Interview with Stephen Schnorf

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Interviewer: Mike Czaplicki – ALPL Oral History Program

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Czaplicki: Today is Tuesday, February 23, 2010. My name is Mike Czaplicki. I work at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois, and I'm here at the Library today with Stephen Schnorf. How are you Steve?

Schnorf: Fine, thank you Mike.

Czaplicki: He has agreed to sit down as part of the Governor Jim Edgar oral history project and talk about growing up, his early years, and then his career in the administration of Governor Edgar. I guess we will begin at the beginning; where and when were you born?

Schnorf: I was born in 1944 in Charleston, Illinois.

Czaplicki: And what were your parents' names?

Schnorf: My father's name was Burl Schnorf, and my mother's name was Marjorie Schnorf; maiden name was Baker.

Czaplicki: What did they do?

Schnorf: My father was a foreman in a factory, so he went to work in a shirt and tie each day. My mother was a school teacher; although, she only taught intermittently, off and on, as we were growing up.

Czaplicki: What levels did she teach, elementary?

Schnorf: Well, when she started teaching, she taught in a multi-grade, rural school. Then I think when I was born, she stopped teaching, and I don't think went back to teaching. Well, she went back to teaching when I was about a senior in high school, maybe a junior. She taught high school English.

Czaplicki: Help me with the pronunciation of your name. When I look at it, I think Schnorf.

Schnorf: Like the "ch" wasn't there. It is kind of anglicized.

Czaplicki: Right, say "Snorf." What ethnicity is that? What's your background?

Schnorf: It's actually Swiss, some small province in Switzerland.

Czaplicki: So do you know how your family happened to come to Illinois, how you ended up in the Charleston area?

Schnorf: Actually it happens that I do. A distant family member did a very, very extensive genealogical study of the family, and my first ancestor that came to this country came here in the 1740s or 50s; I forget which. Jacob Schnorf died in Pennsylvania. Among his many sons and daughters, Jacob Schnorf, Jr. died in Ohio. The standard from the coast out to Pennsylvania, down the River Ohio, up into Indiana, across to Illinois—

Czaplicki: The Ohio River Valley?

Schnorf: …up into Indiana, across to Illinois. Yeah.

Czaplicki: Interesting. Do you know when the Illinois contingent arrived?

Schnorf: Yeah. I don't know if I can call it off the top of my head. Let's see. Jacob, Jr., buried over somewhere near Crawfordsville. I don't think it was his son that moved to Illinois. I think it was his grandson, which would be about my fourth great grandfather back, right before the civil war.

Czaplicki: And in Coles County, the Charleston area?

Schnorf: Actually, originally to Cumberland County, which is the next county south and then up to Coles. Let's see, Elmer, my great great grandfather is buried in a small, rural cemetery that's just north of the Cumberland/Coles County line.

Czaplicki: Do you have any siblings?

Schnorf: I have three younger brothers. I have a brother David who is a little less than two years younger than me, a brother Marty who's about five years, six years younger than me, and a brother Jim who's ten years younger than me.

Czaplicki: Were there other family members that were important to you, besides your siblings and your parents?

Schnorf: Well, we always lived in close proximity to my grandparents on my mother's side. My mother was born in a small town, a tiny little village in Lawrence County, named Chancey. She was the third of five. When they were living in Sumner, she was about six, I think. Well, she was in early elementary school when her oldest brother, my oldest uncle, was approaching graduation from high school.

My grandmother wrote the state superintendent of schools and—as a matter of fact, I saw the letter when I was younger. It was kind of a family heirloom—asked him what he thought she should do. She had five kids and she wanted them to go to college. He wrote her back and suggested that they move to the family to Charleston so the kids could go to the Normal [Illinois] school. And they did. So my Uncle Leo, my Aunt Pauline, my mother, and my Uncle Merv all graduated from Eastern [Illinois University], all in the area of education. My mother's youngest sister Alberta didn't graduate from college; although, several of her kids attended Eastern.

Czaplicki: Wow, long, deep roots at Eastern, like the Edgars too. I think he said something about, had their daughter gone to Eastern, she would have been the fourth generation, because Brenda and her relatives had gone there.

Schnorf: My mother knew Brenda's mother. I didn't, to the best of my knowledge, know her, but my mother used to refer to her, perhaps. Her married name was Smith, I think, because my mother would always refer to her as whatever her first name was, Smith. For a while I didn't know it was Brenda's mom, but then I figured out it was.

Czaplicki: Small world. And that's the Baker side of the family. So growing up, what was family life like? Was it particularly home centered?

Schnorf: Extremely home centered. Charleston was a small town then, still is. Maybe 10,000 people, 9,000, something like that. Four boys, ten years between them, so there were always things going on, involving one or more of the kids. My parents didn't go out and do things without their kids. I could count, I'm sure, [on] the fingers of one hand the times I or we were left with a babysitter—was usually my grandmother—when my folks went out to do something that we weren't going with them, very family centered, whether it was a day at the state park for a picnic or a trip out to the county

fairgrounds, or you name it. Mainly, by the time, oh, I suppose I was around seven or eight, it centered around youth athletics.

Czaplicki: What kinds of sports?

Schnorf: Baseball, youth baseball, minor league, little league, Babe Ruth league, pony league, whatever the heck all of them were called, I and all three of my younger brothers. So, by the time I was maybe fourteen, thirteen, something like that, fifteen, there might be two or three games a day going on at different levels with different kids.

Czaplicki: You guys would have had a whole infield pretty much. Was religion much of a factor in the home?

Schnorf: No. My parents weren't church goers. When I think about it, my grandparents on my mother's side weren't church goers. I would not think of them as non-religious people, but they weren't church goers. My grandmother on my mom's side was a Bible reader and a regular check writer to Billy Sunday. After him, to Billy Graham.

On my father's side, my grandfather and grandmother were divorced. My grandmother was a church goer. Went to a small, probably non-denominational evangelical church. I would go with her occasionally to Sunday school or something like that. But no, religion wasn't a big part of the family.

Czaplicki: If you don't mind me asking, do you know why your grandparents got a divorce? Did it happen young, or did it happen later on?

Schnorf: I don't know for sure. I know that it—

Czaplicki: It was not as common then as it became later.

Schnorf: I know that it caused my father and my grandfather to become estranged. I did not meet my grandfather on my father's side until I was sixteen years old. It was my understanding that my father had had absolutely no contact with him since he and my grandmother divorced. I couldn't tell you exactly when that was, but I can remember as early as when I was about four, that would be '48, my grandmother and her mother were living together by themselves. So it was…I don't know; the divorce was sometime before that.

Czaplicki: How about extracurricular activities, outside of baseball? Any hobbies you had?

Schnorf: No, not a lot, you know, youth sports. Kids in the neighborhood [would] play basketball at the outdoor court at the local grade school or get up a football game or something. It was pretty much sports oriented.

Czaplicki: Did you have a bike?

Schnorf: Yeah.

