after Medicaid fraud?

Edgar: Yes, talking about Medicaid, and what they'd accomplished. I mean, they were tooting their horn.

DePue: Didn't you already know that, though? Or you just didn't know the detail of it?

Edgar: I didn't know the details. There were a lot of vendors in the state who made a lot of money, who I didn't know. I didn't deal with those contracts. I knew we needed to cut Medicaid costs. I think somebody told me before I had dinner with them, just to bring me up—"You're having dinner with these guys, and this is what they've done; they've had a contract with the state for three years and we estimate they've saved this much money." So I knew they had done their job, per se. There was never any question about them doing their job.

The question came later, when we found out that unbeknownst to me and I think most people in the governor's office, they'd changed the contract and got paid retroactively. They changed the rates back to get paid. When I heard of it, I said, "They can't do that." They agreed to get paid this rate, and they did their job, fine. Henceforward maybe they get a rate increase, but you can't go back for eighteen months **prior** and change the rate after the fact. That's what had happened, and that was the problem. Now, I have to tell you, I found out that in the private sector, that happens. People get bonuses because they've done a good job in the past. I'm always amazed in these corporations, this whole bonus—I said, "We

don't get bonuses in government. If you last twenty years, you get a gold watch if you don't go to jail."

But again, to that point, everything I knew about it, which wasn't a whole lot—I knew Terry Bedgood was involved with them, and I knew these guys did a thing that knocked people off the Medicaid rolls that shouldn't be on the Medicaid rolls and saved us a lot of money. I figured they had made money, but I knew they had saved us a lot of money. After that dinner, that's what I walked away thinking: These guys are saving us money.

DePue: At the same time, during your campaign in 1994, MSI unofficially has got a lobster list—maybe that's something the news media tagged to it. This is a list of officials within your administration who are receiving Christmas gifts, and the Christmas gifts include steak and lobster, some trips, and some other things.

Edgar: Okay, let's separate those, because I think the trips went to two individuals who were the problem.

DePue: I'll take that back. But it includes [James] Berger.

Edgar: Yes. Are you talking about the two guys that went to jail? Or one guy went to jail, and the other guy should have gone to jail. He's the one that turned all the evidence...

DePue: Most of this, I have to admit, I'm getting from the newspapers at the time. Steve Schnorf was one of them, Senate president Pate Philip, some aides to include Carter Hendren, Jim Owen, Mike Bass—

Edgar: You're talking about getting food. There's an old saying in Springfield, "If you can consume it, you can take it." It was booze or whatever. It was very common for folks, lobbyists, to send at Christmastime—you'd maybe get cheese, you'd get candy, you might get steaks, you might get booze. That happened throughout the state capital; it happened for a whole variety of things. Now, what was **not** common and what I say was a red herring: if you're dealing them a contract and these guys are giving you a trip someplace, that's a different thing. But there was this thing: if you can consume it, it's all right. Let me just say, at that point in history—today, you can't do that probably—I would guess there were probably a hundred, two hundred groups sending candies and cakes to various people, as they do in the private sector. I mean, that's not an unknown thing.

DePue: So you were the recipient of a lot of these things as well?

Edgar: Might have got some, I don't know. I have a list of everything I got. I don't remember getting lobster. I'm not a big lobster fan. To be truthful, I don't remember getting anything from them. Might have. We used to list everything we got. Most of the stuff was—

DePue: List to whom?

Edgar: Every year you'd put a thing out in the ethics. Anything over two hundred dollars, a hundred and fifty dollars, you had to publicly—I just disclosed everything. Anything anybody gave me, I put on a list. T-shirts, cups, coffee—they didn't give me coffee; I don't drink coffee—I would put out, as I was supposed to under the law, every year and let the press look at it. They'd come back and be so confused about things they usually didn't—they'd dwell on a T-shirt, want to know what that T-shirt said, or things like that. But to accept that food was acceptable. Now, some people didn't. Most people did. To me, if you're doing anything for them because they're giving you food, then that's wrong. But the thought always was, getting a dinner bought for you—which was even more common, somebody would take you out to eat—if that's persuading you to do something, then you've got a problem. So what I'm saying is, on all that, at the time I didn't know it, but if I had known it, I wouldn't have thought, gee, these guys are buying them off. Now, later we found out these two guys who really dealt with the contract, who changed the contract, were getting free trips. That's a different thing. Then I would have said, "Hey, that's a problem," and I think it was a problem. One of them went to jail; the other guy talked about them all, and he's the guy that should have gone to jail as far as I'm concerned.

