Interview with Felicia Norwood

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Monday, July 11, 2011. My name is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today I'm in Chicago at One Wacker Drive, surrounded by all kinds of construction, and I'm delighted to be here with Felicia Norwood. Good afternoon.

Norwood: Good afternoon, Mark.

DePue: Felicia, you are part of our series with the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, but I'd like to ask you for your official title and your position right now.

Norwood: The official title is President of Mid-America Region for Aetna [an insurance company]. I'm in charge of a seventeen-state region for Aetna, right here in the heart of the mid-America region.

DePue: So one of a lot of folks in the Edgar administration who have done very well for yourself since that time.

Norwood: Yeah, everybody. I think quite a few people did quite well.

DePue: That's an impressive position. Now, let's start at the very beginning of your life. Tell us when and where you were born.

Norwood: I was born in a small town in south Georgia. It was called Camilla. Not many people have heard of it, because I think the population might be under five thousand or so, although a lot of people have heard of Albany, Georgia, and Camilla is right next to Albany. South Georgia, very close to Florida, and in many respects is kind of closer to the Florida line than the Georgia side. It's not that far from Tallahassee, so most people often say to me, "Oh, it's that place you get to before you head into Florida." But a very, very tiny town in south Georgia.

DePue: What's the economy like around Camilla? What is it based on?

Norwood: You know, when I was growing up, the economy was probably very similar, although it might be a little bit different than what it is today. There was a big poultry plant in Camilla at the time that was probably the largest employer. I will say it continues to be the largest employer today, probably more so than it was when I was growing up. It's not like you could look around and see a whole lot of opportunity, so to speak, in terms of the kinds of things you wanted to do when you grew up. The only thing I knew was that I didn't want to work at the poultry plant, which is actually where my mother worked. She worked incredibly hard, and I just knew that wasn't the place where I wanted to work. Alternatively, at the time I was growing up, I will say aspirationally young boys and girls probably wanted to grow up to be teachers or something like that, because I think teachers were looked up to in the community and quite revered. But for me it's one of those things where I knew definitively what I didn't want to do, and gave some thought later on to what I thought I might want to do when I grew up.

DePue: Were there lots of large poultry farms in the region or a lot of small farmers?

Norwood: It was really a big plant at the time; it used to be called Cagle's. I think they were bought by a big firm later on down the road as a lot of things got consolidated. So a lot of farming. It was a big farming area there. When you think about Georgia, you think about cotton and pecans and things of that sort, so you had a lot of small farms where I grew up. As a matter of fact, one of my first jobs when I was in high school—during the time I was actually still in school—I would leave school at the end of the school day around 2:30 or so, and I would go to work in an afternoon program that used to be called CETA a long time ago, which I think was something like Comprehensive Employee Training Act. But I went to work at a place that was actually called Farmers Home Administration; I essentially would help process farming and home loans. So I was learning even at that time all about the farming economy that was in the area, what was happening with farmers, what kinds of things they were looking for. But, you know, very small, rural communities, farming was predominant, but the largest employer, I will say, was probably the poultry plant.

DePue: Were CETA and the Farmers Home Administration both federal?

Norwood: Absolutely. CETA was an old training program from a long, long time ago, and Farmers Home Administration was probably the precursor to what became HUD or one of those entities. Typically, farmers would go to Farmers Home Administration to get kind of a combination of loans for their farming equipment; to the extent they were buying irrigation equipment and things of that sort for the farm, for large grain and other purchases, they went to FHA.[1] Then they generally would roll in their home loans, because their homes obviously sat, for the most part, at their farms. So I literally was doing very entry-level work at Farmers Home Administration, doing intake, helping to read through the application—doing the usual rudimentary things that you do when you work in an office after school.

DePue: It does sound a little bit better than working in the poultry plant itself.

Norwood: (laughs) I think so.

DePue: Maybe your mom thought so too.

Norwood: Exactly.

DePue: What was her name?

Norwood: Her name is Bertha Bryant.

DePue: And tell us a little bit about your father.

Norwood: I really wasn’t raised with my father. My mother really raised all five of us. There are five girls. I would see my father from time to time, but my mother was really a single mom who raised all five of us. From an early age I would see her leave for work super-early in the morning. It was generally before I even left to go to school. So she could be up and out of the house at 6:00 or so in the morning. My grandmother lived with us, so my grandmother then would get us all up out of the bed and make sure the rest of us got to school on time.

DePue: Is that your mother’s mother?

Norwood: Absolutely.

DePue: And her name?

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[1] CETA stood for the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, which Congress enacted in 1973 to provide short-term job training in government or non-profit work to low-income and long-term unemployed individuals. The program also provided summer jobs to low-income high school students. The program was replaced by the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 and the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. HUD refers to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) replaced the Farm Security Administration of the New Deal era, until it was absorbed by the Farm Service Agency in 1994. Here, FHA refers to Farmers Home Administration, not the Federal Housing Agency.

Norwood: Mattie Bryant.

DePue: Mattie?

Norwood: Um-hm.

DePue: Your father's name was Lester?

Norwood: Absolutely.

DePue: Did he help at all with the finances?

Norwood: Yes, but I would say most of the support came from my mother.

DePue: Where were you in the line of the five girls?

Norwood: Couldn't you guess? I'm the oldest.

DePue: (laughs) Yeah, I should have guessed.

Norwood: I'm the oldest. We're all about two years apart, as a matter of fact. I will turn fifty-two this year, so just count backwards in two years and you have the whole gang.

DePue: You were born in 1959.

Norwood: I was, Christmas.

DePue: Christmas Day, 1959. So how does a little girl deal with having her birthday on Christ's birthday as well?

Norwood: I tell people I always considered it an honor. From the beginning I always thought it was very special. At the same time, I often remind people that I'm probably one of the few people who's never had a birthday party on their birthday, because no one has time to celebrate my birthday when the other birthday is being celebrated. So I always thought it was one of those special things, but at the same time, it is… It's not like you could have a birthday party for your birthday because no one really celebrated your birthday then; everybody was thinking about Christmas.

DePue: I'm guessing that with a single mom and five girls you didn't get a birthday present and a Christmas present.

Norwood: I absolutely did.

DePue: Oh, you did?

Norwood: My mother was always very good about that, to say, "Here is birthday present; here is Christmas present." She did that from the time I could even remember getting presents; even up until this day on Christmas, she gives me a birthday present and a Christmas present. Always has happened, absolutely.

DePue: Was yours a religious family?

Norwood: Very much so. Our family was, and still is today, probably one of the largest families in our church. As a matter of fact, one of my aunts, Mary, probably the next to the largest family at our church, so we were all a part of this big family. I went to a Baptist church in the town I grew up in, Beulah Baptist Church. How old-fashioned does that sound? You don't even really hear of something like Beulah anymore. Beulah Baptist Church, which was really one of the largest Baptist churches. From the time I can remember—I mean early on—I have these memories of the old churches. You used to have prayer meetings and you used to have these revivals. The revivals would happen during the summer, generally after Vacation Bible School. I remember from the time I was a little girl, when it came time to, the nomenclature used to be "join the church," which was the same thing as kind of accepting Christ. I did that when I was very young and literally grew up in the church.

I was secretary of our church Sunday school from the time I could probably write up until the time I graduated to go to college. I literally was the church secretary for the Sunday school. I was there every Sunday taking the minutes of the general meeting and reporting on it the next time. So early on, growing up in the church was so fundamental to me. I was very active in our little junior missionary society. A lot of the older women in the church spent a lot of time with me. I was one of these people who sang in the choir; we went to Sunday school every Sunday morning, we had church right after Sunday school, and we had evening church service. So my family was definitely a family that was very active in the church. My mother was on the usher board, my aunts were on the usher boards, and they sang in the choir. So a large family and all very active within the church.

DePue: So far you don't sound like a typical little girl at that time.

Norwood: (laughs) I really was young, you know, and I think about it, and I think about the time I actually started working in the church, in the Sunday school; I did things from a very young age. It's because a lot of the older women in the church used to tell me I had this maturity about me, that I didn't seem that young, and I would do things and volunteer to do things that others wouldn't do. I tell people I never had a great voice or anything, but if the choir director or the pianist asked me to sing a song, I would always sing it, and my sisters would cringe because my voice really wasn't that terrific. (DePue laughs) But the church was a real important part of my life, and the people in the church for me were almost like an extended family because we were there every Sunday, we were there on Saturdays for choir practice, we were there on Wednesday night for mid-week prayer meeting, those kinds of things. So very active in the church, and my family was very active in the church.

DePue: How old were you when you actually started to take minutes and be the secretary?

Norwood: I was really young. If you look at the church history, I bet I was still in junior high school?

DePue: Twelve, eleven time?

Norwood: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely.

DePue: What kind of a big sister were you?

Norwood: Oh, you know, it's interesting. We talk about that a lot, because one of the things that happens and has happened now for maybe the last sixteen or so years: I go on vacation with my other four sisters every year. We all go away together, we take—

DePue: So you get along today.

Norwood: We get along together. We're a really close family. We go on vacation. We take no kids and no husbands. A lot of times when you're sitting around at night and you're in the bed thinking and you kind of try to get a sense of what kind of big sister you were, I like to think I was a good big sister. They thought I was incredibly serious. And I think—

DePue: Hard to live up to, I would think.

Norwood: (laughs) They've told me that often. I think I was probably a little bit more on the serious side than my other sisters, because for me, I had such responsibility. I mean, I was the oldest of a family of five girls. I used to see my mother get up and go to work every morning to try to take care of us, to give us the kinds of things we needed. I guess I shouldered this kind of responsibility: be responsible, do all the things you're supposed to do, work hard, study hard, all of those kinds of things. I would say my other sisters would say they probably had more fun than I had. So I think I shouldered a little bit of the responsible older child, more than many.

DePue: Tell us a little bit about Grandma Mattie.

Norwood: My grandmother was almost like the bedrock of our community. Everybody in our community knew my grandmother, because after school, unlike today, you kind of gravitated toward one friend's home or the other, and everybody invariably would end up at our home. Everybody knew my grandmother—all the people in the neighborhood. She had sole authority to discipline anybody who got out of line. Was a very, very quiet person but very good. Sometimes I remember waking up in the mornings, and I could hear her singing as we were getting ready to go to school—always her favorite hymns; I recall that vividly in my mind. She was an incredible cook, just a wonderful cook. She could make great food out of almost minimal ingredients, and just a fantastic cook. Even today, my mother and my aunts are the best cooks anywhere. We are all completely, completely spoiled. She was just a very quiet but very strong person that everyone in the neighborhood just loved and respected. You could go anywhere and someone would say, "Oh, you're Mattie Bryant's granddaughter? Oh." That certainly came with some credentials of you've got to be good, you're a good kid, you're disciplined, you're respectful. And it really did mean that, because she did not play around. She literally was one of these people who could look at you and put the fear of God in you. But just a really wonderful, good person. She died in, I guess it was 1991, but she definitely was somebody that was the glue holding all the family together. Even now, my family's just an incredibly close family.

DePue: You grew up in the '60s and into the '70s. At the time you were born, the civil rights movement was just kind of getting started in that period of the country. The Freedom Rides were '63, '64, I think. Do you remember any of that?

Norwood: I don't remember a lot of it. What I remember is when I was in elementary school when our schools became integrated. I remember the violence of the integrating of the schools, because when I was growing up early on, all the black students went to one school and white students went to another school. By the time you got ready to integrate the schools, there was a lot of violence and rock-throwing and things of that sort.

DePue: By the kids or by adults or both?

Norwood: Well, by the kids, but the kids extended up through the higher grades. There was definitely a lot of tension in the school systems at the time. Early on, a lot of the white students left the integrated school and formed their own private schools in the town. I was moved into—I tell people today it's probably like the precursor of what would have been a magnet school within the broader school. So they brought together some of the black students and the white students, and we had smaller classroom sizes led by one of the really terrific teachers that was there. But there was definitely a lot of racial tension then, for sure.

DePue: Was Camilla a very racially divided town, then?

Norwood: Absolutely. Black people stayed on one side of town; white people stayed on the other side of town.

DePue: Do you remember anything particular where, when you were growing up it struck you, Wow, I'm different from them, and they seem to be better off than I am?

Norwood: No. I felt that people always thought they were different. I guess fundamentally in my own mind, I always grew up thinking I was just as good as anybody else. So I was always disturbed, particularly when the schools began to be integrated, that they would believe they needed their own school. Because, frankly, I kept thinking to myself, Well, I'm just as smart as anybody, so I don't understand why they don't think they should be able to go to school with us. Over time I've always said you have people who really run the gamut of levels of intelligence and everything else. So I think in one respect, I found it disturbing that a group of students thought that they—and I would say it was definitely more so their parents who believed that their children were better and needed to be separated from the school that was being integrated for the rest of the students. That was a little bit disturbing. As I grew up later in life and left and went to undergraduate school and other things, I ran into students as I went back home who had left and moved to the other school, and interestingly enough, they would always say, Oh, I heard you did X, Y, and Z. And I kept thinking to myself, Well, what did they think I would do? (laughter)

But it was definitely the nature of the community that it was a very tense period of time. I would say, though, when I look at Camilla, it was probably somewhat more quiet than some of the other towns that had a lot of the strife and tension from the Civil Rights movement. Even my undergraduate school wasn't integrated fully. It was integrated, but they didn't really have a number of blacks going to school at a place like Valdosta, which is in south Georgia, until much later as well. So it was one of those circumstances where, particularly in south Georgia, we were very late to move to fully integrated environments. There were sprinkles of students who ended up going, but I would say even not until the time I was at Valdosta did you start to see an influx of black students headed to schools in south Georgia.

DePue: Valdosta being the college that you went to.

Norwood: Absolutely.

DePue: What messages were your mother and your grandmother giving you about your potential and what limitations might be placed on your life?

Norwood: It's really interesting, because as I was growing up, I loved school. To me, school was just this phenomenal place, and I had almost perfect attendance because I thought it would just be awful if I couldn't get to school. I tell people the story all the time. I remember we used to take this bus. One time the bus didn't come, and I stood on the corner and cried. My sisters thought, Oh my God, she's got to be kidding. We don't have to go to school today? And I was just miserable because I thought I'm going to be missing school. But I think when I was growing up, the thing that I always thought to myself—it's not like I had kind of quote-unquote "role models" to look up to, because nobody in my family had gone to college before—I remember I would have these conversations sometimes with my mother. As I said, I was going to these church things all of the time, and sometimes they would have members of different churches get together at a visiting church. Since I was the secretary of the association of the group, I would have to go to these meetings that sometimes would be in the middle of nowhere. On the long rides back to home, my mother would come and pick me up. They would take me out there early in the morning, then they would come back and get me. And we're talking about in the sticks in some of these places; I mean, these are rural areas.

DePue: It sounds like the kind of thing that parents would be just paranoid about if they did today.

Norwood: You would, but you think about it, everybody knew these wooden churches that would be out in all kinds of rural areas where people literally went on Sunday. Obviously the black church was just the central part of our communities. I remember my mother would have these conversations with me on those drives back, and she'd say things like, "You know, there's really nothing you can't do. I mean, you're smart, you do well, you study hard. You can do anything you want to." So it's not like she ever really said to me, You need to do X, Y, and Z, but she always let me know and gave me that encouragement that you can do anything you want to do. And I fundamentally believed that, unlike other people whose mother and father and grandmother and all of these people had gone to college and done all these phenomenal things. That wasn't my family. No one really had gone to college. So when I was even looking for undergraduate schools, I kind of did all the work myself, because my mother trusted that I would look and find a good place for me to go. It's not like she came in and said, Why don't you think about X, Y, or Z, or anything else of the sort. I just took the initiative myself, and I thought to myself, I need to find a place where I can hopefully get most of my college paid for, because we don't really have any money to send me to college.