Czaplicki: Edgar described these scenes of these mobs of kids riding their bikes everywhere. That was kind of the thing to do outside of sports. Did you meet him, growing up, when you were really young, or did that happen later?

Schnorf: He and my next brother were in the same grade. So, I and all three of my brothers, as did Jim [Edgar]—I really don't know about Fred or Tom—we all went to the lab school[1]. Lab school was small, two classes per grade level. My brother David and Jim were two years behind. When Jim talks about bike riding, part of what he's probably talking about is on the campus at Eastern. It had miles and miles of sidewalks and was perfect for bike riding when school wasn't in session or something like that, especially in the summer when there weren't a lot of people around. That and we rode our bikes up to the square. Charleston is the county seat, so there's a standard courthouse square. And [they] would ride their bikes on a little hill, on the way from anything south of the square, to the square. There's a little hill, so you'd coast going down, pedal going up.

Czaplicki: No ten speeds yet, right?

Schnorf: Oh my, my, my, my, my, few people had three speeds, but no, that was the real exception. Most of the heading up there was to either a place called King Brothers, which was Kings. It was a bookstore, kind of. I don't know; maybe you'd think of it today as kind of the equivalent of a bookstore/gift shop or something like that. But they had a soda fountain, and people would go there to read comic books and buy a coke. Then, on the other side of the square, there was the Owl Drug, which also had a soda fountain and served food.

Czaplicki: Owl Drug. Never heard of that.

Schnorf: So we got a little older, maybe a little bit more of hanging out over on that side of the square, rather than King's, because they did serve food. [As we] got a little older, the pool hall was right next door to the Owl Drug. I don't imagine Jim ever hung out at the pool hall. I really don't. (both laugh)

Czaplicki: What part of Charleston did you live in? What neighborhood?

[1] Between 1899 and 1957, Eastern Illinois University's teacher candidates participated in Buzzard Lab School, where they could complete observations or student teaching on campus. Local students attended first grade through high school at the "model school." The lab school closed its doors in 1974. In 2012, space within Buzzard Hall was secured for creation of the EIU Lab School Museum.

Schnorf: I lived on the southwest side. So actually, about six or seven blocks straight west of the north end of the university. Lincoln Street runs east and west. The university main building faces Lincoln, and it sits between Fourth and Seventh. I grew up at A Street…Fourth, Third, Second, First, Division A.

Czaplicki: Pretty logical.

Schnorf: Pretty logical.

Czaplicki: Were you aware of young Jim's political school ambitions, running for class office and all that stuff?

Schnorf: Well, I was aware of him more than I would have been aware of a lot of kids, because he was, like I said, in my brother David's grade. Jim was a good student, as was my brother David, and as were three or four other kids they kind of ran around with or were a part of a group of. So I knew who Jim was.

I remember, on occasion or two, my folks—[whether it was] somewhere we'd been or we were going and he'd been or he was going—giving him a ride. I probably, at first, had some recollection of him, maybe around third, fourth grade or something like that, his third or fourth grade, so [for] me, maybe fifth or sixth grade.

Czaplicki: All kids say, "When I grow up, I want to be blank." Did you—

Schnorf: When did I first know he had political aspirations?

Czaplicki: Well, that too, but I was even thinking for yourself. What did you think about doing at your earliest, not so much coming out of high school?

Schnorf: No. I guess I'm generalizing from my own experience, but I don't think you grew up in Charleston, particularly if you went to the Lab School, without somewhere in the back of your mind the idea of maybe being a teacher.

Czaplicki: And your family background?

Schnorf: Yeah, yeah. A whole lot Charleston kids went to Eastern [and] became teachers. Some of them stuck with it; some of them didn't.

Czaplicki: Was it something in the curriculum, or did you just have a lot of great teachers that you all respected?

Schnorf: Oh, I don't know. [It] might be closer to predestination or something like that. You can go to school for next to nothing. It's a teacher's college. I never really remember talking about it much with other kids; although, like I said, a surprising number of us ended up with degrees in education. There were teacher education scholarships available then.

Basically [that involved] a commitment to teach in the public schools, I think, for…It was either for three years or for a year for every year you received tuition. I lived at home; I didn't have to pay for a dorm or something like that. I remember writing the checks; my tuition and fees, after the scholarship, were $17, as an education major. So, you're an education major; you had to teach for a few years. A lot of people stayed in it. It was right at the time when teacher salaries hadn't quite but were just getting ready to start to really boom or explode or something like that.

The first year I taught, my salary was $4,800. That was the 1966-67 school year. Forty-eight hundred dollars plus $300 as assistant football coach and $100 as assistant baseball coach, so $5,200, a nice even $100 a week. By the third year, if I had stayed in, my salary would have been almost $9,000. So, it was really really just at the point where teacher salaries were starting to grow to some level of respectability.

A lot of people I taught with, particularly guys, maybe spent a couple, three years downstate, maybe not even did that, and went up north to the suburbs where the salaries were considerably better. A lot of people I went to high school with taught in the Chicago suburbs. Even with the cost of living difference, you could teach in someplace like Hinsdale or somewhere like that, you could make a living wage as a teacher.

Czaplicki: You mentioned football coaching. Did you play some football too?

Schnorf: Only in high school, but in a small school in downstate Illinois, everyone that looks like they can hold a ball without dropping it ends up an assistant coach of something. (Czaplicki laughs)

Czaplicki: In your school days, before college, did politics interest you much?

Schnorf: No, not particularly. I was probably…I don't know. Let's see. I think of Eastern faculty [as] being World War II vets who had gotten their advanced degrees after the war.

Czaplicki: GI bill?

Schnorf: Maybe. Did the GI bill pay for masters and doctorates?

Czaplicki: I'm not sure.

Schnorf: I don't know either. I just realized, I never thought about whether they actually got their PhD with a GI Bill or not. But anyway, it was kind of contradictory because, you know, I think of them as ex-army officers, but I also think of them—many of them, if not most of them—as FDR Democrats.

When you went to the lab school, it was an interesting experience. My French teacher in fourth, fifth, sixth grade was the head of the foreign language department at Eastern, a full PhD. A lot of my instructors in grade school, junior high were full PhDs.

Czaplicki: So you were ten years old, and you had a PhD teaching you.

Schnorf: French, the head of the department. My grade school PE [physical education] teacher has a building named after her at the university, McAfee Gymnasium. The nurse in our grade school, [her] portrait hangs somewhere around their health department, June Bland; I remember her name. So, you were exposed to something different than I think what the average kid, even the average bright kid attending a public school. You didn't have PhD's.

Because we were a lab school and it was a teacher's college, we were guinea pigs for a lot of things. One of the things that you would find out, if you look back at us, the older we got, we tested unbelievably well, because we got tested all the time. There was always some undergrad student or grad student giving us some kind of test about something. So testing became so ordinary, such a normal part…We always had lots of undergrad and grad students floating around whatever we were doing at the lab school.