DePue: I'm looking right now to try to find the names of those two. Do you recall?

Edgar: I don't know. They were two guys hired under the Walker administration, and they were holdovers within the department. They were not people that I had hired or appointed.<sup>101</sup>

DePue: Department of Public Aid? The names might come up as we go into this a little bit farther. May of 1995—that's the time when Mike Lawrence received an anonymous letter.

Edgar: Right. Mike Lawrence came to me and said, "I've got this letter, something about MSI," and I probably had to ask him who MSI was. He told me what it was, and he said, "We got this. We always turn those over to the state police." I said, "Fine, turn it over to the state police." So he turned it over to the state police, and that's what started the investigation. We started the investigation.

DePue: How much discussion did you have at that time with Mike and with your legal team?

Edgar: None. He just told me, "We get these letters; you turn them over to the state police." He mentioned it to me more to just tell me he was turning it over to the state police. We'd get letters like that a lot—I mean, turn things over to the state police, any time

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<sup>101</sup> Curtis Fleming and Ron Lowder were the Public Aid workers charged with helping MSI falsify work costs. Fleming pleaded guilty and served as a federal informant during the investigation, part of a plea bargain that earned him a reduced sentence of eighteen months in prison. By the time of the indictments, Lowder had left Public Aid to work for MSI; he was convicted with MSI co-owner Michael Martin, and sentenced to five and a half years in prison. James Berger, former deputy director of Public Aid, was acquitted at a separate trial. *Chicago Tribune*, April 7, 1998, and July 20, 1998.

we'd get something that'd accuse somebody. I don't remember if somebody said, "We've looked into this," or what. They looked into it later and found that they had changed this retroactive, this contract, which we all said, "You can't do that. That's not right. You shouldn't do that."

DePue: So that was the issue that was under investigation, the reason it was given to Lawrence in the first place? It wasn't campaign contributions, it wasn't steak and lobster?

Edgar: No, I think what we figured out later—this probably came from Terry Bedgood because they'd had a falling out.

DePue: "They"?

Edgar: Terry Bedgood and his partner had had a falling out with—there was a guy that worked for him over the years in the legislature and the governor's office, and he was kind of the Medicaid expert. They'd had a falling out with these guys at MSI, apparently, which I wasn't aware of at the time. The feeling was the letter actually came from Terry. We got it from him—we didn't know it at the time—and then later he sent some others out. But we got the first one and turned it over to the state police at that point. That's what started the investigation, and then—

DePue: So the gross overpayments because they had adjusted the pay schedule.

Edgar: I don't know what specifically the note—I just remember it implied some questionable practices from MSI dealing with the state. I don't remember the specifics. What I'm saying is, later, the specifics that upset me was that we had taken a contract and had gone in the past and changed how much we were reimbursing. I didn't have a problem if we had to negotiate a new rate for the future, and if they were performing—and as I said, they had performed. The thing that kind of got lost with MSI a little bit: they had saved the state tens of millions of dollars. The problem was this retroactive contract. It wasn't so much MSI tried to get it—I understand people are going to try to get all they can—the problem was that we **gave** it to them. And the problem was these two individuals who approved this and said this was okay who were guys getting trips. There was a problem up the ladder in that maybe they should have checked this more, but it struck me as a mistake in a job; it wasn't an ethical problem. For these two guys, I think it was clearly an ethical problem; those are the two guys I would say, yes, they did something illegal.

DePue: Were you aware, then, that the case was being investigated once it was turned over? That was the assumption, that it would be investigated?

Edgar: The state police would look at it, yes, and determine, is there anything to this?