DePue: That just might work.

Norwood: So if I'm going to go to college, I'm going to have to look for a place where they're going to be willing to give me some scholarships or let me do work-study and be able to help me pay my way through college. I started to kind of explore different places. Unlike friends of mine, who had parents who were teachers or doctors or the mortician or something down the street and knew that they had options to go to different colleges just based on the facts they had good grades and someone was going to help them pay to go, I didn't have that option. Nobody was going to be helping me pay to go, because we didn't have any money to help me pay to go. So I started to try to research colleges on my own. I remember saying to the counselor one day, "What kind of colleges do you think I could look at that might have some students loans available; I could do some work-study?" I just wanted to cobble everything together. When you asked the question about my mother and grandmother, I would say it was just they were two very strong women and instilled into me early that I could do anything that I wanted to do, and I firmly believe that.

DePue: Was it them telling you, You need to go to college, or was this your idea?

Norwood: Never. Never said I needed to go to college. In the back of my mind, the only thing I'm thinking: I don't want to go work where my mother works. Literally, I'm saying this to myself all the time: I don't want to go work there. I knew that my mother's expectation for all of us is that we would go to college, but it's not like she ever said to me, You need to do X, Y, and Z. I'm thinking to myself, Of course I'm going to college. I'm like one of the smartest people in my class. I'm going to go to college. This is what I'm going to do. But it's not like she said, This is what you need to do. I did all of that, took it upon myself to work on my own and figure out what I needed to do.

DePue: Once you got to college, I know you majored in political science. At least I think you did.

Norwood: Um-hm.

DePue: So was politics ever a subject of discussion at home when you were growing up?

Norwood: Almost never. I think the closest thing to a political discussion that came up was, there was a discussion at one point about whether or not there should be a union at the plant. There was all of this discussion about whether or not they should let a union come in to represent the employees. I remember sitting around looking and hearing some of the debate that was going on around what a union should mean and not mean. Now, one of my aunts was very active in the local NAACP and one of my uncles was as well, but it's not like I paid that much attention to what was going on there.[2] I just had a love for my civics classes. I loved government. I just thought the whole process around government and everything associated with how government worked and all of those things was terrific. I did well in most classes, but I had a particular affinity for those classes. There was no elected official or anybody else like that in my family, or anything else of the sort.

DePue: You were working, you were church secretary—did you have time for any other extracurricular activities in high school?

Norwood: I did. I was in band, and I was—

DePue: What instrument?

Norwood: First-chair clarinet.

DePue: (laughs) First chair.

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[2] National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Norwood: Absolutely. You'll get this thing. (laughs)

DePue: (unintelligible)

Norwood: I'm a little bit competitive. I was in band early on, started playing the clarinet, probably because I didn't like going to physical education class. There was something about in the middle of the day getting all worked up and sweaty and all of that other kind of stuff that just didn't sound like a lot of fun. So I started early on playing the clarinet. I was a very good clarinet player, so I played clarinet not only in concert band but also in marching band. I was in the marching band, played clarinet, and loved our music teacher, so that was absolutely a lot of fun.

DePue: By this time—you're talking high school—was that an integrated school?

Norwood: Uh-huh.

DePue: And that was in Camilla?

Norwood: Absolutely. Went to school in Camilla all my life. Never lived anywhere else until I graduated and moved to go to undergraduate school.

DePue: A lot of farm kids going to that school as well?

Norwood: Yeah, a lot of families did, and some of these farms in Camilla were pretty big farms. I would say a good cross-section, mix of students who went to the school. But yeah, the schools were integrated.

DePue: What year was it? What grade were you in when the school was integrated? Do you remember that?

Norwood: I don't. I keep remembering I was probably right around sixth or seventh grade by the time it happened.

DePue: How was the integration experiment, if you want to call it that, going by the time you were a junior or a senior in high school?

Norwood: Oh, really well. Really well. I will say, once everybody got past the whole fact that we were all going to be in a school together, it was surprisingly good. Never really any type of tension or anything else that broke out. Had black friends, white friends. As I said, I was in this little group of students where we had a lot of our classes together because we were this—we didn't know anything about a magnet program, but today when I think back on it, that was probably what it was. We were all in this little group of students together, but in the broader school. We had a very well-integrated faculty and great teachers, both black and white—favorites all over the place. But the integration actually went very well after the initial shock, I like to say, of being in an environment with people you weren't in before.

DePue: You graduated in 1977, right?

Norwood: Um-hm.

DePue: So Jimmy Carter was president by the time you graduated. As a person who was really into government and political science, was that something you were paying attention to?

Norwood: Yeah. As a matter of fact, we were quite proud that our president was from Georgia. My husband frequently reminds me that he was not a great president, but… (laughs) But yeah, we were actually quite proud of that. Americus was not very far from Camilla. So if you think about it, you got Camilla, then Albany, and then not too far from Albany is Americus. But yeah, not very far away, and something we were all actually quite proud of.[3]

DePue: And does something like that make you think, Well, if a small farm boy from Georgia can do it, then by golly, I can make something of my life as well?

Norwood: I think I thought that even before Jimmy Carter, but it was one of those things where it was of particular significance for us that there was a president that actually came from Georgia, and I thought to myself, And a tiny little town like Americus. I mean, that's pretty darn good. Plains, he would say, but for us, Plains, Georgia, and Americus, Georgia, were pretty close, right there together.

DePue: By this time, though, I would assume you're really looking hard for colleges. You already talked about that quite a bit—was it Valdosta College?

Norwood: At the time it was called Valdosta State College; now it's called Valdosta University.

DePue: What was it about Valdosta that set it apart from the other places?

Norwood: The University of Georgia was too big. Valdosta was close enough to home.

DePue: How close?

Norwood: It takes about an hour forty minutes. It actually had a very good reputation in terms of academics. My guidance counselor had suggested that I take a look at Valdosta and a couple of other colleges that were up near Atlanta. I told her I wasn't really interested in University of Georgia just because I thought it was too big, and in my heart I was still like a small-town girl. Thinking about a college that big seemed just too big to me, which is going to be strange, considering I left Valdosta and went to University of Wisconsin.

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[3] Jimmy Carter was born and raised in Plains, Georgia, and served a term as governor prior to his election as president. Plains is ten miles from Americus.

DePue: Yeah, we'll get to that.

Norwood: But at the time the proximity to home was certainly a factor, and it had a reputation of being just a very solid academic institution around the size that I wanted to go to. And the most important thing: the financial aid package that they were offering me was very attractive. Very attractive. I would say that was definitely the determining factor.

DePue: Based on SAT? ACT? Your grade in high school? All of those?

Norwood: All of those. SATs, grades in high school, community involvement—all of that. You name it, I did it. So when you take a look at a student on paper, I probably looked pretty darn good to them in terms of a student.

DePue: I'm assuming that Valdosta is not a historically black college.

Norwood: Oh, not at all. And as a matter of fact, interestingly enough, several of my best friends went to historically black colleges.

DePue: Why wasn't that something that you considered?

Norwood: I think that their families could afford to send them to those colleges, and from my perspective, I didn't have a family who could afford to send me to one of those colleges. And I think as I thought about places that I wanted to go, I really wanted to go to a campus that was really integrated and be in that environment, because I told myself that was the real world that I would be going to work in. So I will say that I really didn't think long about historically black colleges at all, first and foremost from a financial perspective, but I also wanted a campus that was going to be more integrated.

DePue: Your major, you already said, was political science. Any other minors that you were looking into as well?

Norwood: Nope, nope, I was a political science major.

DePue: Okay, Felicia, then what are you going to do with a political science degree when you look for a job?

Norwood: (laughs) That was a great question, because I thought to myself, What am I going to do with a political science degree? I thought I might want to teach. I had a wonderful advisor at Valdosta—actually, he was the head of the political science department at the time—and I had some conversations with him back and forth on, What do you do with a political science degree? Now, my heart of hearts, I always wanted to be a lawyer. I just thought, Someday, I'm going to be a lawyer. But frankly, I had no money to pay to be a lawyer, so I kept thinking I was going to have to take some circuitous way to get money to be a lawyer.

So I had a conversation with the head of the political science department when I was getting close to graduation, and he said to me, "You know what? The University of Wisconsin has a great graduate program in political science. It's a program that leads into a PhD in political science, and with your grades, you shouldn't have a problem getting accepted." He suggested, "Think about Wisconsin, think about Michigan, think about Illinois." But he was a little bit biased towards Wisconsin because he had spent some time in Madison and thought Madison was terrific. I remember having this conversation with him in his office almost like it was yesterday. I said to him, "I've never left Georgia."

DePue: (laughs) I'm thinking myself that's a long way from Georgia.

Norwood: "I've never left Georgia. What do you mean, Wisconsin?" I go off to the library, I do a little research, and research Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois—all of which were really attractive. University of Wisconsin: I did the application, ended up getting accepted, and they gave me a full ride. I wouldn't have to pay a dime to start a program that was really going to allow me to get my Master's in political science, and if I wanted to stay in the program, stay and get a PhD, since I thought I might want to teach if law school didn't turn out to be a good option.

DePue: Full ride in tuition, or tuition and room and board?

Norwood: Both.

DePue: You must be thinking the citizens of Wisconsin are awfully generous.

Norwood: I thought they were very generous. But interestingly enough, I had a couple of schools that were very generous in terms of their financial aid programs.

DePue: Were you working at all while you were going to Valdosta?

Norwood: Oh, God, yes. I was doing work-study every day.

DePue: Paid position.

Norwood: Um-hm.

DePue: Work-study in what specifically?

Norwood: The admissions office, alumni affairs—you name it, I did it. But for the most part, I spent most of my time in the Student Government Association, alumni affairs office at Valdosta.

DePue: Any other extracurriculars?

Norwood: I pledged my sorority, so I was very active in my sorority. I was in student-government association—

DePue: Which sorority?

Norwood: Delta Sigma Theta.

DePue: Theta.

Norwood: Um-hm.

DePue: Was that a black sorority?

Norwood: Um-hm, public service sorority. They're big on most college campuses and focus on a lot of different public service initiatives, which was terrific. I pledged sorority my second year at university, so that was a lot of fun and gave me a chance to meet a lot of people, in sororities and fraternities of course.

DePue: I was going to ask, (Norwood laughs) you had to fit in some boys occasionally.

Norwood: There was room for boys. I dated seriously throughout my undergraduate life at Valdosta and was actually engaged, but I decided that I was going to leave and go to Wisconsin, and that really didn't fit into leaving and going to Wisconsin.

DePue: Does that mean your career goals were more important than that relationship at that time?

Norwood: Absolutely. That's an honest answer. (laughs)

DePue: Okay. Still in political science.

Norwood: Um-hm.

DePue: Where were you in terms of your own political views at that point in time?

Norwood: I would say still formative. I think realistically when you grow up in the town that I grew up in, the environment that I grew up in, **everybody** was a Democrat. Literally, there's no such thing, at least in my family circles or any circles of anybody that I know, as a Republican.

DePue: Both blacks and whites.

Norwood: Absolutely. I mean, come on, I'm in south Georgia, and Jimmy Carter's president, and everybody around us are Democrats. I won't necessarily say pretty liberal, but my ideas with respect to programs and services and politicians that I followed were pretty far on the left side—but not too far—of the political spectrum. So I don't think I ever gave any thought to anyone. And this was of course at a time when Georgia really didn't have Republicans. That's not today, (laughs) but certainly back then everyone around me was a Democrat. But it's not like I went to Wisconsin and was a member of the Young Democrats or something like that. Of course Wisconsin was a pretty—

DePue: I was going to say, did you know the reputation the University of Wisconsin had at the time?

Norwood: Absolutely not. That would have been fine, but I didn't necessarily go there thinking, Boy, you're going to one of the most liberal universities around by making this choice. The only thing I'm thinking is, I'm going to a place where they've offered to give me a full scholarship to get a graduate degree, which I thought was phenomenal. And the reputation of the school and particularly the political science department was excellent.

DePue: When did you arrive in Wisconsin?

Norwood: I graduated in either May or—I arrived in Wisconsin that same August.

DePue: Of 1981.

Norwood: Absolutely.

DePue: So now we have a different president. What'd you think of Ronald Reagan after he beat Jimmy Carter?

Norwood: I would say I probably think more highly of him today than I did then, which is why history is always one of those things that's much more generous.

DePue: Yeah, I can't imagine he would have been a popular figure at the University of Wisconsin.

Norwood: Not at all. Not at all. But Wisconsin was just a wonderful academic environment. I had not been much outside of Georgia to speak of. I think when I was in undergraduate school the Student Government Association might have gone over to Alabama a couple of times. I had a tiny little Honda Civic, and my family packed everything that I could possibly need into this little car. I got in my car and I drove to Madison, Wisconsin. So I had never seen snow, anything else—I take that back. When I was growing up, we may have had a little sprinkling of snow at one point, but I had never seen real snow until I arrived in Madison.

DePue: Any other surprises because you were at University of Wisconsin or because you were in Wisconsin?

Norwood: I think my apprehension when I first got to Wisconsin was, Oh my God, this is a **really big** school. Valdosta was a really good school, but this was a really good **big** school, so it's kind of like, Yeah, you did really good at Valdosta, but are you really ready to be at University of Wisconsin, and will it be different? There are all kinds of people that you draw out of Wisconsin that you don't necessarily draw out of Valdosta, so how will it be? It was definitely one of those environments where the professors were terrific. Just their whole way of teaching was so much less reserved than Valdosta. I mean, it wouldn't be unusual for you to be outside in Wisconsin, sitting under a tree talking about political science and those kinds of things. It was a terrific learning environment.

DePue: At that time were you still thinking, law school, that's the next step?

Norwood: After I had been there, I started thinking to myself, I really don't want to teach, so I know I don't want a PhD in political science. And I remember having a discussion with one of my professors there. I said to him, "You know, I'm really not sure I want to stay in this program and get a PhD." He said to me, "But why not? You're terrific; there are a lot of great opportunities." I said, "It's the research thing." I'm one of these people who likes to see things happen pretty quickly, which is why I tell people I probably would have never been a litigator, because it takes too long to see the results of what you're doing. So I said to him, "I'm not sure I really want to stay in a PhD program, write a dissertation and all of those things that go along with it." And he said to me, "Did you see this posting in the graduate student lounge?" I said, "No, what posting?" He said, "There's a posting in there for a year-long fellowship in state government in Illinois. Why don't you go in and take a look at it, and why don't we talk about it?" So I went into the graduate student lounge, and in the student lounge was a flyer about a program called the Dunn Fellowship Program. It's a year-long program in government in Illinois that gives you the ability to rotate through either a state agency, the Bureau of the Budget, and the governor's legislative office, or do something else, policy-related. I was at this thing where I didn't know if I wanted to teach, and he said, "You know what? Why don't you apply? It will give you a sense as to whether or not you want to do something in public policy in government, and then you could always come back here if it's not what you want." So literally I was going to go and apply and leave Wisconsin with very little risk that if I didn't like it I could always go back to Wisconsin.

DePue: What was the professor's name?

Norwood: I think it would have been Gormley.[4] So I did. I looked on the wall, I saw this year-long fellowship program in government, and I thought, Okay, that might be worth applying. I filled out the application and submitted the application. I think that may have been my first plane ride. (laughs) I had never been in an airplane before, so that could have been my first plane ride, from Wisconsin to Illinois.

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[4] William T. Gormley taught at the University of Wisconsin from 1980 to 1990 before moving to Georgetown.

DePue: While you were still in graduate school, was there any particular aspect of political science that you were more drawn to?