So, it was a, I think probably, generally a more broadening experience than the average small town downstate Illinois kid got, growing up. One of the things that happened is, many of us—I have no idea if it is true, Jim, or not, but I suspect—many of us were much more liberal than our parents were, filled with the thoughts of twenty-three year old grad students, things like that. Even when we were twelve, fourteen years old, we might be arguing with our parents about capital punishment, socialism and civil rights and things like that.

Czaplicki: But you personally weren't particularly—

Schnorf: Thinking about…No, no, no, not particularly civil rights and things like that.

Czaplicki: You weren't following Stevenson and all that stuff?

Schnorf: No¸ no. Not at all, when I think about it. The first time I was old enough to vote—you had to be twenty-one then—I voted for—

Czaplicki: McCarthy?

Schnorf: No, (laughing) I don't think there'd have been a McCarthy running in Illinois. I am trying to think. The first time I voted would have been in sixty …I turned twenty-one in '65, okay. There would have been no general election in '65, so it would have been the general election in '66, which would have been a presidential year, would it?

Czaplicki: No, ‘68.

Schnorf: Sixty-eight was a presidential year, because then—

Czaplicki: I don’t know if Dirksen was up in ‘66 or not. I can’t remember.

Schnorf: The first thing I remember about an election, I remember riding with my parents in the car, a blue Oldsmobile, standing up in the front seat between my parents. They are going to the polls in 1948. I remember saying, because I guess I knew the name, “Are you going to vote for Harry Truman? Are you going to vote for Truman?” And I remember my mother saying, “No, we’re Republicans.”

As far as I know, as far as I can remember, I’ve never voted for a Democrat for governor. I’m trying to think if I ever voted for a Democrat for president. I don’t think so. I voted for John Anderson. Was that in the general or a primary? I think I voted for John Anderson in a general, which means I didn’t vote for the Republican. That’s probably the only time that I didn’t vote for the Republican. I voted for Nixon twice. Although I have a world of admiration for Obama…I knew him when he was in the Senate, thought very highly of him, I voted for McCain; I’m a Republican

Czaplicki: Interesting. So kids aren’t…The grads students may have been trying to fill your head with their liberal ideas, but you went the GOP route.

Schnorf: Well, Jim said something to me once. I don’t want to attribute it to him as a direct quote, but I remember it generally how he said it, that we were Republicans because of where we grew up. If you ever wanted to be elected or if you ever wanted to be connected to people who were elected, you’re going to be Republicans. I remember him saying, if we’d all grown up in Madison County, we would probably all be Democrats, which is, I guess, one of the advantages of being a moderate. You really aren’t moving very far to move from one party label to the other. But no, [it was a] small town; you knew the mayor; you knew the police chief, a couple of things may be of interest, interesting kinds of things.

It turns out for some reason, I never knew exactly why my parents were friendly with the son of the university president. The university president was a guy named, I believe, Robert Buzzard.

Czaplicki: That’s not Quincy Doudna?

Schnorf: No, he was the next president.

Czaplicki: The next president.

Schnorf: The son of President Buzzard was—

Czaplicki: Buzzard, like the bird?

Schnorf: Yeah. It was Henry Buzzard, and my parents played cards with him. My parents, aunt and uncle, family friends and Henry Buzzard, I remember them in the dining room. They played canasta

Czaplicki: (laughs)

Schnorf: But because of that, I knew President Buzzard. It just turns out then, coincidentally, because of that, I have known every president of the university, except the first, the guy who was president when my mom went there, Livingston Lord. I can't remember for sure when President Buzzard came. President Doudna came in '57 I believe, '56 or '57. So, the university, the lab school, Eastern's athletic teams, youth athletics, that's pretty much growing up.

Czaplicki: So, you're going to Eastern then. Did you even look at any other schools?

Schnorf: No, $17 a quarter. Some of the people I graduated from high school with did go other places. A few did go other places, but most, at least for undergraduate school, went to Eastern. You could get a bachelor's degree. Particularly if you are willing to be an education major, you've probably got $500 invested in a bachelor's degree.

Czaplicki: Could you earn credits in advance while you were at the lab school? Were you allowed to take anything?

Schnorf: Not that I recall. Not that I recall. I don't recall it even in high school. It may be just something that didn't happen yet or at least didn't happen in rural parts of Illinois.

Czaplicki: When you entered Eastern, what was your major?

Schnorf: History.

Czaplicki: History. How did you come to settle on that?

Schnorf: I liked history. My mother always described history to me as like reading a novel. I don't know what the equivalents might be today, but at Eastern, at least at that time, if you are an education major, if you're getting your degree in education, a BS in education, you picked a major and a minor. If you were a history major, the logical minor was social studies, because a social studies minor plus a history major left you accredited at the end of your degree to teach about five or six different subjects. You could teach history, world history, American history. I suppose you probably could have taught ancient history, anything else, but at that time, basically world history and American history. Then, because of what you had to take for your social

studies minor…You had to take at least three classes in several different areas, geography, sociology, political science, economics.

Well, at that time in Illinois, anything you had twelve hours in—twelve quarter hours, or it was either nine or ten semester hours—you were accredited to teach. So that major and minor let you teach a lot of subjects. Of course, also, probably a lot of people ended up teaching things that they weren't accredited to teach also, but you were…In theory, I graduated from college, fully prepared to teach geography to high school kids.

Czaplicki: So you were a history major, or you were an education major, and then within education, your major was history? Or it was not as divided as it is today?

Schnorf: It was different then. You either got a BS in education or a BA. If you weren't getting an education degree, you got a BA. So, everyone who was going to be a teacher's degree was a BS in education. Then their major was the field they were qualifying to teach in. So I was a history major, a social studies minor.

Czaplicki: Any particular courses or teachers that stood out in your mind? I know in the case of Jim Edgar there was that really important political science teacher, Connelly?

Schnorf: Joe Connelly, yeah, yeah, yeah. Not so much in undergraduate school. There were, at least as far as I can think of, all men. There were people who were good teachers. There were also people who were far from dynamic, let's say. But no one stands out. Now in graduate school…I went back to get my graduate degree. Then there's a guy, a couple of people, actually two or three people, that kind of stand out, but not really in undergrad. Edgar was, I am sure, a poli sci [political science] major. I don't know what his minor was.

Czaplicki: I think it was history.

Schnorf: History. That makes sense.

Czaplicki: They're close. What was campus social life like? Was it different since you had grown up in that town? Was it much of a change?

Schnorf: No, very, very little change. Matter of fact, you knew the kids from the town far better than you are going to know anyone that you met at the university. So your social life kind of gradually transitioned a little bit from 100 percent people from Charleston to, at some point, 50/50 maybe. At some point, even more than that. But when I was an undergrad, I ran around mainly with other guys that were undergrads that I had gone to high school with.

Czaplicki: Did you join a fraternity or anything like that?

Schnorf: No, no. Thought about it, considered it, I and another guy did, but didn't, actually three of us. One guy actually did go ahead and join. No. It's funny, my next younger brother did. But then my brother after him didn't. But then my youngest brother did. So, it may have been very idiosyncratic and personality-based or something.