DePue: But it's a federal grand jury that brings down indictments in August 1996.

Edgar: Right. The U.S. attorney's office, FBI, found out the state was looking at it, so they took it over. But they didn't start it; the state had started it, and they just walked in and took the stuff they had and went on with it.

DePue: Why did they do that?

Edgar: They saw something to go after. I mean, why did they leak things throughout this whole thing, too?

DePue: "They" being?

Edgar: The FBI. That's the way they operate. But they didn't find this originally. Now, they say later; "Well, we got letters, too." Well, if they got letters, they got them later, because they hadn't done anything; the state police started the investigation based off us not sweeping it under the rug but going to the state police and saying, "Here, we got a thing raised about this vendor and the state. Look at it and see if there's something there." Gainer, who headed the state police—

DePue: Terry Gainer.

Edgar: Yes. They looked at it, and then the Feds came in and took it over. But it became apparent to us that there was a problem there, on the fact that they had retroactive on this contract. I think all the evidence showed it was these two guys.

DePue: The people who the federal grand jury indicted were Michael Martin and William Ladd of MSI. Here's maybe the names you're looking for: Ron Lowder and Curtis Fleming of the Department of Public Aid.

Edgar: One guy, the main guy, never got indicted, I think, because he's the guy that told them everything when they went to him. The other guy who worked with him, apparently he didn't move fast enough; he did get indicted and went to jail. I can't remember their names.

DePue: Yeah, I can jump ahead here. Are we okay for another fifteen minutes, you think?

Edgar: Oh, yes, another fifteen minutes, yes.

DePue: Okay. (pause)

Edgar: How about another ten minutes? Okay, go ahead.

DePue: Let's get up to the point where you are testifying, and pick it up there. What was your involvement at that time with—

Edgar: The reason I testified? Everybody said, "Gee, a governor had to testify." Well, this had to do with the state. I didn't get called by the prosecution; I got called by the defense lawyers to help their clients. Basically they wanted me to tell that their client wasn't involved in anything that I knew of. And I didn't; I didn't know. In

fact, the guy that called me was the other partner, the guy that got found not guilty the first time. Ladd? Who are the two names?

DePue: A jury finds Ron Lowder of MSI guilty of bribery, fraud, and that's August 1997. William Ladd is acquitted.

Edgar: Yes. I was called by Ladd's attorney. Basically they just wanted me to go through the process—how are these things handled; who knows what? I told them what I knew. I said that I wasn't involved. Contrary to what people might think, this governor didn't get involved in every contract the state issued. That was done at the department level. Maybe somebody in the governor's office reviewed it, but more times than not, not. I talked a little bit about the dinner and said we just talked about what they did; nobody put any pressure on me or anything like that. The governor had to testify; you get called, you don't have a choice. The prosecution, who I cooperated with, talked to the U.S. attorney and the FBI several times—never did want to call me to testify.

The second trial, I got called by the guy who was the defendant, who was one of my appointees. It took the jury—after about a three-week trial—less than an hour to find not guilty.<sup>102</sup> After that, the U.S. attorney kind of sneaked away. I mean, only one guy convicted. Two guys should have been convicted: two state employees who were hired by the Walker administration, who were within the bureaucracy, and who apparently were fixing the contract; they also received travel and trips from these guys, which, to me, was improper.

DePue: Public Aid director Robert Wright in February '97—and this is, I think, during the findings—admits that MSI was overpaid by \$7.8 million, and he blames Fleming.