Norwood: No. I have to say, I like political science, public policy. I'm kind of a wonk when it comes to all of those things. I won't say that I like the legislative process, because I find it to be quite ugly, but—

DePue: (laughs) Like watching sausage being made.

Norwood: And you really don't want to watch sausage being made. But I remember him saying to me, "Illinois—how much more intriguing could you get from a political science, public policy perspective than what happens in a state like Illinois?"

DePue: "A state like Illinois." (Norwood laughs) You've got to provide a little bit of background to that comment.

Norwood: Illinois had its history of—

DePue: Was this 1982?

Norwood: Yeah, but Illinois had had a reputation of politics with a governor who didn't do too well. Dan Walker was obviously an Illinois governor who did not have a particularly good reputation, and—

DePue: I think that was before he was convicted and sent to jail.

Norwood: Um-hm. So it's one of those things where you think about it, it's always been a colorful place for politics. I would think from the Wisconsin perspective, that was more around the Chicago politics of Illinois and the kind of balance politically, as we used to talk about, when you have—I always find it interesting that state capitals are typically in places where you don't have the biggest population of people. So Springfield: Why else would anybody be in Springfield outside—it wouldn't be a place you would normally pick for your capital, so to speak. I think (unintelligible) larger city, How do you strike the balance between what happens in your urban areas versus the rural areas of your state? So it's always been one of those places where it's had much more interesting things happening politically than most places.

DePue: I'm going to take a break and fix my microphone here.

Norwood: You can.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Okay, we're back after a very quick break. When exactly did you get down to Springfield? I assume that's where you went.

Norwood: I did. I got accepted in this year-long fellowship program. I left Wisconsin and I moved to Springfield, Illinois.

DePue: Had you not yet finished your Master's degree?

Norwood: Finished my Master's degree.

DePue: How long did it take you to get—

Norwood: A year.

DePue: It's supposed to take two years, isn't it?

Norwood: At Wisconsin, Master's degree in political science in one year.

DePue: Does that mean you didn't have to write a Master's thesis?

Norwood: I did, but it wasn't like a big thesis; it was like one of these mini—I call them mini papers.

DePue: Then what was the job you landed once you went down to Springfield?

Norwood: I was in the year-long fellowship program in Springfield. I did a rotation between a state agency, the Bureau of the Budget, and the governor's legislative office. When you think about it, you break it up into a year, you were literally four months in each place. So four months I spent at the Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, old DCCA; four months I spent in the Bureau of the Budget; and four months I spent in the governor's legislative office, which is where I met Kirk Dillard and a range of other people in government.

DePue: This is going to put you on the spot: of the three, which one did you like the best?

Norwood: I would say the governor's legislative office and the Bureau of the Budget were very, very interesting, so they would almost be a net tie. My experience at DCCA was okay, but I thought it was one of those agencies that certainly just needed a lot of work. With a lot of state agencies in government, I think you find yourselves asking, What's the real mission of the department and what's the focus? It was one of those things where it was about bringing jobs and commerce and things of that sort into the state. But I think the agency struggled overall with respect to its mission. I will say I learned more about state government between the Bureau of the Budget and the legislative office than I did anywhere else.[5]

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[5] Peter B. Fox headed DCCA, Robert Mandeville was budget director, and Kirk Dillard served as Senate liaison (1982) and director of legislative affairs (1983) during Norwood's rotation.

DePue: This is when Jim Thompson is the governor.

Norwood: That's correct.

DePue: Did you get a chance to meet him?

Norwood: Absolutely.

DePue: Your impressions of Jim Thompson?

Norwood: He was kind of bigger than life. (DePue laughs) He was always someone that I found impressive in the sense that he seemed to be a quick study, seemed to pick up on things very quickly. When you saw him in settings, he was incredibly personable, had the ability to connect with people in a way that was very comfortable. Very smart. The people on his team were good people. Obviously I'm a little biased, since Paula Wolff turned out to be one of the people that I ended up meeting at the time. I actually later went to work for Paula after my year-long stint in the fellowship program. I went to work on the governor's program and policy staff, working with Paula.[6]

DePue: Is that right after the internship, then?

Norwood: Absolutely. There were eight or nine of us. I would say maybe half of us were from the state of Illinois, but the others came from other states—a person from North Carolina, one from Ohio—so we saw ourselves as… This was really quite an interesting program, because the whole purpose was to be able to attract all kinds of people into state government. So about half of us probably ended up staying and going to work in either an agency or somewhere else in state government. I ended up going to work for Paula on the governor's policy staff.

DePue: I'm assuming you saw yourself at that time, if you were to make a political affiliation, as a Democrat?

Norwood: I would say at that time, it certainly would have been. Absolutely. But when we were asked to apply to the program, no one ever asked whether we were Democrats or Republicans. When I went to work for Jim Edgar, no one even asked me if I was a Democrat or a Republican, which is one of the things that I found quite striking.

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[6] Wolff had a keen eye for administrative talent, and she served as an important link between the Edgar and Thompson administrations through the people she helped bring into government. For assessments of her ability and the work of the program staff, see Jess McDonald, September 3, 2010, 48-50; Joan Walters, July 15, 2009, 17-26; and Jim Reilly, August 11, 2009, 21. All 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. For a useful outside perspective on the program staff's role in the Thompson administration, see Jeff Brody, "Thompson's Staff: Conflict and Consensus," *Illinois Issues* (October 1987), 10-14, http://www.lib.niu.edu/1987/ii871010.html.

DePue: What about all this thought about going to law school?

Norwood: I couldn't afford it! (DePue laughs) So when I got to work there I already had my plan. My plan was to work for two to three years, and then I would be able to afford to go law school.

DePue: You mean work and save every penny you could possibly save.

Norwood: I worked and saved every penny I could possibly save, which was why staying in Springfield was so important, because you could stay in Springfield at a very reasonable cost of living and be able to save enough money to help me get myself to law school.

DePue: Here's a young girl from Camilla, Georgia—tiny little Camilla, Georgia—then you had Madison for a year, and now Springfield. What did you think of Springfield as a community?

Norwood: I liked Springfield. I tell people Springfield was kind of like that bridge for me. It was a nice-enough-sized city. You had a population that wasn't Chicago, but was a very nice-sized city. To me, you felt like you could get your arms around Springfield. I felt very comfortable in Springfield. Found a church there that I liked and people that I liked and worked with the folks that had been in the fellowship program with me; several of them stayed. So I enjoyed Springfield. For a political town with the state capital, I thought Springfield was terrific.

DePue: It also has a reputation of having racial difficulty or racial challenges. It always has, ever since the early 1900s, really. Your impressions of that?

Norwood: I'll say I didn't experience it when I lived in Springfield. As a matter of fact, I got very active in the graduate chapter of my sorority, so I spent time with people that were both black and white and felt very comfortable in settings when I was with same-orientation—you know, a group of black people, a group of white people—or a group of people who were integrated. I can honestly say during the entire time I was in Springfield I never experienced it.

DePue: Anything else that surprised you about working in government that you hadn't expected in these three positions, especially the Bureau of the Budget and the legislative liaison?

Norwood: I think it was probably the unveiling of how things really got done. I spent a lot of time, now thinking back over it, in that whole sausage-making process.

DePue: I was going to say, is this something of a rude awakening?

Norwood: I won't say rude, but it was certainly crystallizing for me that sometimes good ideas don't happen if you don't have the proponents to make them happen. There are individuals who, despite the fact that they might have great ideas, don't have the ability to properly work them politically in order to get the buy-in for them to really take place. It was really a learning process for me over the time of being there and being able to **work** the relationships constantly. I mean, relationships are just so critical, and being able to work those relationships **constantly**, that allowed anyone to be able to get anything done.

DePue: I'm assuming fall of '82 would have been your initial arrival there, so did you have a chance to see a little more close up that 1982 election campaign for governor and the constitutional officers?

Norwood: I didn't. I was there, but I wasn't at a level in terms of my role to be actively involved in what was going on, to be able to see it up close and personal. My up close and personal view of a real election didn't come until I was working in the Edgar administration and was on his team at the time he was running for re-election, because you were literally right there, front and center, with everything that was going on.

DePue: The reason I was asking was because that election in 1982 was the first one where you no longer had multi-member districts and the cumulative voting process—that bizarre side of Illinois politics, if you will, though everyone looks back nostalgically at it right now. So you weren't able to observe any of the dynamics there?

Norwood: No, I really wasn't.

DePue: The position that you ended up with after the internship, what was that?

Norwood: It was on what Paula called the program staff. If you think about it, it was in the sense that you became the person within the governor's office who was kind of the program policy person working with certain departments. Jess McDonald was there at the time as well. Jess and I worked very close together then, which is how we actually got to know each other. Jess really was the senior person on Paula's team working on a lot of the human service agencies, and I was the junior person on the team working closely with Jess. So I'm still the newbie at this point from a program policy perspective, and working very closely with the governor's office and Jess and the team on different initiatives in human services. A very interesting time when you think about being able to learn and work along someone like Jess and the other people on the team who really had a lot of experience in government. I was definitely still young and learning a whole lot. I considered myself then, and even today, kind of a sponge; I soak up almost everything that's going on around me. I learned a lot from working with Jess, and Paula particularly.

DePue: Tell us a little bit more about Paula, then—her personality, her management style.

Norwood: I consider her probably the smartest person I ever worked with in government because she knows so much about a lot of things. I tell people all the time, when I think about the kind of person you want to emulate in terms of their work ethic, ability to work with a vast array of people, becoming a student of the process, really having strategic thinking and strong analytics, and then having the ability to get things done, to me, it's Paula Wolff. I think she's probably one of the best things that ever happened to government. There were so many people that I worked with who were on Paula's team. She taught me a lot of what I know about government. But she has the ability to tackle even big issues and break them down in such a way that you can kind of segregate the pieces, put them back together, and come up with a solution. Now, we did have a running kind of mantra of "Solve no problem before its time" (laughter) in government, because there seemed to have been definitely no urgency around getting a lot of this done. But if you were to ask me two people who I worked with in state government who spent a lot of time helping me learn government and shaping my understanding of many of the issues, it would probably be Paula Wolff and Mike Lawrence.

DePue: I'm not surprised by the second name either. We'll get to Mike a little bit later here. Was the relationship you had with Paula something of a mentor–mentored relationship?

Norwood: Unofficially, yes, because Paula's the type of person where, when I actually moved back to Chicago in February of last year, one of the first people I thought of about picking up the phone and calling to have lunch with was Paula Wolff. That's just because over the years she's been someone who has provided sound counsel on a number of different things. I find you can take so many things that you learn from Paula with you later on in life. But her ability to navigate both sides of the aisle I always found terrific. She could have great conversations with Democrats, great conversations with Republicans, had the ability to get things done, had incredible amount of respect among a number of people. There were plenty of people who liked her or didn't like her, but I think you found very few people who didn't respect her ability to get things done and be extremely knowledgeable on a range of policy issues and government. But yes, I would certainly say for me, when I think about the person who was probably one of my key mentors in government, it was Paula.

DePue: I think probably the timing is a little bit off here, but I know another person who Paula really had a powerful impact on was Joan Walters. Did you know Joan at that time?

Norwood: I didn't know Joan until I went to work for Jim Edgar. I knew about Joan because Joan's name frequently came up as someone who Paula had worked with before, but I didn't know Joan. I think at the time I was there, that could have been the time that Joan was in Seattle. So I didn't really meet Joan until I went to work for Jim Edgar.

DePue: Can you tell us any of the big issues? You talked about the big issues that she would often tackle. What were the big issues at that time that were being discussed, that were being analyzed?

Norwood: Obviously DCFS has always been a big issue. The state's foster care system has been a very challenging issue for some period of time, the state's mental health system. So I would say Children and Family Services, Department of Mental Health. Facilities: should you keep them open, should you close them? What should be state government's role in the mental health system? You had a lot of facilities that were closed because we went through challenges all the time around the kind of programming that was provided in our state institutions. So tackling those kinds of issues was very difficult, particularly in an environment where you always had, like you do today, the community activists who firmly believe that individuals would certainly be much better off in their communities and closer to their families and closer to home. At the same time, the cost of taking care of them in institutions continued to go up. But it's not like you have places where you can immediately move everyone into the community. Building community-based facilities takes time. That was certainly, I think, kind of the beginning of that transition.

DePue: This is specifically for the mental health arena?

Norwood: Absolutely. And you then had those issues later on with senior citizens, whether or not you should have them in nursing facilities and things of that sort, or should you do more of community living facilities where individuals would be able to stay in their homes. The child welfare system has been a challenge for all administrations because you are frequently asking the question a number of ways: whether or not you should be reunifying families or having more of a time period for a family to come together. Do you get to that point where you say reunification and keeping the family together isn't going to be what you can do? And then what do you do to prepare for those circumstances where you have a foster care system that continues to grow and expand? How many chances do people get? So those are really big public policy issues that literally started coming up during the time I was in the program staff and working with Jess; they certainly were still there and even magnified by the time I went back to government in the Edgar administration. You almost say to yourself, These issues never go away; they just reappear in various reincarnations at different magnitudes, at different levels, depending in some respects on what's going on environmentally, in the economy, around whether or not people have places to live, whether or not people have jobs, whether or not they have the ability to take care of their families. So they don't go away. In some respects I think that always was for me the challenge. Even when I was trying to decide whether I would stay after the first four years, I said to myself, What will be new? The issues I felt had come back even during the Edgar administration were only a different variation of some of the same issues that had been there in the Thompson administration.

DePue: You just mentioned, "If I were to come back after the first four years." Now, are you jumping ahead and talking about the four years at the beginning of the Edgar administration?

Norwood: Yeah, I was going to say, I left after the first four years. I didn't—

DePue: Okay. You're a little bit ahead of where I wanted to be, but that's fine. That's the nature of these interviews, quite frankly. You mentioned Jess McDonald several times in this. I suspect you're aware that we've interviewed Jess as well about his tenure as the director of Children and Family Services during the Edgar administration. But during the Thompson administration—you might disagree with this—DCFS was essentially broke. It was just kind of bumping along, just barely making it. The reason I say that is because towards the end of the Thompson years, there was an ACLU lawsuit that—

Norwood: Um-hm. Consent decree, absolutely.[7]

DePue: Consent decree. So let's go back to fighting that as one of the big issues. Here's a broke agency where the amount of caseload far exceeds what the caseworkers can deal with, where we're just not taking care of these foster kids well. Remember how you and Paula and Jess were wrestling with those particular issues?

Norwood: You know, I do. I do think in many respects a lot of time was spent trying to figure out what could be done. I guess one of the things that happens, Mark, is sometimes when you have the benefit of history, you look back and you say to yourself, Why did everybody feel we needed to fight it for so long? Because obviously something needed to be done. But I think it's very—

DePue: What was the "it" that you were fighting?

Norwood: I think in many respects, when you get sued, the natural inclination of some people is to figure out, Okay, what can we do to kind of protect ourselves? In some respects, sometimes you might need to step back and say—and what eventually happened—what can everybody get in the room and agree on that we **can** do to change where we are today? Sometimes it takes litigation to make things happen in a very different way. When you think about the environment from a policy perspective, you're having to deal with an appropriations process where you have competing needs from DCFS and senior citizens and Mental Health and a number of other agencies, all of which need the resources of the state, and an environment where trying to have the resources to support programs gets to be a real challenge. Sometimes it takes the kind of litigation that occurred to make the progress that needed to be made, because in some respects, I think you had a system that had grown significantly. Funding certainly didn't keep pace with the needs that were there in taking care of the families, the programs, the caseworkers—a number of different things that needed to happen in order to make DCFS work. But you're also talking about more and more kids who are coming into an already burdened child welfare system.

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[7] 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. McDonald interview, September 3, 2010, and October 4, 2010; Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 29, 2009, 89-90.