Czaplicki: Did you live on campus or off?

Schnorf: I lived at home. It was cheap. Now, like I said, my next brother moved into a fraternity house. So, again, maybe it just came down to personality. But it was so inexpensive.

Czaplicki: How would you get to campus? Did you have a car by then, or was it close enough to walk?

Schnorf: I think I probably had a car, but we were five blocks from campus, easier to walk than to find a parking place.

Czaplicki: And did you work at all, while you were going to school?

Schnorf: Yeah. When I was fifteen, I started working at a bowling alley. My parents and another couple went together as partners and built a bowling alley. The other family ran it, and the rest of us worked there.

Czaplicki: What did you do?

Schnorf: The automatic answer is "set pins," but by that time there were automatic pin setters, so you worked as what…I don't know, I think today maybe they use the word spotter or something like that. You worked in the back, and you fixed things that broke. And while nothing was broken, you cleaned pins and patched pins and did things like that.

Czaplicki: Do you remember where that bowling alley was located?

Schnorf: Yeah, yeah. It's still there.

Czaplicki: Oh yeah?

Schnorf: On E Street, just north of Lincoln.

Czaplicki: Was that the first job you had growing up?

Schnorf: First real job. [I] mowed yards and stuff like that but first real job.

Czaplicki: How did you meet your wife? Did you meet her in college?

Schnorf: Met her in graduate school. I was married—

Czaplicki: When did you go to graduate school?

Schnorf: I quit teaching in '69 and went to graduate school. When I was a junior in college, I married a woman that I knew from high school. I'd been dating her off and on for quite a while, got married. [We] were married six or seven years. Got divorced while I was back at grad school.

Met my [current] wife in a…It was a counseling class, and she was one of a bunch of undergraduate students who were brought in by the professor as guinea pigs for simulated counseling sessions that were…She was my counselee. I was attracted to her. I ran into her a few weeks later, somewhere near campus; I don't remember where. Asked her if she wanted to go out, and she did. So we ended up getting married. We got married in '73.

Czaplicki: So was that shortly after you got the divorce or had you been divorced?

Schnorf: Well, the woman I had been married to, we hadn't been living together for about a year and a half. But it was six months after I got divorced.

Czaplicki: What kind of counseling were you simulating in class?

Schnorf: Well, when I went to graduate school, I went as a history major, and I was about, I don't know, probably about two-thirds done with my degree in history.

Czaplicki: MA or PhD?

Schnorf: MA. I think I had had maybe nine of the twelve courses I needed or something like that, eight maybe. I decided to change my major to counseling. The reason was, while I was going to graduate school I had started working in a local nonprofit that was in the area of services to mentally and physically disabled people. I decided to change my major to counseling. I kind of focused on courses that would be beneficial in working with people with exceptional needs. I probably didn't even know those words at the time. I remember distinctly the class. The professor was a guy named Glen Hubele.

Czaplicki: Do you know how to spell that?

Schnorf: B-e-l-e

Czaplicki: Oh, b-e-l-e

Schnorf: At that time, the counseling program was part of the ed psych (educational psychology) department. The ed psych department was very Rogerian[2]. The

[2] Person-centered counseling. Such client-centered therapy is a form of psychotherapy developed by psychologist Carl Rogers, beginning in the 1940s and extending into the 1980s. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Person-centered_therapy)

clinical psych department was very much…they were behaviorists. But in the counseling program, which was part of the ed psych program, everything was very Rogerian. This was a Rogerian counseling—what would you call it?—counseling seminar maybe or something like that. And she was my guinea pig counselee.

Czaplicki: Did Vietnam figure into any of your calculations at all in this period?

Schnorf: It was certainly always in the background. I pretty much just—kind of a grace of God thing—avoided it. I had good enough grades, barely, when I was an undergraduate to keep a deferment. At that time, you had to be in the upper quarter, I believe, of the males to keep your deferment. Then I was married. And then I was a school teacher. So, I was always sort of half a notch or a notch removed from the top of the priority list. I got called up for physicals a couple of times, but I never got drafted.

Czaplicki: Personally, how did you feel toward the war? Did you have a constant view of it? Did your attitudes change over time? Governor Edgar, I think, says he started off supporting it, but by the time the '70s came, he had—

Schnorf: Well, I had a lot of friends…When I say a lot, I had quite a few guys that I'd grown up with went to the war. Some of them were drafted; some of them were enlisted. Several of them ended up in Vietnam; a couple of them were killed in Vietnam.

I don't really remember having early-on feelings, but I remember, pretty much like Jim said, by the '70s, thinking of it as a disaster, you know, no end in sight, just a sink hole into which—I probably wouldn't have articulated in these words—but assets, human and cash and everything else were being thrown.

Czaplicki: How about other political issues in this period, other things that caught your attention?

Schnorf: Well, very much…I think of myself as a civil libertarian. I have always thought of myself as a civil libertarian. Some of it I am sure is self-delusion and stuff. But for the main part, as a matter of fact, I always kind of, until I started becoming disabused of it, thought of it as the right Republican position. If you were a Democrat—

Czaplicki: Right as in correct Republican or right wing?

Schnorf: Correct, morally correct. If you were a Democrat, you had things you wanted to accomplish, and you might well say that the ends justified the means. But if you were a Republican, you believe in the Constitution, believe exactly what it said. I always had high hopes that the Republican Party would be the first party to run an African American for president or vice president, a woman for president or vice president, because if you were

a Republican, what people could do is what counted, not stereotypical things about where they came from or something like that.

A lot of these things now I've never really said aloud or even crystallized as thoughts. The "southern strategy" thing disgusted me, still disgusts me. It's a terrible, terrible, lowest common denominator approach.

Czaplicki: And what did you understand by that term? When you say "southern strategy," how did you see that working?

Schnorf: The Republican Party, who—granted this is a little bit simplistic—freed the slaves, now want to go back into post, substantially post, Reconstruction South and basically be the party of white segregationists and use race as an issue to divide, to, as a party, recapture the South from the Democrats by, in effect, conceding the African American vote to the Democrats and appealing to what I consider to be far from noble aspects of race relationships in the South, at the time.

You don't come to that conclusion instantly. If you can step back from it a little bit, you can even admire it as a political tactic. But I think it's a big part of the foundation for where we're at now, the beginning of the politics of divisiveness. Politics were nasty in 1860 or 1870 and occasionally governing was, but governing was, at least by the good guys, viewed as something separate from running for election.

By today, running for election is constant. Governing is, I think in Washington, in most people's minds, something maybe they recall that they're supposed to be there for, but it doesn't come to the forefront very often for very many of them. I attribute a lot of it to the politics of divisiveness that go back to that Republican strategy of driving a wedge, driving the southern whites away from Democrats.

Czaplicki: Did you get involved in any particular—

Schnorf: No.

Czaplicki: …political actions?

Schnorf: No, not even the war. [It's] something I think about sometimes, but no. Small town rural Illinois, there weren't a lot of demonstrations and stuff like that.