Edgar: Yes. Fleming is probably the guy that didn't go to jail. I think what they probably got in the front office was a recommendation from Fleming and this other guy on what ought to be done on this contract, and that was... Now, we did make changes afterwards in making sure two people had to sign off, not just one, to make sure it got the proper review. I have never disagreed that we screwed up administratively; I argue that the **ethical** problem, the illegal thing, were two guys that were in the bureaucracy, to be very truthful, who I had inherited from Thompson, and Thompson had inherited from Walker. And they had not been involved in anything in the front office of the governor's office. Also, the one guy I did appoint who was somebody that you could say, "Well, since you appointed him, you're responsible for him"—and you are—that trial went for three or four weeks, then it took the jury less than an hour to find him not guilty. The problem was those two guys—and there probably were not enough checks and balances in the process, nothing that led to think that there was anything illegal as far as their conduct. That was the argument I made. The fact that I went and testified—people get called to testify all the time. I never thought it was that big a deal. I can see the second time, because I

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<sup>102</sup> On July 29, 1997, Edgar testified at Lowder and Martin's trial. For Berger's trial, Edgar's testimony, which had been videotaped two weeks earlier to allow him to attend a trade mission to India, was played for jurors on January 14, 1998. *Chicago Tribune*, July 29, 1997; January 1, 1998; January 14, 1998.

did appoint the guy. The first time, I was just a reference on how these procedures work.

Now, there was another thing you haven't raised on this that I think is a legitimate thing to say. Before all this happened, I decided I wanted a computer. The only guy I knew that knew anything about computers is this MSI guy. I thought they were in the computer business; I wasn't sure what all they did. I remember telling Sherry or somebody, "I need a computer. I wonder if these guys can get me one at cost since they're in the business. Maybe I can get it at cost, and I don't have to..." And they got me a computer at cost. Now, they said cost. What I ended up paying for it was more than I think I would have paid for it if I had just gone out and got it. That, I always thought, was a legitimate thing to say, "Hey, what's the deal on this computer?" The deal on the computer was, I did go to them because I knew they were in the computer business. Well, they weren't really in the computer business. I thought they were in the computer business; (laughs) they were in the **programming** business, which I found out later, after I got into it, is a whole different thing. That came up, and I explained that; nobody ever seemed to get too excited about that. That was the one I thought I could see where somebody says, "What's the deal on this computer?" I remember we kept asking them for a bill and asking them for a bill before this all came up, and we never could get a bill off them. Finally we demanded a bill and got it. I looked at the bill and I said, "Hey, this is more than I've seen listed in the catalogs." (DePue laughs) So anyway, that's MSI.

DePue: Was Sherry Struck the one who was keeping track of the gifts and the one who was helping you try to get the bill from these guys for the computer and things like that?

Edgar: She was trying to get the bill. Sherry could be very demanding, and finally she just told them, "Send the bill. I've been asking you guys for six months for this bill. Give me the bill."<sup>103</sup> Then we got the bill and I looked at it; I said, "Jiminy, this was not a smart thing to do. This cost me more than if I'd have bought it out of the catalog."

DePue: I'm going to back you up a little bit here. I should have mentioned this before. October of '96, Curtis Fleming pleads guilty of mail fraud and diversion of funds. Now, this is what you were talking about before. James Berger, deputy director of Public Aid—is that one of those Walker appointees you were referring to?

Edgar: I don't think he was deputy director. Berger—wait a minute; go ahead and tell me the rest of it.

DePue: He was indicted. Fleming revealed at that time he'd been taping phone conversations, so it came out later on that Martin claimed—this is a quote

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<sup>103</sup> Sherry Struck, interview by Mark DePue, November 3, 2010, 90-99. For other perspectives on the MSI scandal, see Lawrence, July 2, 2009, 58-71; Gene Reineke, June 4, 2010, 54-65; Jess McDonald, October 4, 2010, 62-64; Mike McCormick, July 22, 2010, 74-78; and Al Grosboll, November 6, 2009, 37-41. All interviews by Mark DePue.

from a phone conversation—“the governor is culpable on this thing,” and that a staffer “tried to shake us down for some free stuff.” Now, this is the kind of thing, of course, that’s appearing in the newspapers at the time.

Edgar: Yes, the FBI’s putting out at night—yes.

DePue: And I’m not saying that’s an accurate quotation from the phone conversation.

Edgar: Yes, I don’t remember anything coming up in trial on that.

DePue: Tom Hardy denied that allegation.

Edgar: Yes, yes.

DePue: It all goes to trial in July, and of course it’s at the end of July that you testify in this. Tell me a little bit about the legal counsel that you had at the time and what kind of legal advice you were getting. Was that still Bill Roberts at the beginning?