DePue: Is that what you meant by saying a system that was growing?

Norwood: Absolutely.

DePue: What was it that was going on in society or Illinois at that time that was causing that?

Norwood: You know what? You look back and you don't know. But there were periods of unemployment, a number of different things that you see happen, and you end up with child welfare systems that certainly grow during periods of economic challenges. So it's always been a mystery to many, although I'm sure there are many people at universities who take a look at those environmental factors to determine whether or not you see significant increases in case loads in child welfare systems during certain periods of unemployment and other things that were happening at the time. The system was growing, not just here, but in all kinds of places. It actually takes money to be able to support that kind of growth. That typically means caseworkers and a number of other things, and we certainly needed more of them.

DePue: What kind of hours were you working at this time?

Norwood: We worked long hours. They weren't as long as the hours I worked in the Edgar administration, but the years in the Thompson administration were pretty long hours, depending on the time of the year. The legislative session hours are typically longer than other periods of the year.

DePue: You were working on some things that maybe at that time almost looked intractable. How do you figure this stuff out? Was this a challenging experience for you? Was this a rewarding experience for you?

Norwood: Extremely rewarding. I spent eight years in public service, and when I benchmark that against almost every other position that I've had, the years I spent in public service were some of the most rewarding years I spent anywhere. I used to say to people, I think everybody should have to spend a couple of years just to understand the issues, because optically, things look one way; they look completely different when you are literally watching the sausage-making process. (DePue laughs) It really does.

DePue: You suggested before that it wasn't something you'd normally like to do.

Norwood: (laughs) **You** don't like to do it, but it certainly gives you a much better appreciation as to how it all comes together. It really does.

DePue: Were your political views evolving at all at this time?

Norwood: Yeah, and they have continued to evolve. During the time I was in the Thompson administration, I think I continued to be probably more Democratic-leaning in terms of some of the solutions that I thought should be available to address problems. I don't think that I had a great appreciation for that whole balance between resources and revenue, and programs and policy, until I spent four years in the Edgar administration.

DePue: This timeframe you're working in the Thompson administration would be the '83 to '86 timeframe?

Norwood: That's correct. I left in August of '86.

DePue: So we're talking about the middle of the Reagan years; we're talking about a timeframe when the political lines at the national level in terms of what it means to be a Republican, what it means to be a Democrat, what it means to be liberal versus conservative, are really kind of crystallizing much more so than maybe they had in the '60s and '70s. Were you feeling that as well or have an understanding of what that meant at the time?

Norwood: I understood what it meant. I almost felt that I was sometimes in no-man's-land, because in some respects you certainly had to tackle the issues in a way that left others believing that you were interested in spending a whole bunch of money. At the same time, I knew that money wasn't the solution to a lot of the issues that we were trying to tackle; that fundamentally, you had to have much broader solutions, and in some respects, government involvement in tackling those solutions, than what some of us wanted to do. But at the same time, it was one of those things where I looked and I said to myself, You know what? I don't really belong in one camp or the other. I always felt that I straddled the middle far too often in terms of crystallizing my own political perspective around what needed to be done.

DePue: You're working with government on very difficult problems—mental health issues, child welfare issues. Would it be correct to say that you definitely did see a role for government to play in solving those problems?

Norwood: Absolutely, absolutely. And that's why I will say I kind of straddled this, because you see a role for government. But at the same time, it's not always one of those things of saying more money is going to solve all of those problems. It's a mix of a number of things that you needed to take a look at to solve some of those issues.

DePue: Let's get back to your personal aspirations here (Norwood laughs) because there are two different things, and I suspect I know the answer to both. One is dealing with law school, but the other is: You're hanging around all these politicians and people who are in public service. Do you have your own political aspirations?

Norwood: None.

DePue: Why not?

Norwood: I think that we all sometimes underestimate what it takes to live in that world. Frankly, I tell people all the time I think I'm almost far too candid to be a politician. I'm a pretty straight shooter around what I think, and I'm pretty good about expressing it. I think a lot of times, I'm just not sure how ready the public is to hear the kind of things that you need to tell them about the reality of what we're facing. That was one of the challenges I saw very clearly in the Edgar administration. I admire people who are politicians, but I don't think that I'm one who could do it myself, personally.

DePue: But part of the attributes of being a successful politician is being competitive. Do you see yourself as competitive?

Norwood: Very.

DePue: Another one would be ambitious. Do you see yourself as being ambitious?

Norwood: Absolutely.

DePue: So how do you channel those things into a career? Going back to law school? Is that where that comes back in?

Norwood: That's exactly where it came back in. That was going to be my new challenge because, as I said, I always wanted to go. There was nothing particularly that was going to stand in my way, because I thought, I'm going to save up enough money, and then I'm going to apply to law school, and I'm going to be out of here in a couple of years. '86 was my little timeframe for leaving and going back.

DePue: Then what's the attraction for you of going to law school, of being a lawyer?

Norwood: I'm someone who likes having options. I still think that a law degree is the most versatile degree of anything that's out there. Lawyers do a number of different things, some of which are politicians as well. (laughs) But it was always one of those things where I said to myself, First and foremost, if I ever get to the point where I don't want to work for anyone, I always want the ability to hang out my own shingle. I knew I couldn't be a doctor, so I wasn't going to be a medical professional. So what was it—

DePue: Why couldn't you be a doctor?

Norwood: I never had that tolerance for bloody. (DePue laughs) Anything bloody just wasn't working for me. It gets back—almost psychologically, I tell myself, from the time I was growing up—I always wanted the ability to take care of myself. No matter what else happened in life, I had to have the ability to take care of myself. I thought if I went to law school I could always take care of myself by going into law and practicing law, even if that meant doing it on my own. That was going to be my anchor professionally at any point in life, giving myself the option to say, I can go it alone if I need to. And I still feel that way today. I tell people that, and I firmly believe that.

DePue: What were your mother and your grandmother saying about your aspirations, what you were doing, being away from home?

Norwood: I think when I was working in the Thompson administration, my mother used to frequently say, "I really don't understand what you do. What is that job that you do there?" It wasn't like one of those things where you can say, Oh, my daughter is a teacher or my daughter does this. She said to me, "If you had gone to Wisconsin and gotten a PhD I could say, Oh, she's a teacher, or something like that, but I really don't understand, what is that kind of political science, program staff thing that you really do?" I think I always said to my mother that the plan was, I'm really going to go to law school; just give me some time to make it happen and you'll eventually be able to tell somebody that your daughter's a lawyer. So I'm getting there, but it's just going to take some time to get there. She said okay. The thing is, she never really grilled me a whole lot because I always took care of myself. I mean, literally, from the time I left and went to undergraduate school, I was completely, pretty much self-sufficient. It's not like I ever asked for a dime of support or anything. I made it work through student loans, scholarships—kind of a combination of all of that—but I never asked my mother for monetary support because I knew she couldn't afford to give it to me. She would try to give it to me if she could, but I never asked. I knew I needed to be able to do it myself.

DePue: How were the other sisters doing?

Norwood: My other sisters did terrific. They all went to college too, and took care of themselves. They all do great today. All five of us ended up going to college. So I set a pretty decent example, I guess.

DePue: During this time that you had your excursion up to places like Wisconsin and Illinois, were you able to get back home occasionally?

Norwood: Always.

DePue: Christmas?

Norwood: Always went home twice a year. Always went home at least once for Mother's Day, and always went home for Thanksgiving. Christmas, I didn't particularly go home because it was only like one day, but you typically had a little time for Thanksgiving. So I would go home at least two times a year.

DePue: Does that mean that Thanksgiving was the big holiday gathering?

Norwood: Thanksgiving's a **huge** holiday gathering in my family, and we have a **big** family. My mother is one of eleven or twelve, and almost all of my aunts are all back in South Georgia. So when you get all of us together—I think I'm one of thirty-five grandkids or something—you get my family together; you have a **huge** family. My poor husband now, if he takes a vacation and goes home with me, he's overwhelmed (DePue laughs) because my family is so large. But Thanksgiving is **really big** in our family; almost everybody comes together for Thanksgiving every year, even now.

DePue: You mentioned your husband, but that's coming quite a way down the road yet.

Norwood: Ah, yes, yes, yes.

DePue: So where are you with your social life during the time you're working with Paula in Springfield?

Norwood: I had a great social life. The people that were in the fellowship program were all there. We had our own little group that would get together and—

DePue: I imagine some of these people were trying to set you up.

Norwood: (laughs) That happened quite often. That happened quite often. But I had a great social life.

DePue: But still, law school is out there?

Norwood: Law school was going to happen.

DePue: How did you select a law school?

Norwood: I applied to Harvard and Yale.

DePue: If you're going to go to law school—

Norwood: Hey, if you're going to aim, aim high, right? So I applied to Harvard and Yale. I just always thought that if I applied to Harvard and Yale and I did great, I should hopefully get in. So I applied to law school and got accepted at Harvard first and thought, Oh my God, I got accepted at Harvard; of course I will go to Harvard. I want to say it was either the week, or the week after I got accepted at Harvard, I got accepted at Yale. So I decided I should visit to make up my mind about which one I should attend. I flew to Boston and visited Harvard; I found it a little bit cold and impersonal, not exactly warm.

But I said to myself, Hey, it's Harvard. It's a big place, you know. Unfortunately I think I went during the time they were in the middle of final exams, so the students were a little bit dispersed and not around; it was hard to be able to find someone to give you information about the law school and connect with you. So I went to Boston and I thought, Okay, it's Harvard, you couldn't go wrong.

I got in the car and drove from Boston down to New Haven, Connecticut. I got to New Haven, and they were also in the middle of exams. I walked into the registrar's office, and there was this nicest little lady at the registrar's office behind the counter, and she said to me, "Well, honey, this is final exams, there are not a lot of students around, but, oh, by the way, maybe one of the deans might be here and they could spend some time talking to you." The dean of admissions was a guy by the name of James Thomas, Dean Thomas. She goes around the corner, comes back, and there's Dean Thomas: "Hello, how are you? Welcome to New Haven. Welcome to Yale. We think Yale would be a terrific place for you," blah, blah, blah. He talks to me for quite a while. Then the dean of the law school happens to be passing by—his name was Guido Calabresi. Guido stops by and says, "Hello, hello, hello. If you're looking for law school, there is no greater law school than Yale. Yale is terrific," blah, blah, blah, has this wonderful conversation, goes on and on. Dean Thomas said something to me like, "You know, I have a meeting, but I'm not busy right now. Why don't I show you around?" So he shows me around. Here he is, walking me around, peeks his head in the door and talks to a couple of faculty. Before I know it, I left New Haven and I said to myself, I'm coming to Yale. This has to be the nicest group of people I have ever met. For the dean and the dean to have time to say hello, chat, tell me what they thought about Yale, this will be a place where I won't be number six hundred and something, I'll be one of 171. So, that was it.

DePue: But somebody they knew personally.

Norwood: Absolutely. I loved it. It was terrific. And I went to Yale.

DePue: What kind of financial support did you get at Yale?

Norwood: I had a lot of student loans, and I had a couple of grants, but mostly student loans.

DePue: I would think that compared to Valdosta, and even maybe University of Wisconsin, the bills coming in here might be a little bit steep.

Norwood: They were very steep, very steep. But the one thing that every student I talked with told me is that you'll never have trouble paying them back because you're not going to have trouble getting a job. Which was true.

DePue: Were you a little bit different than some of the other law students at the time?

Norwood: Yale definitely has a group of students who are incredibly affluent, but Yale also has a number of different students who don't particularly come from wealthy backgrounds. I think they get a pretty diverse student body, economically and otherwise. I think my class had around 170 or so students; there may have been about seventeen of us that were African Americans in my class.

DePue: But I was also thinking you might have been a little older than some of the students.

Norwood: Yes, but interestingly enough, a woman who became my best friend, who was across the hallway from me—

DePue: Her name?

Norwood: Her name was Sandy—at the time, Sandy Dunn. Her name is now Sandra Robertson. She had taught high school in the New York public schools as an English teacher, and she had come back to law school. I met her, and she was a few years older, quite a few years older, than I am, because I want to say she just turned sixty this year. So Yale has a way of attracting a range of students. Sure, they're mostly young and right out of undergraduate school, but they also have a lot of other interesting students who've worked before, who've done some interesting things, and they mix it up a little bit from the traditional law student that you see.

DePue: Was it an advantage for you that you'd been in this little incubator of Illinois politics and working for people like Paula Wolff and meeting some other folks?

Norwood: I wouldn't say that. I think it was helpful that what I brought to the table wasn't just an experience that was from undergraduate school into law school; that I had spent some time working and actually spent some time doing things that weren't the traditional student. I think that made probably for an attractive mix in terms of a résumé pool for the law school.

DePue: I would assume that by this time, when you get to law school, you had a pretty clear idea of what kind of law you wanted to practice and maybe even what kind of law you did not want to practice.

Norwood: I did not want to be a litigator; I knew that. When you grow up, the vision everybody has in mind is you're Perry Mason and all of this other kind of stuff.[8] I **knew** I didn't want to be a litigator. It takes too long for anything to happen. I thought I wanted to do something in corporate law, and that was probably going to be something on the transaction side. But I definitely knew

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[8] Perry Mason was a fictional attorney featured in a series of detective novels, radio and television shows, and movies between the 1930s and the 1960s. Raymond Burr played the most popular version of Mason in the *Perry Mason* television show (1957-1966).

I didn't want to be a litigator. Now, interestingly enough, Yale produces **lots** of teachers. Many of the faculty at law schools across the country are trained at Yale, because many students who go to Yale end up clerking and then going on to be judges, and many of them actually go into academia and end up teaching.

DePue: You had already eliminated that from your—

Norwood: I knew I didn't want to do that, either.

DePue: That also includes not wanting to clerk?

Norwood: I didn't want to clerk either.

DePue: But I would think that's part of that competitive drive that those—

Norwood: It's interesting, because I think a lot of people that I went to Yale with ended up clerking. After the first year, everybody goes through this crazy interview process; many students are looking at judgeships, and some are looking at all kinds of things they're going to do during that summer after the first year of law school. I had no interest in doing that. I think by the time you've spent some time out of school, you do start to crystallize in your own mind what you want to do and what you don't do, and you're not in a search process anymore. By the time I went back to law school, I wasn't still in some search process to figure out what it was I wanted to do when I grew up. I had already spent a little bit of time growing up, so I wasn't still in that kind of discovery phase.

DePue: You knew that you wanted to go back to government in some capacity?

Norwood: I absolutely did **not** want to go back to government, (DePue laughs) which is the irony. Absolutely did **not** want to go back to government. As a matter of fact, I kept saying to myself: I'm going to law school, I'm going to leave law school, I'm going to go practice law, and I'm going to be a happy corporate lawyer. That is what I wanted to do. I had no intentions of going back to government.

DePue: Why not?

Norwood: I had been there and done that, is what I said to everyone, and I had no interest in going back. Not to mention, I was leaving law school with a boatload of debt, so why on earth would I have an interest in going back to public service once again and taking a pay cut? That was not in the plan at all.

DePue: You said you didn't want to be a litigator because the process was just too long; it takes too long. I'm thinking to myself, Okay, what, being in government, doesn't take too long? (laughter)

Norwood: Government was not in my plans at all, Mark. I had no intentions of going back to government.

DePue: Was there any particular type of law or any particular course that really struck your fancy, that really got you jazzed?

Norwood: I loved all of my corporate law classes. I loved contracts. It's just like being able to take a document and dive into it and dissect it and figure out what you want to do and what you needed to do, what you didn't want to do—something I still do today even with my team here. But I loved all the classes I took in corporate. I thought they were absolutely terrific. So I was certainly gravitating towards doing something in the corporate area.