Czaplicki: Yeah, I've heard Eastern was pretty quiet compared to—

Schnorf: That would be—

Czaplicki: …compared to other places.

Schnorf: That would be fair. I am trying to remember; I don't know if there ever was an anti-war demonstration. I suppose there surely was, but I don't remember it.

Czaplicki: I think Governor Edgar told a story about there was some polite demonstration, and I think the kids even stopped to salute the flag or say the pledge allegiance or something like that.

Schnorf: Yeah, yeah I do remember that. I think it was out in front of Old Main, as a matter of fact.

So, I finished graduate school. I was working for this nonprofit, and that's pretty much what I did, off and on. That would have been '73. I stayed at that nonprofit for another year and a half.

Czaplicki: Do you remember the name of the nonprofit?

Schnorf: Yeah, Coles County Association for the Retarded. I then went up to the Chicago area, to the suburbs, to work for a very similar nonprofit. I was recruited to come up there by a friend of mine who was the executive director, who was leaving. We went up there for two years, the west suburbs, Proviso Township Association for the Retarded.

Then [I] went to Springfield, recruited by a fellow I knew, who worked there in an office called the Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities. It was a federally funded project, still exists. Federal funds to the states to use for planning, coordinating, experimenting, etc. service provision for people with developmental disabilities.

Czaplicki: Would that have been about '77?

Schnorf: That was the summer of '76. I worked there through the end of '78, I guess.

That was the end of the Walker administration, the beginning of the Thompson administration.

I then worked for a statewide nonprofit, the Illinois Developmental Disabilities Advocacy Authority, a federally funded program that was to be established in each state. Its successor still exists here. I can't remember exactly what it's called now.

Edgar is appointed secretary of state by Thompson, and I go to work for him in the summer of 1981.

Czaplicki: We'll get up to that in a minute. I just want to back you up a little bit first and just ask, were you aware at all of Edgar's campaigns for office in your connections at Coles? Were you involved in any of his runs or anything?

Schnorf: Oh, yeah.

Czaplicki: Oh, you were.

Schnorf: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Czaplicki: I didn't know if you maybe left Charleston behind for a little while when you went up to Chicago.

Schnorf: No. As I said, I always pretty much thought of myself as a civil libertarian. The woman who I married, a woman named Jane Elmore—

Czaplicki: How do you spell her last name?

Schnorf: E-l-m-o-r-e. …was a very, very, very active feminist. And lo and behold, one of the things that we had in common was we both liked Edgar's position on ERA [the Equal Rights Amendment] and abortion.

Czaplicki: Even in these early years? Was his first run '74 or '76?

Schnorf: His first run was the primary in '74, and he lost.

Czaplicki: Max Coffey's presence.

Schnorf: Um-hmm. We contributed to his campaign. We hosted a small coffee for him among the people we worked with.

Czaplicki: So you had the coffee, and he came and met your friends?

Schnorf: Um-hmm.

Czaplicki: In '74, the first run?

Schnorf: Actually in '73; I am sure it was, that we did it. It was interesting. When my wife and I got married, the summer of '73, she kept her name. First person I'd ever known that done it. But it made sense to me. As she pointed out, I was going to keep mine. We had to get the state's attorney to instruct the county clerk to allow her to register to vote at her new address, because he would not register her under her name. He insisted that her married name could no longer possibly be Jane Elmore. We literally had to get the state's attorney to tell him that he had to let her register to vote as Jane Elmore at her new address.

Czaplicki: Was the clerk—

Schnorf: The clerk was an elderly white guy, you know. I am sure I'd voted for him every time he'd run. (both laugh) He wasn't a bad guy. I mean, he was seventy-five years old probably. Was a foreign concept to me, and I was twenty-seven years old. I'm sure it was a foreign concept to him.

But anyway, Jim Edgar is probably one of the only Republicans she could ever possibly have been closely attracted to. Part of what we liked about Jim was he made no bones about it. It wasn't like he wore it as a flag on his shoulder or something. It's just he didn't try to hide it. It was just matter of fact about it. And that's one of the things that we liked about him all along. We liked his positions, but we also liked his matter-of-factness.

So yeah, we were involved, not as much in his '73 campaign. In '74 and '76, we were living in the Chicago area in '74. I guess we were back in Springfield by '76. We contributed, helped raise a little money, did some volunteer work and stuff.

Czaplicki: By that point, was Edgar asking for your help, actively, or was it just you would go home to see your family, and you knew was in the race?

Schnorf: I don't think he ever asked. He never had to. I don't remember him ever asking. Now we were bona fide 100 percent supporters of his. He's re-elected in '76. Sometime in '77 Thompson asks him to—

Czaplicki: Seventy eight, I think.

Schnorf: Seventy eight …join his staff.

Czaplicki: Seventy nine actually. Or at least in '79, Thompson asked him to be his legislative liaison.

Schnorf: That's right. He's elected in '76. He's re-elected in '78. Seventy-nine, Thompson asks him to join his staff. So I was one of the people that Jim called.

Czaplicki: Really? He mentioned that. He said he called a few people. I was wondering who he called.

Schnorf: He did. "What do you think I ought to do?" I suggested to him, and he did it, that it being so soon after the election and just having asked the citizens to vote for him for re-election, that his condition be that Thompson come over to Charleston and ask the citizens for their permission to take Jim away from them and go to work for him. And Thompson did.

We hosted a breakfast at the student union early in the morning. Thompson appeared, was Thompson at his best, and the citizens were agreed to make the sacrifice of letting Jim leave as their representative and move on to higher things. I enjoyed that.

Czaplicki: Were you up on the platform at the—

Schnorf: No, no, no, in the back, but it was fun. Then roughly the same thing happened in late '80. I don't know who all he called then, but he called me

to talk about it. It was an interesting thing. By that time, by the late ‘70s, he and I were at least occasionally having real political discussions.

Czaplicki: Yeah, I was going to ask you about that, how the relationship developed, from knowing him as your little brother’s friend to—

Schnorf: It just kind of evolved.

Czaplicki: Have you ever chatted with him when he was working at Cavins and Bayles [a clothing store in Charleston, Illinois where Jim Edgar worked]?

Schnorf: Yeah. I bought stuff from him when he worked at Cavins and Bayles, for crying out loud. If you’d known Jim a long time, one of the things that you pretty clearly see—and I don’t mean to intimate that there is no growth or anything—but you see a great consistency. His work at Cavins and Bayles is a good example, his work ethic. He’s a hard worker. His personal appearance, he’s very careful about it. You would have noticed it every bit as much at Cavins and Bayles as you would have noticed it when he was giving his first acceptance speech as governor or something like that.

You might not have seen this so much, but what quickly became apparent was his self-discipline. He might have allowed himself a little bit of the luxury of moaning about things not going exactly as he wanted, but it didn’t move beyond that into modifying his sense of who he was and what he believed in and what he stood for and stuff like that.