Edgar: No, no, Bill Roberts might have still been there, but we had outside counsel. We always did on the campaign stuff; we didn’t use the government...

DePue: So that came from campaign funds, then; they were paid by that?

Edgar: Yes, it was a campaign-related thing as far as we were concerned, our involvement, because the whole thing was about them being a contributor. Valukas. He was former U.S. attorney. He was one of Thompson’s guys, then he became U.S. attorney.

DePue: His first name?

Edgar: Tony. Anthony, probably, but Tony Valukas. He was who we always used for all our campaign stuff.<sup>104</sup> He just kept telling me, “Don’t say anything. Just don’t answer. Just say...” (laughs) Typical attorneys. They never want you to say anything, you know. I said, “Well, if they ask me a question, I’m not going to say I don’t know if I know. I’m the governor, for Pete’s sake.” That was pretty much typical. And they’re right; they don’t want you to just kind of go babbling on. But, as I said, there’s nothing to—just go testify. Not a big deal.

DePue: Well, the press was certainly making a big deal out of this.

Edgar: Oh, yes. Yes, of course they were.

DePue: The *Journal-Register* had a daily MSI watch. There was a story every day.

Edgar: Well, what else is going on? What else is going on? Yes. But again, all I will say—

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<sup>104</sup> Anton Valukas had also been involved in vetting potential staff picks during Edgar’s first gubernatorial transition. Kanter, December 29, 2009, 12.

DePue: I'll tell you, Governor, what else is going on, because you get to the point where you testify; maybe the next day the state fair opens, and the day after that or a couple days after that, you're sitting in the stands at the state fair watching the horse sale.

Edgar: Yes. I wasn't watching a horse sale. They didn't have horse sales at the state fair. I watch horse races.

DePue: You were sitting next to Walker, and there's...

Edgar: Who, Doc Walker?

DePue: Doc Walker.

Edgar: Yes. They don't have horse sales. They have the grand champion. That's a cow, that's a pig, and that's a rooster.

DePue: I'd have to look at the headlines here to see what I'm referring to, but it didn't look like you were worried—that's my point.

Edgar: No. I used to wonder, what's the big deal about me testifying? This is something to do with state government, our office has been implied—it makes sense the governor would get called. But I was called to basically defend these guys. Anyway, the media loved the fact the governor—and especially me, because there wasn't anything on me, so this was kind of a fun thing for them to go after.

The thing that irritated me the most on this whole thing—and I didn't mind; I mean, we should have been looked at because this was a very questionable contract, this retroactive... The rest of it was fine. As I said, (laughs) we saved a lot more money than we paid them. But the thing that really irritated me on it was the leaks, because Wright, the guy at Public Aid, got hounded out of office. He finally resigned, and he could not get a job for years. They finally admitted he hadn't done anything wrong. But after all those leaks, you'd have thought he was in league with these guys. That was the thing.

I remember about the last day I was in office, they notified that there was no further investigation, and everybody had been cleared; they had just dropped the whole thing. They told this to the press, and I said, "What really upsets me is what you guys and what the FBI did to Wright. You guys hounded him out of office." He was a young kid—bright kid. He went down to Arkansas, and he couldn't get a job because they kept reading this in the newspaper. He didn't do anything wrong. Maybe he should have had a little tighter controls, but it wasn't his **fault**. But these leaks from the FBI to try to enhance their case, to get people to talk, ruined this guy's career. I just think that's unfortunate, because here's a guy they never indicted, they never in the end suggested, but they'd put out these innuendoes. That was the thing. I had never been involved in one of these; the only time I'd ever been around one. But they also talked a lot about some of my staff. They co-indicted, and

they released a co-indict—co-indictment is purely a technicality they use for who you can call as a witness and what they can talk about. That's what that's all about.

DePue: Well, the list of co-indictees is—

Edgar: Yes, Janis Cellini and stuff like that.

DePue: Mike Belletire, and his name appeared quite a bit through this whole testimony.