DePue: You got your law degree in 1989, is that right?

Norwood: Yes.

DePue: And I assume you then had to decide where you wanted to practice law.

Norwood: Um-hm.

DePue: How did you make that decision? Part of that is you've got to pass the bar exam in whatever states you choose, right?

Norwood: Oh, that's a piece of cake.

DePue: Oh.

Norwood: (laughs) At least you think so. You know, you say to yourself, Come on. You get a job. After my first summer, I worked at a law firm here, Hopkins & Sutter. Actually I ended up at Hopkins & Sutter because I came back and was going through an interview process, interviewed with lots of law firms, and while I was here, I called up Paula. I said, "Paula, I'm interviewing at all of these law firms. You know a lot about law firms"—

DePue: All in Chicago.

Norwood: All in Chicago. This is after my first year, so I was coming back to work after my first year.

DePue: So something about being in Illinois must have…

Norwood: I thought I wanted to be either in Illinois or New York. After my second year I actually worked at a law firm in New York. So I did New York and Chicago to try to get a comparison.

DePue: As an intern?

Norwood: Yeah. A summer associate is what they call it. I did Illinois because I thought I would all likelihood choose between Chicago and New York City. So I came out—I interviewed with maybe four firms—to do the round-robin. In some respects it is kind of a round-robin, it's kind of a formality, because they all descend on the campus at Yale; you interview with quite a few, and they all say, "Come and interview with us at the end of the summer." So you go out and try to interview at the different places.

I called up and said to Paula, "Look, I don't know anything about these law firms other than what the students say about them," because the students all come back after they've worked there for the summer [and say], "Don't go here, don't go there." I said, "But you know these firms, so tell me what you think about them." They were all the biggies. She said, "They're all good, but why don't you go interview at this law firm called Hopkins & Sutter?" I said, "I haven't heard of that one." She said, "Oh, I think you'd like it. The firm is headed by a guy by the name of Jerry Marsh. Why don't you go and speak with them?" I said, "I don't really know anybody over there. I've been to Sidley & Austin and I've been to Mayer Brown, and I honestly was kind of choosing between Sidley and Mayer Brown." And she said, "Oh, go over and talk to them." So she called him up and she set up some time. I went over and I met with him, and he arranged some time for me to talk to two other partners when I was there. So I headed here thinking that I was going to think about either Mayer Brown or Sidley & Austin. By the time the interview process was over, I was pretty much deciding that I was going to go to Hopkins & Sutter.

DePue: Now, I confess that I've watched too many movies, and this part of the whole process, where they're almost competing for you—

Norwood: They do.

DePue: —and promising you the world, that's the way it was?

Norwood: That was the way it was.

DePue: That must be kind of a heady experience.

Norwood: It's a great experience. It's a great experience. That was the process here; that was the process in New York as well. So I ended up working at Hopkins & Sutter, and it was a very good experience—very rewarding, liked the lawyers that I worked with, liked the work, had really interesting work. Then I went back to law school for the next year and the year after that. In the summer I worked in New York City; New York City was a lot of fun too, and I thought, Oh my God, this can be terrific.

DePue: Oh, so this is even while you're in law school, and then in the summertime you're experiencing this.

Norwood: Absolutely. Because that's how you make up your mind. Once you're done with your third year, you essentially have to make a decision between your first year's experience, that summer, and the second summer experience. So you're essentially comparing your two summer experiences to make a decision.

DePue: What kind of law was Hopkins & Sutter doing?

Norwood: Everything that everybody does, so they had a corporate practice, they had a litigation practice. I worked with some lawyers in the corporate practice. So I came to work at Hopkins & Sutter. In the choice between New York and Chicago, I picked Chicago.

DePue: What was your original assignment with Hopkins & Sutter?

Norwood: I worked with a group of lawyers in banking and another group of lawyers who were in public finance. The group of lawyers in the banking side were really terrific, sharp, and smart. The banking practice was actually pretty significant because Jerry Marsh had spent some time over the years cultivating a lot of banking clients. He was a wonderful person, great person to work with. He and the team of lawyers that were at Hopkins, I couldn't say enough good things about them. They gave me a number of really good experiences and paired me up with some terrific partners and associates. So definitely the corporate practice.

DePue: So here's this girl from Camilla, Georgia, who spent some time in Madison and Springfield and thought they were big places at the time, and now you're living in Chicago. Did you live in Chicago, downtown?

Norwood: I lived in Chicago, downtown. Four hundred East Randolph was my first address, which was right down Randolph Street before the S-curve does its little change. I thought it was terrific. Chicago, for me, was a big city. Although the summer I spent in New York was probably the first time I had been in a really, really, really big city for a summer experience; that was really heady, because New York firms do things on steroids (DePue laughs) compared to what Chicago firms do. You definitely get the summer associate experience of a lifetime, for better or worse, in terms of hours—because you're working long hours—but also in terms of entertainment. So New York was a really terrific experience as well.

DePue: Then why did you end up in Chicago?

Norwood: Chicago feels manageable. New York to me is almost too much. I just came back to Chicago after four years in New York. I spent the last four years in New York for my company before coming back here in February of last year. But New York felt really big to me at the time, and Chicago felt comfortable to me. So even though Chicago was a big city, in some respects it feels small in the sense that you have kind of a cadre of people that you work with and friends that you connect with over time. It felt very manageable to me. There was something about the proximity of living down on Randolph Street, and the firm was right on Madison, so I literally had less than a fifteen-minute walk and I was at work every morning.

DePue: Did you have a car at the time?

Norwood: I still had my little old Honda Civic from a long time ago. (DePue laughs) So yes, I still had a car at the time. But soon after I got here, I decided that it didn't make a lot of sense when I was living right in downtown.

DePue: So sold the Civic, huh?

Norwood: I sold the Civic.

DePue: Because parking…

Norwood: (laughs) Exactly.

DePue: It wasn't too long after that, though, that you got a call from the Edgar folks, I assume. Can you walk us through that? Did you know Jim Edgar before that time?

Norwood: No. I was reading about him, obviously, but personally, I had never met him.

DePue: Do you have any idea how you showed up on their radar screen?

Norwood: I was told that it was probably a combination of Kirk Dillard and Paula Wolff in terms of how my name surfaced as someone to take a look at for joining the administration.

DePue: Paula was involved with the transition team, right?

Norwood: Uh-huh.

DePue: And was Kirk Dillard as well?

Norwood: I don't know what Kirk's role was, but Kirk obviously was working very closely with the administration. I got the call from Jerry Marsh at Hopkins & Sutter that he had been called by the Edgar administration about me taking a look at a role there. So he called me. I actually happened to be in Wichita, Kansas, with one of the lawyers from the law firm. (laughs) I was in Wichita, Kansas, and I remember getting a call from him and Sam Vinson. Sam Vinson was a former legislator who was then working at Hopkins & Sutter.[9] The two of them said, "When you come back to Chicago, we'd like to talk to you because we have a call from the Edgar administration people that they'd like to talk to you."

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[9] After working as an aide to U.S. Rep. Edward Madigan and as Thompson's House legislative liaison, Sam J. Vinson (R-Clinton) entered the Illinois House in 1978 when he was appointed to fill John Lauer's (R-Broadwell) vacant seat in the 44th Legislative District. He served in the Illinois House through 1986, including

DePue: Was this before he had actually been inaugurated?

Norwood: Yes.

DePue: Were you involved at all in the transition team?

Norwood: Nothing. No involvement in transition team, knew nothing about any of them.

DePue: Well, now this is derailing your plans here of—

Norwood: Totally derailing my plans! Totally derailing my plans. I, who has no interest in going back to state government, all of a sudden, there is this conversation that I am supposed to be having with the Edgar people. I don't really know Jim Edgar other than what I've read about him, but know really none of the people involved in this, with the exception of—I obviously know Kirk and I know Joan Walters That's it; I'm the outsider.

DePue: But you didn't say, "No, I'm not interested."

Norwood: I did, actually. I remember Jerry Marsh said to me, "Before you say no, at least think about it." And I said, "Okay, I'll think about it, but I still don't think I'm going to be interested." (laughs)

DePue: Was that before actually sitting down for an interview?

Norwood: That's correct. My initial reaction was that I was definitely not interested. Not interested at all. Did not want to go back to state government. I had just spent three years in law school. I basically was trying to pay back student loans and didn't think I wanted to go back to state government and take a pay cut and do state government all over again.

DePue: Then tell us a little bit about the interview itself. Who did you interview with?

Norwood: It was almost not like an interview. I had a conversation with the governor.

DePue: You went down to Springfield?

Norwood: I flew down to Springfield. A group of people from the team who were going to be working in the administration were going to be taking a state plane from Meigs Field that weekend. I was told that I would be able to fly down with this group of people to Springfield, and then they were going to be coming back that evening. This was during the time they were trying to figure out all

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a four-year stint as assistant minority leader, before leaving for his successful career as a lawyer and lobbyist. *Illinois Issues* (April 1977), 29; (March 1987), 28; and (May 1995), 11.

of the things around: What did the budget look like, what were they really going to be coming in with in the administration? There were people on the airplane who were going to be flying down. I showed up at Meigs Field, and the plane was there. They all knew each other because they had all spent some time working together on the campaign. They all were very close and chatting about different things, and I didn't know who any of them were. So I hopped on the plane and flew down to Springfield.

DePue: You don't strike me as being shy, though.

Norwood: I wasn't particularly shy, but I was clearly the outsider because they had obviously spent months and months and months working together on the campaign, so there was this familiarity that they all had with each other. I wasn't, obviously, a part of the group; I was the new face in the group that was flying down.[10]

DePue: And it's Governor-elect Edgar who you have the conversation with?

Norwood: I had a conversation with Jim Edgar. He said something to me—I don't remember all the specifics—but the gist of it was that there were very few things that both Kirk Dillard and Paula Wolff agreed on, but one of them was that I would be a good person for this job. So net-net we started talking about the role. I was trying to understand what this "Executive Assistant to the Governor for Health and Human Services" was. Paula had described it as kind of the human services czar. My whole thing was, What is the role going to be? Because we weren't going to be cabinet directors, who were obviously named by the governor and then confirmed by the Senate; we were more kind of a kitchen cabinet, an inside group of people who were pretty much liaisons, the intermediaries between the governor's office and then the cabinet departments themselves. So I was trying to understand what these roles were going to be, and it was a little bit murky. But net-net, the selling feature was that the responsibility would include a lot of agencies that I had a lot of passion for, which is probably the main reason that I decided to go back and do this.

DePue: What were those agencies?

Norwood: The agencies were the Department on Aging, the Department of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Public Aid, Department of Public Health, Department of Mental Health, Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Guardianship and Advocacy Commission, and… There were eight. Am I on number nine yet?

DePue: I have eight that you've listed.

Norwood: That might be right. There might be one…

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[10] For a similar awareness of the bonds between Edgar's longtime staffers, see Kirk Brown, December 22, 2009, 83, and Bill Roberts, April 11, 2011, 19-20. Both interviews by Mike Czaplicki.

DePue: In other words, Felicia, your scope of responsibility included, what, over half of the state's budget?

Norwood: Yeah, it was just about 50 percent.

DePue: How many other members of this kitchen cabinet, and who were they?

Norwood: Let's see. There was Erhard Chorle; Erhard had the financial services agencies, I believe. So Erhard sat next to me. Trying to remember…

DePue: Was Al Grosboll on there?

Norwood: Al Grosboll had the environmental agencies. Me, Erhard, Al… A woman named—what was she, an executive assistant? I can't remember all of them.[11] (pause)

DePue: Sally Jackson, by chance?

Norwood: Yeah, but I thought Sally's role was a little different.

DePue: I have her down as a deputy chief of staff, along with Mike Belletire.

Norwood: Correct. Because somebody would have had to have the public safety agencies, like state police and those agencies, as well as Corrections, and I don't remember who had those. Those could have been—

DePue: Of course, Howard Peters was director of corrections, but that's not—

Norwood: Howard was director, correct.

DePue: A step down from what you were hoping to make in terms of financial benefit, going to this position, but you have a huge responsibility, it sounds like. I assume that it was at least financially rewarding enough that you could see yourself doing this job?

Norwood: It wasn't like I was going to be poor or anything, but I certainly wouldn't have been at the same track that I was on at the law firm. The law firm paid well. I mean, that's the great thing about starting as an associate, even summer: you barely have passed the bar exam, and that's really the only credential that you have, but you automatically start out making pretty decent money for someone who's really never tried a case or closed a transaction. And I was single, so it's not like I had kids or anything to support. But certainly you were not going to stay on the same path in terms of income that I would have been on had I stayed at the law firm.

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[11] 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 Norwood, Michael Belletire, George Fleischli, Allen Grosboll, Erhard Chorle, and Mary Ann Louderback. In his second term, Edgar scrapped this system in favor of two deputy chiefs of staff.

DePue: That first time you met Governor-elect Edgar, your impressions of the man.

Norwood: I remember having a conversation with a friend of mine when I came back. He said, "What did you think?" I said, "He genuinely seems to care about what happens to this state and the people here. On top of that, he seems incredibly nice." The third thing I remembered was that he never asked me whether I was a Democrat or a Republican or whether I voted for him. To me, that spoke volumes about saying, I'm trying to find the best people who could do this job, notwithstanding whether they are Democrats or Republicans.

DePue: Once you're into the position, I assume then you get a chance to work pretty closely with him and the other members of the governor's team.

Norwood: Um-hm.

DePue: Tell me your impressions—after you got to know him better—of Governor Edgar as a manager and leader.

Norwood: I would say a very strong leader and manager. In some respects, I used to ask myself, Boy, is he almost a micromanager? Then I would step back and say to myself, No, he's really not, but I like the fact that he's genuinely interested in knowing what's going on. You have to be able to manage at two levels. You have to be able to manage at the fifty thousand–foot level because you have so much territory to cover, but at the same time, you need to know enough about the issues to be able to make an intelligent decision around what should happen. To me, he always struck that balance. I always felt that when you had given him a briefing paper to read, that he had actually read it, so by the time you had a conversation with him, it wasn't that he was taking a look at this for the very first time.

DePue: You figured that based on the questions he was asking?

Norwood: Absolutely, absolutely. And it genuinely was, for the most part, something that I kept thinking to myself, You know what, I probably should have included that, but that was probably too much detail. And lo and behold, that would be the question that invariably would get asked.

DePue: So is this a situation where you've got one policy wonk asking questions to another policy wonk?

Norwood: (laughs) No. I used to tell myself it was a situation where—even today, I always tell my team—it was the best preparation ever, because by that point you get to understand what he's going to be like to work with and the kind of things that he's looking for. So unlike the rest of the team, who had probably already gotten to that place because many of them had worked with him before, it was still new for me. And early on it was trying to get to that point where you struck the right balance between what you needed to tell him and what he ultimately wanted to know.

DePue: Did you find him to be a demanding boss in that respect?

Norwood: Very demanding, which I loved. I thought that was terrific.

DePue: Difficult?

Norwood: Never thought he was difficult. As a matter of fact, I will have to say, I never saw him display a demeanor that was really—at least not with me, anyway—something I would look back and say, That was just absolutely awful and unprofessional. Never happened the entire time I worked with him.

DePue: Did any of that surprise you?

Norwood: Not really, because reputationally, I think he was known as—his demeanor was one that was relatively easygoing. But even the best of people can be pushed to the point sometimes where you see a side of them that you might not necessarily like. But I never really saw that with him.

DePue: You mentioned easygoing. A lot of people say Governor Edgar was intense.