I remember once…Oh, I don’t remember, this was probably… criminy, sometime ‘81, late ‘81, early ‘82 or something like that. We’re in his office, a few of us, and we are talking about DUI [driving under the influence], and I am one of several who’s saying, “You know, maybe we have gone far enough with this.” Now, we weren’t yet to the point in ‘86 where we had the “Stop Edgar before he stops you” signs in all the taverns and stuff, and him saying, “It doesn’t matter if it beats me. This is where we are on this issue” and that sort of stuff. It goes back to what Jane and I saw in ‘73 and ‘74. He was pro-ERA. He was pro-choice, and those weren’t the ideal positions for a Republican to hold in Coles County, Illinois. But they were his positions, and he held them, and he ran on that basis.

It was just like in ’90, on the income tax surcharge. “It may not be the most political expedient position, but I’ll stand on it, and I’ll lose or win on it.” To this day, all of us that were with him have these mental images of Neil Hartigan, “too little percent.” (Czaplicki laughs) So, the things that have been impressive, things that are impressive about Jim, are things that have been there to see, his brightness, his self-discipline, his straightforwardness, his steadfastness. He’s not some sort of kamikaze fool or something like that. He doesn’t go out of his way to attract lightning or

something like that, but he doesn't run from it. He's comfortable with himself.

One of the things that we would always say about him to people that never met him, "What you see is absolutely what you get." It's not like there's some other Jim Edgar who is different than the one that you meet at the reception. That's absolutely him. You wish he was a little more this or that or a little less this or that. It doesn't matter. What you see is absolutely what you get. So, the worst that's going to happen to you is not going to be that you get a pig in a poke. You're going to get exactly what you saw when you decided who to vote for. He's not going to be someone else tomorrow. That was comfortable, and I think it was reassuring to a lot of people.

Czaplicki: Can I go back to '73 for just a second? You might not remember precisely where, but when you say that you were aware of the position on ERA and abortion, was that something that you had heard him personally say in a speech, or is that what the people in town were talking about? How did you—

Schnorf: I can't remember. I really can't.

Czaplicki: I was just curious because Edgar often talks about his campaigns, and he really downplays the issues. "Nobody cared about the issues. We didn't talk about that stuff. It was who you knew and who your family was and—"

Schnorf: He's absolutely right. I mean, it's a local election, but because it was something that was significant to me, something that was extraordinarily important to my wife, that's something we became aware of early on.

Czaplicki: So, when Thompson names him legislative liaison, then you have this conversation. Were you surprised? He's awfully young when this happened and—

Schnorf: Well, he was awfully young when a lot of this happened. As you got to know him, his ambitions became clear. A little of this probably sounds less serious than it should be or something like this, but early on, part of what you saw was he's like a high school baseball player. His goal isn't to hit 380 in high school. His goal's to play in the major leagues. Everything else is part of getting there.

Early on, it was evident that his goal wasn't to go to Springfield and spend twenty-five years as a state representative and retire. That's part of a process. I personally, I don't know that I've ever heard him say it, nor do I know that I've ever heard him deny it, but there's no doubt in my mind that he had at least entertained ideas that he could be president one day. So did a lot of the rest of us. So there was focus on tactically, "Don't do the wrong, stupid, short sided thing. This isn't the end of the race yet." It was there; it was always there.

Czaplicki: Thompson's speech, as a tactical thing at the union, that reception you had, do you think it needed to happen, or was it just something good as part of gamesmanship to have happen? Would people have actually been angry at him?

Schnorf: I don't know. Would people have been angry at him? Certainly at least some would have. "I just voted for him." Maybe me more than him, and I've said this to him—I don't know if he remembers it or not—"You've got to be from somewhere." I thought it was a tactical mistake when he changed his voter registration from Charleston to Springfield. You got to be from someplace. No one's from Springfield; everyone's from Springfield, everyone around here's from Springfield.

It's meaningless, because there're people passing through. I probably felt much more strongly about it than he did. You don't walk away from the people who got you there. I am not implying he ever would, but it's an image thing.

Czaplicki: One more question about these prior to the secretary of state years, and that's, you sort of described your attitude towards the Republican Party. You described yourself as a civil libertarian and talked about what attracted you about Edgar. What was your sense of the Republican bench beyond Edgar at this point? Is he…I don't want to put words in your mouth. Was he a last hope?

Schnorf: No!

Czaplicki: You just had Watergate, as well. You sort of had this as another shot. It seems like you really felt strongly about him by the time—

Schnorf: Well, I felt strongly about Edgar personally. I was with Edgar. There were a bunch of us. We were with Edgar. There might have been other fine people. I through Edgar met Bob Kustra. I really liked him. Bob was a good guy. There were other good, moderate Republicans around. So, I never thought of Jim as the **last** hope of the Republican Party, as much as I thought of him as the best hope.

He always, I'm sure, wishes we wouldn't say things like this. He was not the perfect candidate. He's not the world's greatest public speaker. I wish he would have stopped using the royal "we" the first time he used it. (Czaplicki laughs) But there's a sincerity there that causes people to feel a comfort level. He always said, "You know, a lot of it's not whether or not people agree with you on the issues that they know your position on. It's whether they trust you to answer a question that no one has any idea yet of even what the question's going to be."

I thought that's what there was with Jim. He's not going to do something stupid. He's not going to do something that's self-aggrandizing.

He's not going to do something for flashy effect or a ten second press pop or something like that. He's going to try his very best to do the right thing. And you know what? Above and beyond all that, he's very knowledgeable. He's very well read. He's a student of government. There's a pretty good chance he's going to know what the right decision is. But there's no doubt he's going to try his very best to make the right decision. I think that's the thing, more than anything, that served Jim very, very, very well. [It] hasn't hurt him any, obviously, that he's telegenic, but there's something in him that people felt all along they could trust him.

ERA and abortion could be issues that beat him. They would hurt him in parts of his district. There were counties within thirty miles of Charleston that I'm not sure he ever carried, except maybe against Dawn [Clark Netsch], and the issue was abortion. He had a heck of a time carrying Effingham County. He had a heck of a time carrying Jasper County. But he wasn't going to be one person speaking at the Lincoln Day dinner in Effingham Friday night and someone else talking to the Republican women in Waukegan or something the next day. I think that was more than okay with people. It worked out pretty well.

Czaplicki: Indeed it did. So, I guess '80, not '81, Thompson taps Edgar to replace Alan Dixon, who's been elected to the Senate. So he picks Edgar to be his secretary of state. Was that a surprise?

Schnorf: Well, probably more of a surprise at the time than it would be looking back, when you look back at Governor Thompson's pattern of turning to people he knew. Some governors—Edgar maybe would be a decent example of one—but some governors grow people out in their cabinets and then bring them into the administration. Thompson grew people, young people, in close to him, then moved them out into important roles. If you look at that, maybe it is not quite as surprising.

I suppose that—I only hypothesize this—in Governor Thompson's mind, at the end, it probably came down to between Jim Edgar and George Ryan. Certainly, if you look at the results, Thompson made a good choice. I suspect at least part of it is that Thompson felt the same thing about Jim as a lot of other people do; there's substance here. This isn't light weight; this isn't a game; this isn't ego. Not to say Jim doesn't have one, but this is a person who'll do the job well, and who can advance the principles of the moderate wing of the Republican Party well.