Edgar: Yes. But that does not mean that they did anything wrong; it just means that that's a—if you talk to any lawyer, that's a maneuver they use to be able to call them or do something with them. I never quite understood it. Not implying they'd done something wrong, but it sounds bad, just the term. They never got called. None of these people ever got called to testify. I'm thinking if there's something there, they'd have called them to testify when they were trying to... Particularly that last case when they were really not doing well, they would have called those people. But again, that's always been—for years, every time you'd hear Janis Cellini, they'd mention she had been co-indicted. Well, it doesn't mean anything. It's something about testifying, and they never brought them in to testify. So that was the thing that always frustrated me, and I felt bad for a lot of the staff people because they all had to hire attorneys and do things like that.

DePue: Of course, in the case of Janis Cellini, there's a little bit of guilt by association because her brother, Bill Cellini, has always been involved with politics, and now he is indicted.

Edgar: Um-hm. Well, he was indicted because they were trying to get that judge assigned to the case. That's why he got indicted to start with. They wanted Zagel, and they were trying to get Cellini to flip, but—

DePue: This is recent history now.

Edgar: This is recent, yes. A lot of that, he just unfortunately got Zagel. That's why the second time, they indicted him with Blagojevich, because they wanted Zagel; then once they got Zagel, they separated the trials as they should have. The whole MSI thing was not a fun thing to go through, but as it all turned out, the only two guys that were proven guilty were two guys that I wouldn't know from Adam, who had been around there for a lot of time and had real poor judgment on taking those trips. The one guy that maybe I could be blamed for got found not guilty; within less than an hour it took the jury to throw that out after they'd thrown everything else.

DePue: Fleming and Mike Martin were both sentenced.

Edgar: More than that. That's the first time.

DePue: Ron Lowder.

Edgar: Lowder, and then, yes, the guy that said he was wired. He's the guy that turned evidence on the others. And from all I could tell, he was the most guilty guy of the group. I always think it's guiltier if you're the state worker taking the bribe than it is if it's the business guy offering the bribe, personally.

DePue: Fleming is the guy who was doing the taping. One other very quick question, then, and we'll be done with this one. Mike Belletire was fairly important in your administration—

Edgar: Early on, yes.

DePue: —and he was involved with all of this.

Edgar: Yes, early on he was. I don't know when he left. Early on, probably when they did the original contract, he would have been involved. Yes.

DePue: Do you think there's anything in terms of his involvement with Public Aid in this particular case?

Edgar: No. You've got to know Belletire. Belletire always whispers a lot and all this stuff, but no, I'm sure if there had been something—if he had gotten some trip or something like that—they'd have found it. He probably got a lobster, and they probably called him, and Mike probably... But I never knew of anything. Belletire loved politics, and he liked to be involved in that. I'm pretty sure on Belletire, because I know they looked (laughs) at Belletire a lot. I know they looked at all these guys, and they never brought **anything** on them. The only guy they brought on was this assistant director of Public Aid, who, as I said, the jury found not guilty in record time after a lengthy trial. I was more convinced afterwards that nobody had done anything than I was before, because I knew the feds had looked at these guys up and down and all around; the best case they thought they had was this guy, the assistant director, who it was obvious hadn't done anything. I'm not enough of a lawyer to know, but just what little I read in the paper on that trial, there wasn't anything there.

DePue: But in the court of public opinion, how much were you damaged?

Edgar: My public opinion polls were as good as ever afterwards. I mean, reporters liked to write about it because it was something they could get on me. They didn't have anything else to write about me. They weren't going to look at governmental things; that's just not in their nature. This was the time I had to decide, am I going to run again? They did polls, and my poll numbers were fine.

DePue: With that, next time we meet, we're going to talk about your decision of whether or not you're going to run again.

Edgar: Yes, that's a...

DePue: You might have more fun with that one, Governor.

Edgar: Well, that's a more important... MSI, I don't mind talking about it, I just really get irritated when I think about what they did to poor Wright, the director of Public Aid. I just think they really smeared a guy that shouldn't have been smeared.

DePue: Till next time, then.

(end of interview 22)