Norwood: Oh, I thought he was intense, but I would say easygoing in the sense that I guess I never felt unprepared. So yeah, I guess he could be intense, but if you would go in and you were getting ready to brief him on different bills or legislative things that were going on, he wanted you to basically have the information available to be able to give him a solid briefing. I will say that we probably had a range of people on the team: some over-prepared, some less than prepared. Because I hadn't worked with them before, I was probably always over-prepared. From my perspective, my expectation was you got to make sure you know everything about this that he needs to know, because that's his expectation. So I probably put undue pressure on myself around being overly prepared just to be able to demonstrate that I was on top of whatever subject he was talking to me about.

DePue: In other words, you put in some pretty long hours during this timeframe.

Norwood: It was the longest I've ever worked for anybody. Incredibly long hours.

DePue: What specific guidance did he give you as far as dealing with all of these human services areas?

Norwood: Early on I spent a lot of time with Joan and Mike. Obviously Joan was in the budget office, and my agencies were creating (laughs) a lot of the budget challenges.

DePue: Right up front, let's say that he got to the job and said, Wow, I knew we had a budget hole, but a billion dollars? Then it didn't get any easier as the economy continued to tank and state revenues dropped.

Norwood: That's true. I have to say, that disclosure was not there at the time I agreed (laughter) to do this job, so it was rather eye-opening once it happened. I think we were very clear that we weren't going to raise taxes, so we were looking for creative ways to be able to balance the budget. So we spent a lot of time with Joan and the team from the Bureau of the Budget, and Mike, because Mike has a passion about the agencies and issues that I worked on. That became abundantly clear to me early on when I started working with the team.

DePue: Mike Lawrence was the press secretary for Governor Edgar. That sounds a little bit outside the formal, official realm of the press secretary.

Norwood: Within the boundaries of what the official job description should be, that's probably true. Mike had what I considered a much more expanded role than what you would normally see with a traditional press secretary. Mike knew the issues, and he was very passionate about the agencies that I work with, particularly Children and Family Services and the Departments of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. We spent a lot of time talking through those kinds of issues together. So yeah, one might say it was beyond the boundaries of the press secretary, but I guess I always saw Mike as more than a press secretary.

DePue: Is that because you figured out that he had a special relationship with Governor Edgar?

Norwood: I didn't know that at the time. I definitely knew that for me, Mike was someone that was always a very good sounding-board. But he's the type of person, too, that always tried to understand the implications of the decisions, not just politically, but what they would mean from a personal and policy perspective to the people that the decisions would ultimately impact. He's the type of person you could sit down and talk through issues with in a very intelligent way from a policy perspective and get very good feedback. During the entire four years I was there, I would say he was probably my sounding board more than anybody else—he and Joan.

DePue: Let's talk a little bit about Joan, then. Tell us about your relationship with Joan: Joan as a budget manager and as a person.

Norwood: Joan is someone that I didn't know when I got there and I came to know and respect enormously. Not because she provided a refuge to me often for a home-cooked meal when I was stuck in Springfield on several occasions.

DePue: (laughs) Apparently she did, though.

Norwood: She did. She frequently invited me into her home, but we probably spent an incredible amount of time in the middle of those meals really talking through a lot of the policy issues that were happening on a day-to-day basis. So in terms of people and their work ethic, I will say Joan worked as hard as anybody in that administration. When I got there early in the morning, she was there, and frequently she might be the person that I left with at the end of the day, because she was typically closing the doors.

DePue: This is in the capitol building?

Norwood: Absolutely, in the capitol building. We were on the little mezzanine level, and Joan was downstairs. But Joan is definitely someone who was not just budget director, in the sense that that was her official position; Joan was also someone who cared about these programs. We would sometimes have these intense conversations around, Well, we just can't do that; we've got to think about something else. If you're ending up in a situation where we decided—and we did, during the time I was there—that we weren't going to continue funding public assistance, for example, for single adults because we didn't have the money; we had to make some changes. She's the type of person where we were all sitting back and saying, Well, what kinds of things can we do? What kinds of things can you do from a policy perspective to make these programs work in a better way? I think that she was enormously critical to the success of the administration because she worked incredibly hard, had a deep understanding of many of the policy issues, and more importantly, as budget director, was willing to listen to what many of us had to say around how we needed to approach issues from a policy perspective.

DePue: I could be wrong in this a little bit, but I'm going to try to paint the budget crisis picture that you had. You have an ACLU lawsuit against DCFS, where you know that that's going to cost more money than you had previously been spending. You have Medicaid changes that were mandated at the federal level, which is going to only increase the amount of money that a state's going to have to pay. You have a billion-dollar deficit, and you have a sour economy. So how do you reconcile all those things?

Norwood: You make cuts. You do. Sometimes I used to think you were having a face-off between programs for senior citizens and programs for children—an awful place to be, to tell you the truth, because many of them have incredible budget needs. But the DCFS issue, in terms of the consent decree, had to be resolved. We knew that.

DePue: And that generally meant more caseworkers so you could decrease the caseload.

Norwood: Absolutely. The ratios for caseworkers had to be decreased so that they would be able to pay more attention to the kids who were in the child welfare system. That had to happen. That was already on the side of the ledger where you were going to have to spend money to support that. So we spent a lot of time trying to look at those things that were—it's almost embarrassing to describe them as "optional," but you almost got to the point where, from a budget perspective, on one side of the ledger you had things that were mandatory, that you literally had to do, and then the other kinds of programs that fell under the ledger of things that you didn't have to do even if you believed that the state had some responsibility to take care of certain populations, which is how we came into this thing with respect to public aid. So with your public aid program, certain things were mandated by the federal government around your minimum benefits and things of that sort; they have to be in your public aid program. But there were other things that you could look to do that were state-supported programs, and that's where we had to focus the attention.

During the time that I was there, I had a heightened sensitivity to many of these programs, because many of these programs had a disproportionate impact on minorities. The last thing I ever wanted to happen is for people to say, You were there to provide cover to an administration to cut programs that impact minorities. This really was something that weighed heavily on me for a long period of time, just by virtue of the fact that you're sitting in a role in human services, and many people in communities that I would go out to speak in, at churches and other places, were impacted by those programs in a significant way. The last thing I wanted people to say was, You were brought into the administration so that when the Edgar administration cut all of these programs, they could say, Look, you have someone who's African American, who's in the administration, so that person basically had a voice. People, certainly from my perspective, always looked to me to almost try to be a voice of conscience around what was going on. I thought it was absolutely important that we try to strike the right balance between programs that we supported and programs that we would ultimately have to cut in order to basically balance the budget, where state governments don't have the ability to run these huge deficits—although we do now. (laughter) So things have changed over time.

DePue: Now what is it? Now we're thinking thirteen, fourteen, fifteen billion?

Norwood: I can't even imagine those challenges, because for us, a billion was a big number. I couldn't even fathom the challenges that you're talking about now. So for me it was always one of those issues, Mark, of trying to be very thoughtful around the budget cuts we would have to make, in order to do them in such a way that really struck the right balance between the right thing that we were trying to do in order to balance budgets, and at the same time, focus and take care of those populations I believe government has an obligation to take care of.

DePue: Did you ever get the sense that you were there, in part, to fill a quota?

Norwood: I tell people this all the time. I think that in many respects, it's important for any administration to have diversity. But at the end of the day, I put my qualifications against anybody's who were there, and they were as good as they came. So net-net, I'm happy and proud of the work that we did there. But I think that the one thing that many people who I met, as I talked about Jim Edgar, but even trying to sound people off before I went to work there—he had actually run a campaign that had support from African Americans, which rarely happened with Republicans.[12] So in many respects, I think it was important that Jim Edgar have an administration that included a representation of women and minorities in the administration to basically indicate that he was a governor who was going to be there for everyone that put him into office.

DePue: Now, we already mentioned that Howard Peters went to the Department of Corrections. Otherwise, were you the most prominent African American in the administration?

Norwood: I wouldn't think so. I think the governor actually did a great job. I mean, Desiree Rogers was at the lottery; Audrey McCrimon was the director of the Department of Rehabilitation Services. So there were several prominent African Americans in the administration, which was very positive.

DePue: You're also how old at the time, thirty-two when you first—

Norwood: I was thirty-one when I first got there. I turned thirty-two later in the year. I actually found that picture from that year. I was much younger.

DePue: (laughs) So I'm thinking maybe that was as significant a challenge of trying to prove your mettle, being that young in that kind of an atmosphere. Was that the case?

Norwood: Actually it wasn't, in the sense that the older you get, you don't want to be considered a really mature fifty-year-old, but being considered a really mature thirty-one-year-old was actually quite well.

DePue: Well, you were a really mature eleven-year-old at one time.

Norwood: (laughs) That's exactly right. So I do think that early on there's always that question of, Oh, well, my goodness, she is young. But I think there were a lot of us that were in the administration at the time that were relatively young people. And when I think about it, the administration included people who had been a part of the secretary of state's team, and then there were some of us who were new that came along. But yes, I was definitely young for the role that I had and the responsibility that I had in the administration.

DePue: Do you remember any particular painful or difficult moments those first couple years when you were involved with making these cuts?

Norwood: I do. I remember a couple that are probably vivid. We used to have demonstrations. They were pretty ugly. A group by the name of ACT UP, at one point I want to say, chained themselves to the elevators and other things in the Thompson administration building, so they literally shut the building down for some time.

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[12] On his organizational efforts in Chicago's black neighborhoods during the 1990 campaign, see Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 17, 2009, 41-61.

DePue: Here in Chicago?

Norwood: James R. Thompson Center here in Chicago. That was particularly hard, because obviously what you see are a number of individuals who are in wheelchairs, who are throwing themselves into the hallways and the elevators in the Thompson Center.[13] That was a really difficult period for us, as we tried to explain that cuts would have to be made in all our agencies. I think the worst experience for me during the entire time I was there was the death of one of the children in DCFS, Joey Wallace. I think he was hung by his mother. That was probably what I describe as the saddest day that I spent in my job, because I think invariably you keep asking yourself, Was there something that we missed in terms of the work the caseworkers were doing—a whole bunch of things. But it happened on our watch. So that was really an awful, awful day.

DePue: Was that because DCFS should have taken that young boy away from his mother?

Norwood: We don't know. And what I say all the time—

DePue: But that was the issue at the time?

Norwood: She obviously had some mental health issues, and there were a number of questions around whether or not the caseworkers had actually visited the home, as they had indicated they did. There are always questions around how much did they visit, should they have seen the signs of what was going on with Amanda? You don't know any of that. But you do step back and say, "We own responsibility for the children that are a part of the child welfare system." It's an enormous task, and you rely on the people that are there to do their jobs. Somewhere, someone didn't do their job, and you have to get better about putting in place things that at least help you see whether or not the individuals that are out there doing this every day are doing their jobs.

The good news is that in DCFS, like many places, I think most people do their jobs; those are the 99 percent of the time and headlines that never make it into the newspaper. It's the one case where that doesn't happen that ends up being a game changer. Sometimes positively, in the sense that you look back and see whether or not the changes that were made in the child welfare system prevented something like that from happening again; so far, I think, we've been fortunate in the state that that hasn't happened.

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[13] AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) was a key group involved in budget protests, but Norwood may be thinking of the May 1992 protests at the Thompson Center by ADAPT (Americans Disabled for Accessible Public Transit) activists against cuts to the state's home-services program and a freeze on eligibility for personal assistants. Nearly thirty people took over the sixteenth floor of the building, forcing officials to turn off the elevator. Ben Joravsky, "Prisoners of Bureaucracy," *Chicago Reader,* May 28, 1992.

DePue: I take it, then, the Wallace case—when that little boy was hung, allegedly by the mother—was a case that got a lot of press attention?

Norwood: Huge press attention, not just here but across the country. People heard about it everywhere. I definitely think it was probably one of the lowest marks of the administration in terms of things that really stick with me during the time I was there.

DePue: You mentioned the protests. And I've talked to a lot of different people, but I haven't heard many stories about the nature of the protests that you guys were getting during the time.

Norwood: It was any program that you were cutting. ACT Up was certainly there in terms of cuts that were happening in Rehabilitation Services and the Department of Mental Health. We had LIHEAP; that was the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. They protested frequently. We knew most of them by name. (laughs) And one of the ladies who was with the protestors—she's probably deceased by now—her name was Lillian Drummond.[14] I'd never forget her, because she would always show up at different places where the governor was going to be, and we would frequently see her in a group of people on one side of the street protesting. So there were protests from—you name it. It was the key agencies, whether or not we were providing enough funding or cutting funding for homeless programs, energy assistance programs, rehabilitation services programs, mental health programs—those were the hot topics back during the time because they represented significant parts of state government funding.

DePue: What was the nature of the protests?

Norwood: No one wanted to have budget cuts. Which is interesting, because I say now, there used to be certainly greater voice given to protests than what you see—given to budget cuts, I should say—than what you see today. Everybody knew that in order to be able to find this money, programs would have to be cut. And no one wants their program cut. You think about it: your program is definitely the most important program around, and that's the last one that you want to see anyone make cuts to. So individuals were quite vocal around preservation of funding for their own programs, and I don't blame them. That's the nature of our democratic process. And I have to say, I never really had any concerns with it, because I think that's how people can lend their voice to the overall political process. As long as it's peaceful, I think it's a part of what makes what we do so great.

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[14] LIHEAP was a federal program. Drummond was a member of the South Austin Coalition Community Council (SACCC) and an activist involved in many causes. She received national attention for her advocacy of LIHEAP, and received the Community Service Award from the SACCC at a dinner attended by U.S. Rep. Danny Davis in November 2011. *Austin Weekly News,* November 23, 2011.

DePue: But my question is, how did they manifest their protests? Were they outside the capitol building?

Norwood: Absolutely.

DePue: What were they doing?

Norwood: They'd have placards. They would have groups that were gathered together. And this would be before the ages today, when you have texting and you can get everyone together. But they would certainly show up at the capitol, and a lot of times here in Chicago. Chicago's always a great spot because you can get on the nightly news with relative ease because you definitely have cameras and everyone there. But yes, I remember the individual here in Chicago who worked at Central Management Services who was in charge of the building. It was a woman by the name of Rose Jennings, and Rose was frequently upstairs because during this time, there were protests that were happening with people who would show up en masse to basically say, We want to meet with the government. We want to demand a meeting with the governor so the governor can understand the impact of any of these budget cuts to our programs. Typically we were the face of the meeting with the governor, because obviously the governor can't meet with everyone that just shows up to the capitol to protest. And since most of the budget cuts were happening in my area, since it represented a big part of state government funding, a lot of times I had those meetings with a number of different groups.

DePue: What did you tell them, then, when they said, "We can't afford these; these are going to devastate our group"?

Norwood: You'd be very honest with people and say, you know, everybody is going to have to share in this pain, that the state has a huge budget hole, that we need to close the gap, and that cuts are going to happen in quite a few programs. So one of the things we frequently did was meet with all kinds of interest groups, Mark. I would have meetings with the hospital association, I would have meetings with the nursing homes, I would have meetings with the mental health associations, I'd meet with the rehab services groups, I'd meet with the homeless coalition, I'd go meet with the individuals who were at the low-income energy assistance program—all the time, to make sure people had a voice. And the one thing I'll say is that even if people didn't agree with us, I think very few people can say that they didn't get a chance to meet with, quote, "the governor's office." And many times, I was that meeting with the governor's office because these were programs that individuals rely on. We know that. But net-net, I think everybody wanted to have their voice heard as we went through that process of determining how much needed to be cut in these various programs.

DePue: Did it ever get nasty or vocal?

Norwood: The Act Up group was pretty nasty. The other groups displayed just your solid protest around issues that were important to their groups. But the Act Up group was pretty nasty.

DePue: In most of these meetings, did you feel that they were able to walk away feeling a little bit better about it?