Czaplicki: So pretty quickly, Edgar then brings you in, several months later?

Schnorf: Actually I go to him. I go to him.

Czaplicki: But the position was his—

Schnorf: Yeah, the position was as director of the senior citizen program. The secretary of state had a small senior citizen program, whose primary function was to get out and conduct refresher courses for senior citizens who were going to have to take their driver's license test. He put me in charge of it. When I say [that] I think part of what he thought about was that I think politically, I don't think he would have meant in a partisan sense, as much as in a strategic sense.

A program like that, you look for opportunities to get name awareness, to spread positive vibes, to get thoughtful exposure and things like that. Jim visited a lot of senior citizen centers over a couple of years, which is where most of these courses took place, where our—

Czaplicki: You would go to their sites?

Schnorf: Our staff would…Once a month, appear at the X County senior citizen center to conduct the refresher course.

Czaplicki: And seniors vote.

Schnorf: And seniors vote.

Czaplicki: But you went to him?

Schnorf: I approached him sometime…It was in the spring. The thing that I was doing, the statewide non- profit, was not thriving politically. I probably pushed it harder than I should have and wanted to expand it aggressively. I don't want to say made enemies. [That's] probably too strong. I'd encountered resistance in the governor's office and the general assembly to what I wanted to do.

Czaplicki: From other agencies that felt you were encroaching or—

Schnorf: From other agencies, from individual legislators, from individual staff in the governor's office.

Czaplicki: What was the substance of it? I mean, is it a functional thing, or is it just simply power thing?

Schnorf: Part of it was a power thing. Part of it was a money thing. I can't remember how much federal funding we got. I don't know; I think it was probably less than $1million, and I wanted some state money additionally.

We did a statewide newsletter, bi-monthly, and I said some not disparaging, but probably challenging, things about the state of services to certain people with disabilities in Illinois. I had some of the superintendents of the state institutions for the retarded, particularly, which were at that time were much, much, much, much larger than they are today, believing that I

wanted to put them out of business. And I didn't take gentle hints from a guy in the governor's office, who would give me gentle hints about things.

Czaplicki: Do you not want to name that person?

Schnorf: No, no, no, nothing to be gained. Jim will know when he reads it. The guy will know too. So, it all kind of came together in the winter of '80, '81. I had gotten a legislative appropriation that the governor's office didn't want. As a matter of fact, Republicans controlled the Senate at the time. I had Max Coffey as the Republican senator on the conference committee and stuff. I had a couple of million bucks, I think it was. It wasn't huge, but it was, you know. The governor's office didn't want it. They thought they had it stopped. Lo and behold, the conference committee…We walk into the room, and the guy from the governor's office knows that he's got it aced. In fact, bingo, the conference committee adds $2 million. The governor vetoes the money. At that point, I'm—

Czaplicki: Do you recall? Was it attached to a budget bill, or was it attached to—

Schnorf: It was attached to, I think, the Department of Mental Health's approp [appropriations] bill.

Czaplicki: Winter of '81?

Schnorf: The winter of '80, '81, yeah, whenever the veto session was. If the governor vetoes it, I'm done with the fight. As a matter of fact, while the fight was going on, before Edgar was secretary of state, while he was still the governor's legislative director, he called me to go to lunch. I meet him for lunch, and he said, "Listen," he said, "I know this isn't the way this is going to work but," but he said, "I've been told to find out if you want a job.

I told him no, that's not what you want, and that's not going to work, but I'm here officially to find out, would you be interested in going to work for the administration?" "No I wouldn't." "Okay, fine." We went on and had lunch. So anyway, like I said, at that point, I am done fighting all that stuff, and I go to him, I don't know when.

Czaplicki: April?

Schnorf: Yeah, I was going to say March or April probably.

Czaplicki: Do you remember the date?

Schnorf: March or April. I go to work for him. I do the senior citizen thing through the first election, and then he sends me to the Driver Services Department for the first full-term.

Czaplicki: Even before that, I just wanted to ask…So you approached him. He brought you in. Did he share any vision? Was this just to give you a place to be, or was there something he wanted you to do in there? Was there anything in particular he wanted out of that department?

Schnorf: Oh, you know, if you spend much time around Jim, he's not the kind of guy that would spend a lot of time talking to you about vision and stuff.

Czaplicki: Or even his expectations. I mean, you move into this office, "These are the things you to do. This is what I want out of you in there." Or is it just—

Schnorf: I think it was more of a mutually understood. "I'm not putting you there to do me damage. It's an opportunity for you. It's an opportunity for me to be portrayed in a good light, among the population of votes disproportionately. Go do what you're supposed to do."

Czaplicki: Did you replace someone?

Schnorf: This thing was vacant.

Czaplicki: Interesting.

Schnorf: Well, I think that there **was** someone there. I'm going to probably be viewed as someone who's beginning to lose brain cells or something like that. (both laugh) Maybe Zinder was there. I think there was someone there that he was going to move into the front office. I didn't replace someone who was just going to go away.

Czaplicki: He was elevating someone, and you were taking this—

Schnorf: Yeah, I didn't replace some Democrat that he was firing or something like that.

Czaplicki: And how easy was it for you to make the transition?

Schnorf: It was easy. The secretary there, who'd been in that program for, I think, several years, had started under Mike Howlett, from a good Democratic family down in southwestern Illinois. She and I hit it off fine. She stayed with me for a long, long time. She went with me when I went to the driver services department. She went with me when I went to CMS.

Czaplicki: What was her name?

Schnorf: Nancy White, fine, fine, fine woman, very capable.

Czaplicki: It's been coming up in a few of these interviews, the importance of a very knowledgeable, institutional memory.

Schnorf: She would have gone with me to the governor's office too. We tried it, but she just didn't like it. She wanted to go back to CMS. She did and stayed there through the remainder of the Edgar and Ryan administrations. We were very close. She was very good.

Czaplicki: Well, this question might be more pertinent for when you moved to driver services, but one of the things Governor Edgar talked about is that he was initially worried, because Dixon had brought civil service protection to all these Democratic…This is one of the only Democratic offices, by that point, in state government. He was already worried about whether or not that would handicap his ability to choose staff. I'm wondering if you had similar concerns, or if that did affect you, in terms of who you could bring in to assist you.

Schnorf: Well, in the senior area, I was there about eighteen months. It was a small program, maybe a total of twenty employees, maybe fewer than that. So we didn't do a lot of hiring. I think we had one or two new hires. At that point, the hiring wasn't even something that I got involved with. We had a lot of people who were…Well, almost everyone was a Democratic appointee. A surprising number of them went back to Howlett.