Norwood: Yes, because I think everybody realized where the state was. So you didn't get the answer that you wanted, but you got a fair hearing and you got a pretty good appreciation for where your specific area fit within the domain of everything else that was out there and the choices that we were having to make.

DePue: When you're going through these kinds of experiences, were you ever asking yourself, Why did I take this job?

Norwood: Every day. (laughter) I had a conversation once when I was meeting with the nursing homes. There were generally two groups of nursing home owners that we ended up meeting with, and Bill Kempiners headed up one group. I don't even know if Bill was still around. He used to be the lobbyist for one group, and a guy by the name of Leon headed up the other group. And Leon actually, I want to say he died a couple of years ago. I met him in the governor's office. He died at eighty-something.[15] I never knew him before then, and over the years he became just a wonderful friend of mine as we talked all the time through issues around policy. But he owned a group of nursing homes in the state as well. I used to say to them all the time, "These aren't easy choices, and if you have better solutions, let us know, because we're certainly open to them."

This assessment program, where we ended up having an assessment on some of the facilities that we then took and used to secure some matching federal funds, grew out of some of those conversations around what kinds of things can we do to increase the level of reimbursement that the state of Illinois was getting from the Feds.[16] Of course, the Feds probably look at this now and say, States have been maximizing their federal reimbursement for some period of time, and it's time to change the trajectory of that. But that is actually one of the ways that, as we started going through these budget cuts, we started to think about, What kind of creative ways are out there in order to work with some of the interest groups to try to find solutions to these problems? Because—and I certainly would be very honest—we don't have all the answers. But all of you work in your industries and in your businesses every day, so what kinds of ideas and solutions would you recommend? We certainly had, from my perspective, probably one of the most open administrations in terms of people being able to come—literally—it's almost unheard of today: you could walk right up to the mezzanine, sit down in the middle of the legislative session, have a conversation around a bill that's being heard or something that you wanted to do, sometimes with no appointment, just because the expectation from the governor was that we meet with people frequently to make sure they had an opportunity to give us their input into what was going on.

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[15] William L. Kempiners had previously served as Thompson's director of public health. Shlofrock was chairman of Betcare Associates of Northbrook and founded the Illinois Long Term Care Council. An owner of thoroughbred horses, he served on the Illinois Racing Board from 2000 to 2004. He died September 12, 2008, at 86. SR336, 96th General Assembly, http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/96/SR/09600SR0336.htm.

[16] The Hospital Assessment Program was a very important innovation the Edgar administration developed to address the state's Medicaid burden. For details on the program and federal resistance to it, see Kanter, December 29, 2009, 83-86 and 95-97; Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, November 17, 2009, 567-568; Kirk Dillard, interview by Mark DePue, November 9, 2009, 30-31.

DePue: Were some of these groups using lobbyist groups to assist them?

Norwood: Some of them had lobbyists, but most of them used what I would call their executive directors, who were full-time in Springfield. They were frequently bringing you a position paper on this and something else that their legislative committee had come up with. All of the traditional interest groups that you had in Springfield, that had kind of a Springfield presence, even though they could have been somewhere else in the state.

DePue: It must have seemed almost unmanageable sometimes, though, in the midst of the crisis, when everybody's beating down your door to talk to you, to convince you that theirs is the most important—

Norwood: I think back on it now, Mark, and I kept thinking to myself, when I think of the different groups, a lot (laughter) were involved. In some respects, maybe it was organized chaos, but at the time it seemed very manageable around what was going on. But there were a lot of people to interact with on those days that you were—particularly when you were in the legislative session, and people were invariably there on a day-to-day basis.

DePue: Did you get a chance or were you expected to appear before the legislature?

Norwood: I did not. I spent a lot of time working with legislators behind the scenes, so it wouldn't be unusual for us to—I'd have to appear before a committee, but we spent a lot of time working with legislators on different bills or different things that we were trying to do. So if we needed to go and have a meeting with someone on Mike Madigan's staff or someone on Phil Rock's staff—because Phil Rock was there back during the time that I was there—or somebody on Pate Philip's staff, or go take something and have a conversation with Carter or work with Mike Tristano on Lee Daniels's staff, we did all of that all the time, most of us on the program staff.

DePue: Did you work, then, with the legislative liaisons that the governor has?

Norwood: Oh, absolutely.

DePue: Steve Selcke, Mark Boozell?

Norwood: Absolutely. Steve Selcke, Mark Boozell—terrific people to work with.

DePue: Let's talk about some of the other people you had a chance to work with. Erhard Chorle, is that how you pronounce his name?

Norwood: Uh-huh.

DePue: Did you have much interaction with him?

Norwood: Only in the sense that Erhard literally sat next door to me at my office in Chicago. Erhard generally worked on all of the financial services agencies, which were different than my domain. Interactions in the sense that we were next door to each other, generally a couple of doors down on a day-to-day basis, but not from a policy perspective.

DePue: So you mentioned your office in Chicago. Where were you spending most of your time?

Norwood: Outside of the peak time? Here in Chicago. We were here for the most part. By the time the legislative session commenced in earnest, you were in Springfield almost every day.

DePue: So you had to keep two residences going.

Norwood: We would be in a hotel in Springfield. I spent most of my time in the hotel that's right across from the Hilton. It was called the Renaissance at the time, I guess, and so it wouldn't be unusual—

DePue: Which was the Republican hotel in town, where the Hilton had the reputation as the Democratic hotel?[17]

Norwood: That was the reputation. At the time, for me, it was just the newer hotel. (laughs) So we spent a lot of time there. We would typically take the state plane down at the early part of the week, and we would come back at the end of the week during the legislative session.

DePue: No expectation that you should be living in Springfield?

Norwood: No.

DePue: The work was here in Chicago more than it was in Springfield most of the time?

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[17] Located at 701 East Adams Street, the Renaissance Hotel was developed by Republican powerbroker Bill Cellini. It later became the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel.

Norwood: Only during the legislative session was more of the work in Springfield. And I would say for us, a lot of the work was in Springfield during the session because obviously Jim Edgar lived in Springfield, so that's where I spent a lot of time. It wouldn't be unusual for us to then have to go over to the mansion for a meeting with him during the session when the legislature was there, particularly during the time of bill signings, when he was making his decision on what action he was going to take on particular legislation. So we would meet frequently in Springfield, but no, I never had to move to Springfield during the Edgar administration.

DePue: Did you get the chance to know Al Grosboll during that time?

Norwood: I knew Al, absolutely. Very passionate on environmental issues. I think certainly was very close to the governor, had known the governor for some period of time. So Al was certainly very vocal and passionate on all of the agencies that he worked with.

DePue: Chief of staff at the time was Kirk Dillard, at least to begin with. Your impressions of Kirk as the chief of staff.

Norwood: I liked working with Kirk. I liked working with Kirk in the sense that I don't do well with intense micromanagers; I do well with individuals who have confidence in you to do your job. And Kirk had confidence in me to do my job, because I think on most days of the week, people know that nobody will work harder than me in terms of understanding and the issues that I work with. That's just the nature of what I do. So I worked very closely with Kirk and appreciated his management style, while some others may have not.

DePue: The last year, the election year in 1994, Kirk Dillard had stepped away to be in the Senate, to run for the Senate, and it was Jim Reilly who was the chief of staff. And most have described Jim Reilly as a different personality.[18]

Norwood: Different personality. Intense would also be a word (laughter) that I would use to describe Jim. Very different personality than Kirk, for sure, and I think a different working style than Kirk.

DePue: Now, in talking about your relationship with Dillard, you just described that his style worked better than more of a micromanagement or more of an intense style?

Norwood: But the thing is, by the time Jim comes, we're already well into the administration with—I won't say the wind at our backs, but certainly the true heavy lifting of the administration in those early years was really pretty close to done. By the time Jim arrives, we're getting ready to be in full, almost campaign mode. And most of my time was spent working, meeting with groups, talking to them about what was going on. Jim was a different personality, but for me, also easy for me to work with, just because I knew his style, was used to his style. I found Jim to be fine to work with—different from Kirk, but easy enough for me.

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[18] For example, see Mark Boozell, interview by Mark DePue, September 9, 2009.

DePue: So never had an experience where he had to raise his voice at you or anything like that?

Norwood: Never once did Jim raise his voice at me the entire time I worked with him.

DePue: Nineteen ninety-four. By that time, the toughest times, budget-wise, were behind you. Was it feeling a little bit better by that timeframe?

Norwood: Oh, so much better. You'd think we had learned and done so much. But it's feeling so much better because your comfort level—you know all of the right groups, everybody knows who to pick up the phone and call on an issue, and you become quite fluent in almost all of the issues that you're facing. You never get to a level of normalcy, but as close as you're going to get after going through the period that we've gone through, '94 was feeling very good.

DePue: It's an election year for the governor as well, so there are some other things. Before I get to talk about that: we've already talked about Joan Walters quite a bit, and Mike Lawrence, but there are a couple people who are more close to that inner circle of personal staff for the governor. Sherry Struck is his personal assistant.

Norwood: Wonderful, just terrific. You would go down there, waiting for the governor or something, and there was never a time you couldn't just strike up a conversation with Sherry. You know, she's the type of person where consistently, she's always just pleasant. Never frazzled—even if she was, it wasn't displayed. Just that calming influence in the middle of whatever storm could be going on. She was just delightful to work with.

DePue: How about Tom Livingston? I don't know that you would have had much opportunity to work with him.

Norwood: I did. Tom was always the person that you had to deliver your briefings to. If you were meeting the governor at an event, and the team had done advance and you had prepared the briefing, Tom had these last-minute questions that the governor may have made a notation about in his briefing book or something. Tom was always the person who was getting back to you and giving you a head's up. Tom did that job very well.

DePue: Another one of the rather young members of the team.

Norwood: Absolutely, absolutely.

DePue: Was he the guy who would be something of a gatekeeper to get to the governor?

Norwood: Absolutely, but not in the gatekeeper sense. He was the person who certainly traveled with the governor all the time; if you needed to get to the governor and they were on the road, you'd call Tom. Tom was the person who really worked to facilitate that, but never tried to be anyone who tried to keep you away from the governor. But I have to say, I'm the type of person where I didn't try to get access to the governor unless I needed something, so that probably facilitated the relationship such that if Tom knew I was calling, I was probably calling for a reason.

DePue: Now, who have I neglected to ask you about?

Norwood: Mrs. Edgar.

DePue: Well, that was the last name on my list.

Norwood: A true champion of human services, (laughs) so.

DePue: Especially adoption?

Norwood: Absolutely. She cared a lot about the agencies that I worked closely with, so it was actually nice to have a champion and inside advocate for those programs. She gave voice to our adoption programs in a way that—I like to say it's always nice to get a little bit of celebrity status. But Mrs. Edgar is so likeable that putting her face together with that program I think was a natural, and really good for her as well.[19]

DePue: What was the highlight of those first three or four years that you were with the administration?

Norwood: Oh, boy, that's a tough one. I think for me the highlight was election night after we won by such a margin.[20] Because when I think about it, we worked so hard over four years to govern during a very difficult time, and while it was difficult, we came through it in such a way that left the governor's popularity at such high levels; to me, it was just incredibly affirming. You know, people would walk up to me and say, "I didn't always agree with you, but you always had time for me." That felt incredibly good to me because there were so many people I had to have interactions with over those four years that sometimes weren't easy. I would go out to make a presentation, and I would walk into a room and think to myself, Oh boy, did we just cut this budget by X amount? So what is this group going to think about—as I'm going to speak to the Alliance for Mentally Ill or something like that. And for people to say that consistently—"I didn't always agree with you guys, but you always listened to us; you always afforded us the respect that we believe we deserved"—and to do that and come out four years later in the way that we did was incredibly positive, and also told me that was the time for me to say goodbye and move on to do something else.

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[19] Brenda Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, September 14, 2010.

[20] Edgar defeated Netsch by a margin of 914,468 votes, 1,984,318-1,069,850. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 8, 1994*.

DePue: Because it's not going to get any better than that?

Norwood: It wouldn't get any better. And it wasn't that I was leaving during the difficult part; I survived the difficult part, and weathered that incredibly well for the governor. So I wasn't ducking; it was just one of those things of, It's been four years of probably the hardest work I've ever done in my life, with incredibly long hours, and I have to go and do something different now.

DePue: I want to back you up a little bit. That last year, a lot was going on from Governor Edgar's standpoint. And when I talked to him about this, a lot of the focus was on these issues of child welfare.[21] February '94—you probably remember this—the Keystone Kids? That was another one that the press feasted on, as I understand, because they found this place where there were nineteen children—

Norwood: Living in squalor. Nineteen kids living in squalor in a home. It was filthy. It was awful. It was embarrassing.

DePue: Was that another one of those gut-wrenching moments for you?

Norwood: It was horrible, horrible. Not as bad as the death of a child, but to think that people were living in the midst of these kids living in that environment was just awful. Another example that somebody should have been visiting that house, someone should have known that those were the conditions that those children were living under, and the system failed to do that. And it's not the system; it's generally a person who failed to do what they should have done.

DePue: How about the Baby Richard case? The way Governor Edgar described this, he couldn't think of any other case that garnered more public attention. As it turned out, it played to his benefit politically even though he was very passionate, and obviously Mrs. Edgar was very passionate, about the Baby Richard case.

Norwood: I don't remember the Baby Richard case as much.

DePue: The Baby Richard case was the custody battle over a little boy who had been raised by this adopted couple, and then the father came forward and said, Hey, I didn't even know I was the father, and I demand to get custody of this child.

Norwood: Yeah, I guess for me, that one wasn't as delicate. It certainly garnered a lot of publicity, but for me, it certainly wasn't one that was as prominent as some of the others that I referenced before.

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[21] Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 18, 2010, 737-745, and September 9, 2010, 916-933.

DePue: One other event I'm sure you do recall: right in the middle of the campaign, just when the campaign started to heat up, he had a bit of a heart problem. He had heart bypass surgery in July 1994. Your reaction to hearing that news.

Norwood: Scary, in that I should probably go do something else. (laughter) I think the thing that was so shocking for all of us, and particularly for me, is that I always viewed him as so fit. This is someone who externally was the picture of health. He watched what he would eat. He was a very disciplined person when it came to exercise. So I frequently said to myself, Is this hereditary, or is it the stress of the job that could bring something on like this? But we were quite scared about the whole thing. And you said to yourself, This is a very young person in what many of us consider the prime of his life. Boy, this can happen to somebody like Jim Edgar, so are you living the way you want to live, and if not, you should probably think about going to do something different. But that one really hit me hard.

DePue: In other words, you kind of took it personally because you kind of had the same ambitions, the same lifestyle, the same stress?

Norwood: It was scary, very scary. I did take it personally because I definitely saw him as someone who, literally, to you, looks like he's weathering the stress of this all. And we all know, because, frankly, there are plenty of times that you would go home at night and you would be tossing and turning, thinking about what did you do that day, and did you do the right thing? You think about this for an extraordinary amount of time. I did, anyway. I just took all of this so personal, just because of the burden that comes with trying to serve people in a way that's admirable and credible and certainly reflects well on the governor. So when you see this person who you think is young and healthy, and right there see something like this happen, you do step back and say, Oh my goodness, am I doing what I want to be doing for the next four or however many years of my life? And invariably the answer was no. (laughter)

DePue: You've already talked quite a bit about who Jim Edgar was as a boss, as a manager and a leader, but we haven't talked much about him as a politician. This might seem like a strange question to throw in here, but Jim Edgar saw the political advantages of having this heart problem (laughs) in the middle of the campaign, because Dawn Clark Netsch had to kind of back up a little bit. What was your impression of Jim Edgar as a politician?

Norwood: I always thought that Jim Edgar was an unusual politician in the sense that when I typically think of someone who's a politician, I think of—and my only example literally had been more of a Jim Thompson model of a politician—someone who walks into a room and shakes every hand and glad-handles and knows every name and works a room like no one you've ever seen before. I always thought Governor Edgar was incredibly shy. I did. And so I would often say to myself, How could someone so shy and somewhat reserved really be in politics? Because when I would be on the road with them, I always got the sense that it took him a little time to get comfortable with his environment, and I would see Jim Thompson walk into a room and automatically have a comfort level like no one I'd ever seen before. So I always thought he was a somewhat unusual politician, and I guess over the years, as I got to know him, I always thought of him as someone who brought honor to the word.

Even before our recent issues with governors, I would say for politicians in general, I've seen so many people bring dishonor to the term in the sense that most people don't necessarily associate many positive adjectives with "politician." They generally think of politicians as being someone who's slick and all of these other kinds of things that go along with them. The governor was one of the first politicians I had worked with where I thought you could have a totally different style, that you didn't have to have this kind of personality that really was a kind of work the room way that you've seen so many politicians do it, and still be incredibly successful in your own way. I think someone at the conference described it as, The governor isn't one of these people that you kind of warm up to immediately.[22] He's someone, honestly, that I think you get to know over time, and the more people got to know Jim Edgar, the more comfortable they became with him. So I described him a little bit as the accidental politician in my own mind, (DePue laughs) just because I think he came to fit the term in a way that was positive, more so than some of the negatives that I've generally associated with politicians.

DePue: So we got through the election year. You've already talked about that heady feeling you had election night, being so successful because he absolutely swamped Dawn Clark Netsch, who also had a very good reputation in the State of Illinois.

Norwood: Terrific reputation.

DePue: But how satisfying that was. Was it at that moment, or had you been thinking of moving on for a long time?

Norwood: I had been thinking about it for a long time. I remember having a conversation with him. He probably doesn't remember it. I remember when I talked to him about the position, I said, "I will do this for two years, but I don't think I want to do this much longer than that." From my perspective, I stayed for four years, so I had more than covered the early commitment that I had made. But I guess as I thought about it, I really did think, It won't ever get any better than this. This is the way that you exit. I don't think you wait until things go another way to exit.

But I tried to think about it in the sense of what we had done and the issues that we had confronted, and some of those that we dealt with in the

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[22] April 15-16, 2011, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum hosted a conference on Governor Edgar's gubernatorial administration.

Edgar administration were some of the same issues that I had dealt with in the Thompson administration, just now at a much more elevated level. There were always going to be challenges from a budget perspective, there were always going to be budget hurdles, and the questions were always going to be the same: what are the tradeoffs that need to be made in order to have the state live within its means? And typically, if you had to replay it all over again, you would always have to look at the same agencies that I worked with, because those agencies—and you add education in there—drive state government funding. So I didn't want to do another re-do of budget cuts to those same agencies that I had gone through in this first year that I was there.

Invariably, this all happens again. You might go through a period of not having to do it for four years, but I would say that the issues don't particularly get new. They're very similar; the only challenge is how do you end up dealing with them, and whether or not you're going to work with the leader who's going to provide the direction to say, We need to do it and we are going to get it done, so what's the best way for us to get there. So for me, it was time to leave. We had been there, we had done it, and I was ready to go off and do something different.

DePue: What's the next challenge for you, then?

Norwood: Right before I was leaving the administration, healthcare reform had become—this was healthcare reform the first time around, when the Clintons were trying to get healthcare reform done. I found the whole healthcare policy discussion incredibly interesting. So when I was thinking about what I would do next, the choices were going back to my old law firm or doing something different. And I got approached by Aetna about coming to work with them as their Midwest head, state governmental affairs, and decided to come here and do that.

DePue: That started in 1995?

Norwood: Ninety-four. This demonstrates to you that I really don't take much vacation. I think I left the governor's office in December 1994. My start date at Aetna was December 27, 1994. (DePue laughs) I took Christmas Day off and the day after, and I started here on the twenty-seventh.

DePue: Celebrate your birthday, at least. (laughs)

Norwood: Exactly. I started here on the twenty-seventh of December in 1994.

DePue: And still a very young woman.

Norwood: Oh, much older, but still young. (laughs) That's good, Mark, still young.

DePue: None of that, like that grizzled old veteran that's seen combat, huh?

Norwood: Yeah, December 1994, I came here.

DePue: A year or two afterwards, after you'd made the move, what surprised you that you missed about government service?

Norwood: I didn't miss anything about government service. I look back at the friends and colleagues who were still there. I would frequently stay, you know, to get my fix of what was going on; I would frequently contact Mike Lawrence or something, and Mike and I would have dinner and we'd talk about the kinds of things that were going on. I worked so hard when I was there—not that I did anything other than trade the hard work there for the hard work here—but I guess when I left, I felt very satisfied about what we had done, so I can't honestly say that I look back and missed much about it at all.

DePue: When did you get your current position as president of the Midwest?

Norwood: The Mid-America Region?

DePue: Yeah.

Norwood: February of last year, so that would have been February 2010. When I originally came to the company in 1994, I started as the Midwest Counsel for State Government Relations, and then I moved after maybe a year and a half to the Midwest Region General Counsel. So I did all of their general counsel work here, out of Chicago, but had a region that included the Midwest states as well as Texas, believe it or not. I did that, but when I came to the company to head up the law department, I had a conversation at the time with a woman named Zoë Baird, and I was working with another woman who has since left—she's at Fidelity now—by the name of Kathy Murphy.[23] I always knew I wanted to move to the business side. The opportunity came up in 1998 to move over to the business side as a general manager for Illinois and northwest Indiana, and I flew off to Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, which is where a lot of our business was located at the time, and did some interviews and got the position. So I left the law department side and moved over to the business side in 1998.

DePue: Did you miss the law part of the business?

Norwood: No, because I still use it almost every day. (DePue laughs) Unfortunately, my team and the legal team I work with probably would say, it's not easy having a lawyer as a client. (laughter) Fortunately for me, though, they are a great legal team to work with. But in this role I use what I did on the legal side every day—if that's being in the middle of conversations on provider negotiations or understanding what's happening on contract issues with a customer—all kinds of skills that you draw on from your law days. So it's very interesting that you leverage those skills over time, and they come in handy in those interactions that you have today.

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[23] Baird had worked in the Department of Justice and as associate counsel to President Carter before entering the private sector. In 1993, she was President Clinton's pick for attorney general, until she withdrew her nomination in the face of scrutiny over her household employees.

DePue: I don't think our interview would be complete unless we also filled in the marriage part of the equation.

Norwood: (laughs) I met my husband in 1997 and we got married in 1998. I tell people we've come full circle from this person who grew up in the segregated South during the time of a lot of racial tension, where blacks lived in one side of town and whites lived in another side of town, to years later and today, when my husband's white. I never thought I would end up in an interracial marriage. And I tell people all the time, it comes back to one of those things of just finding the right person. He's just a terrific, incredibly supportive person that's been great.

DePue: His name?

Norwood: Garry Karch. He was with me in Springfield; you may have met him.

DePue: I do remember that.

Norwood: Yeah.

DePue: What does he do?

Norwood: He's an investment banker.

DePue: And do you still live downtown Chicago?

Norwood: We still live downtown Chicago, not very far from the first place I ever lived when I moved to Chicago. So after being here now since the '80s, I probably still live within a ten- to twelve-block radius from the first place I ever moved into when I moved to Chicago.

DePue: After identifying yourself in one way politically early on, and then, let's face it, having all of your political experiences with moderate Republicans, but Republicans nonetheless, have your political views evolved over time?

Norwood: Yes, but I would say that the number of moderate Republicans has declined considerably, which I find very sad, because I don't see a lot of Jim Edgars out there anymore, from a state perspective or a national perspective, to tell you the truth. And he was my kind of Republican. He's someone who was very supportive of abortion rights, which I am. He's someone who was fiscally moderate, someone who was very engaged in social programs and having them work the right way. And you don't find that combination very often anymore. I am so struck by the extremes within our political system today, and in my current role, I cover a lot of territory. I cover from, as I said before, Texas up through the entire mid-America region. When I think about it, just the polar opposites that exist within my states from a Governor [Pat] Quinn here in Illinois to a Governor [Rick] Perry down in Texas, and you don't have many Jim Edgars in the political spectrum. So it's a very interesting dynamic to watch.

It was incredibly interesting to watch as we went through and continue to go through the debate on healthcare reform. Last Wednesday night, as a matter of fact, I was speaking to the Yale Law School Alumni Association at the Chicago Yacht Club on healthcare reform, and my husband later asked me to describe the people in the room. Huge turnout, and everything from very young, bright, just-out-of-law-school liberals that you see at Yale to individuals that were clearly a part of the Federalist Society, and just these huge, broad spectrums of the kind of thing you would see. I look back now and, as I said to them, I honestly do wish for more civility in the political debate; I think we make it too personal and not as substantive as it needs to be. In terms of my own political leanings, if someone asked me what I was today, I couldn't choose either party. I would have to say I'm firmly an independent. And over the years I would say that I've been probably more of what one would consider a moderate Republican, but I think the number of individuals—I'm not sure the Republican Party necessarily has a moderate wing anymore, not that I can identify.

DePue: Well, we talked about Kirk Dillard before as chief of staff, and you obviously felt very comfortable with his style of leadership. He was a couple thousand votes, maybe even less than that, away from being the Republican nominee for governor for the state of Illinois. Would you have been comfortable with his campaign?

Norwood: I didn't pay close attention to Kirk's campaign. I will say that I'm very comfortable with Kirk's leadership, and I think Kirk is the type of person who would listen very closely to a perspective similar to mine. I mean, I don't think people can forget that early on, Kirk actually supported Barack Obama, and the two of them worked very closely when they were in the Senate together. So I do think a big part of being able to work in our political system revolves around relationships and finding some common ground around those things you can agree on. I think Kirk is the type of person that I can find some common ground around, things I could agree on with him.

DePue: Since you're in the healthcare industry and you were just talking about what's now being called Obamacare, what's your position on that, or is that something I shouldn't ask you about in terms of your position now?

Norwood: I will say the following: My company worked tirelessly, particularly our CEO, on healthcare reform, and he spent an incredible amount of time working with the administration to help the administration understand what we do as an industry. If I had to characterize what we have, I would say we have legislation that's addressed some of the issues around access, so certainly more people will be able to have access to the healthcare system—ostensibly. I mean, there's still an overarching question of whether or not we have an infrastructure that's prepared to have thirty-one million more people in the system certainly without some new physicians, particularly primary-care physicians, to take care of them. But the legislation did address the issues of access. I think it certainly hasn't addressed the issues of cost and affordability, which are still very central to truly having some type of health care reform. DePue:Let's take it back to Governor Edgar's administration and finish off with that. What, of all the things, not just during the Edgar but maybe the Thompson administration as well, that you look back and are most proud of in terms of your personal accomplishments?

Norwood: I think when I look back on it, the things that we tried to do in terms of what we would call Earnfare, which was trying to at least provide a way for individuals that had been cut off of the welfare rolls—some call it Workfare, some call it Earnfare—to have opportunities to find jobs; the alliances that the governor worked with businesses to try to have those opportunities was something that was very important, saying, We know we are changing something that's been a safety net for individuals for a number of years, but at the same time, I think on any day of the week, when given the choice between a check and a job, people will take a job every single day. If they have the ability to go out and demonstrate to themselves and their families that they can provide for them, I think that's something that any individual will choose. And trying to structure that program and working with Democratic legislators as well around that.

Actually, one of the legislators that we worked closely with on that—he since died—was a representative by the name of Bob LeFleur. I remember he said to me in a conference room, "Felicia, we have to have something." The governor and the team worked very closely on trying to put together that program, and I think the governor described it a little bit at the conference, about the gentleman who walked up to him and wanted to know who he was.[24] When he told that story, I found that very satisfying, because that was actually a part of my experience and something that we worked on to make happen with the Democrats as we were going through a very challenging time around how we changed welfare as we knew it to make the program more meaningful. Particularly for single adults who were still on that program at the time, we made some pretty drastic changes.

DePue: Any particular disappointments that you reflect on today?

Norwood: When I think about the disappointments, by the time we left—at least by the time I left in '94—I don't think we had made the progress that we needed to make in child welfare. I just kept thinking to myself we were on our way, and I think Jess and the team probably continued a lot of momentum after I left.

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[24] Jim Edgar, June 18, 2010, 763-764.

But by the time I left, we weren't close to grappling with the issue of understanding, first of all, how we had a system that was just almost exploding with kids who were coming into the child welfare system, and how we forged a much better relationship working with unions and the individuals that were on the front line to make the child welfare system a much better system than what we have. I think that's something that everyone still grapples with, but to me, that was a big disappointment for me.

DePue: This is a little bit of a peculiar question. I don't think it's going to be a surprising one. But since Jim Edgar has stepped out of the governor's office, we've had two governors who are either in or heading towards prison. So your assessment of the Edgar administration.

Norwood: I feel good about it. I was at a dinner with twenty-two women last Saturday. We had gone to the theatre, over in Hyde Park; we had all gone to see *Porgy and Bess*. We left seeing *Porgy and Bess* and went to a little French restaurant that was not far from the theatre. Somehow the conversation got on this whole topic of how the women in the room knew each other. There was a group of women in the room where we all knew each other through the work that some of us had done during the time I worked in the governor's office. A couple women at the table said, "Oh, boy, the last two governors, that's been really bad. It's just embarrassing." And the woman next to me said, "I'm not saying this because you're here, but it's probably the last time we had an honorable governor." I felt good about that because I had worked for someone who I believe brought a lot of credibility and honor to the office itself through what we tried to do, and I feel good about having served during that time, knowing that we've had some challenges here in the state since.

DePue: How about comparing Thompson and Edgar in terms of what they accomplished as governors?

Norwood: It's hard, because as I said, I was a very young person in the Thompson administration and wasn't nearly as close to a lot of the Thompson accomplishments as I was in the Edgar administration, so in some respects I would probably be a little bit biased in making those comparisons. And I do think it's hard to compare, in the sense that the conditions that we found ourselves in during the time I was there in the Edgar administration were very different during the period of the Thompson administration. So that would be a difficult one to compare. I think we did some pretty solid things in some very difficult budgetary times that I just didn't have to deal with when I was in the Thompson administration.

DePue: What adjective would you be willing to place on the Edgar administration or Jim Edgar as a governor? Good? Great?

Norwood: I would definitely have him between good and great. I just couldn't say enough about his leadership and the way that he governed and the way he went about pulling together a cabinet that was capable, competent, and certainly one that I think served the citizens of this state very well. So it would definitely be somewhere between good and great.

DePue: Great minus or good plus. (laughs)

Norwood: Absolutely. Still a pretty nice grade there.

DePue: Any final comments for us?

Norwood: Oh, I think this has been interesting to do, because I frequently get asked by people about being in public service, and particularly now since I deal so often in an environment where we interact with legislators on healthcare and a number of different things. I know in many ways that the work I did in the Edgar administration was nothing more than preparation for what I do today, because it makes what I do today so much easier, having survived and thrived during those four years.

DePue: Does that mean that you would advise a young Yale law student who just got their diploma and just passed the bar that you should look at government service for a while?

Norwood: I honestly believe it should almost be mandatory for at least a couple of years. I think everybody should experience something in public service. I do believe that it's good to be able to go and serve in government and be able to make that kind of a contribution. I do think it really helps to have that perspective and be able to understand how the sausage gets made. It definitely gives you a much better appreciation and understanding of the overall process.

DePue: Well, thank you very much. This has been a lot of fun to talk to you, and very informative. I appreciate your candor and appreciate your giving me the opportunity to come up here and do this.

Norwood: My pleasure. Thank you, Mark.

(end of interview)