I suppose there were a handful with whom you might say we had problems involving recalcitrance to do anything that might make a Republican look good. But to tell you the truth, I don't remember much of that at all. I thought Jim handled it very, very, very well, which was "We're not going to fire anyone because they're a Democrat," except for the people immediately around him in the front office, literally a handful immediately around. He said, "If they're doing their jobs, their jobs are safe. That is what they're expected to do." He was a proponent that good government was good politics.

So I really don't even hardly remember that stuff being an issue. I only really remember one case, and it wasn't so much politics on either one's side as much as a reality. Like I said, we had a limited number of staff, and they were spread around the state. Gee, one of them was a former Democratic member of Congress. They were Democrats, but they'd been there. They were doing their job. They knew how to do it. The only thing they were doing particularly different now is that the maps and handouts and brochures they were carrying around had Jim Edgar's name on them rather than Alan Dixon. But, up in one area of the state, we had two employees from the same town, working the same area, the only area of the state where we had that.

We didn't have anyone at all in the south suburbs. We had people in Chicago and people in the west and northwest suburbs. We didn't have anyone in the southwest suburbs, so I wanted to create a position in the south suburbs. The logical thing to do was to take one of these two people,

who were both in the same area, and move one of them over there so that this area would be like everywhere else, just had one employee, and this area would, for the first time, have an employee. They'd both been there a long time. One of them was very active in local politics. The other one had been very active in local unions. Obviously, whichever one of them I picked to transfer wasn't going to want to go, move from western Illinois to the south suburbs, and there was a little set-to about that.

The one I picked did what you'd expect. He hired an attorney and sued me and said I was moving him for political purposes and stuff like that. We worked something out. He wanted to work six or eight more months then retire. That was fine too because we ended up with the same thing, one guy here, one guy there. That was the only thing I remember really where politics ever got very much involved at all.

Czaplicki: Are they from Rock Island? Was that the area?

Schnorf: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.

Czaplicki: I thought I may have read something.

Schnorf: Yeah. The guy that I chose to move went on to become a state representative.

Czaplicki: Also in politics—this didn't happen on your watch; this is something you walked into. But there was a federal investigation of some…As I understand, it was license selling? Edgar learned about this. He got picked, and then he had a meeting with the U.S. attorney who told him, "Hey, we are about to indict people." Were you involved in cleaning up that problem?

Schnorf: Not that immediate one that was already there, but there was an ongoing issue. It's one of the things where, quite candidly, I believe that George Ryan got a very, very raw deal. There are employees in the secretary of state's office, at any given point in time, who are willing to take bribes, and I've come to watch over the years. I don't think it has anything to do with whether they're Republicans or Democrats. It just purely is their own moral fiber or whatever you want to call it. They don't represent a huge number but at any given point in time, they are there.

So, I don't know if, in the eight years I was at driver services, there was ever a time when internal affairs wasn't investigating some office somewhere for allegations of selling or taking bribes for driver's licenses. Many of them turned out not to be true. Many of them turned out to be true. Many of them turned out to be very small deals in small towns. A couple of them turned out to be huge deals in big places.

So, I think for people to say that George Ryan's employees took bribes so that they could buy fundraiser tickets fails to explain why all the

previous and subsequent employees also took bribes, surely not to buy tickets to George Ryan's fundraisers. There's simply a number of people …It's a cash business. I'll tell you this story. This is an honest to God story.

I go to driver services. I haven't been there too long, maybe six months or a year. And I have a—

Czaplicki: You moved there in '83, right?

Schnorf: Moved there in January of '83. I have a meeting of all the key employees, statewide—We used to have them four times a year—bring in the regional managers and the trainers from all over the state to basically do training and information dispensing and stuff like that. I think this was probably the first one I went to. I think maybe the first time or two they had it, I didn't go to. So I go to this one. And I am saying, Boy…A lot of them have been there a long time." This one fellow had been there a long time, had started as a clerk in a facility and moved up and moved up and was now a trainer. So he was a trainer for a pretty good sized chunk of the state around the Chicago area, and he was very well thought of, very competent and had been there twenty some years.

I said, "Boy, I'll bet you've seen some changes over the time from the old paper drivers' licenses, type them out by hand to the computers and all that stuff." I said, "What's one of the significant changes you've seen?" And he said, "When my Dad took me in for a driver's license, when I was sixteen, it was a $10 bill in the ashtray. Now it's $20." He wasn't joking. This was a guy who was well thought of and competent. He was just saying it like it was.

Another time, I'm out visiting the west facility, a facility at which there was frequently allegations of problems and stuff. It's the first time I'd visited there. One of the things I did while I was at the driver services department, I visited every facility in the state. The busy ones, I visited multiple times. There were about a 125 facilities, roughly 100 full-time and twenty-five par-time. And I went to them and went to them and went to them and went to them. This was Chicago west. The weather is lousy out. It's cold and drizzling rain. The manager isn't there, so the assistant manager is taking me on a tour around the facility, showing me, explaining things to me and stuff. You look out the windows. Three sides of the building were glass, basically, and there's a little outpost building. It almost would look like the drive-through place for a bank. It would have a building, three or four lanes, with a little roof over it, something like that.

I'm thinking, "Jesus, that's got to be a miserable job out there." They're out in the rain, have to go around and make sure cars lights and turn signals and stuff work and their brake lights and stuff. I say to the guy that's

showing me around, "Boy, that can't be much fun. Do people like rotate those jobs, so that the same people don't have to be outside all the time?"

And he said, "Oh, they couldn't afford to come inside. They wouldn't want to come inside." Well, at the time I thought, there's a wage differential then. You know, you get an extra eighty cents an hour or something for being the guy outside. It wasn't what he meant at all. They couldn't afford to come inside. It was so matter of fact. It wasn't like, "It's okay." It's like, "What the hell are we going to do about it?"

Czaplicki: So the outside ones were the ones being paid off?

Schnorf: Sure, they're the ones giving the drive tests. They're the ones where the $20 bill goes in the ashtray. They're the ones that decide whether someone can get a truck driver's license or not. Now, certainly as time went on, we found places where it was a lot more sophisticated, where people in levels of management were also involved and so forth. But it was a never-ending thing, a never-ending thing. I think, if I remember correctly, we might have had something like 1,000 employees in the driver's license stations around the state. At any given time, I am sure that 95 percent of them were as honest as the day is long. But that still leaves, on any given day, a number of people out there who are taking a bribe. Our internal affairs guys were very vigilant. They were very creative. They caught people all over the state.

One of the things I thought back on, someone might say, "Well, I sure don't see that you fired a lot of people." We gave everyone…In retrospect that may have been a mistake. If it wasn't something just outrageous, where it was like a ring or something like that, but if it was just one guy taking ten bucks, we let people resign, because you were never sure in a civil service hearing if you'd end up with them fired. You might end up with them suspended for thirty days and back at work. So if they were willing to resign, we viewed that as a more sure thing than firing them and going to a hearing. Now, if it was big deal thing, like a ring or something like that, then those always went to the prosecutor to be prosecuted.

Czaplicki: Were they state prosecutors or federal?

Schnorf: Well, local prosecutors actually. As a matter of fact, one of the things I always remember about Jim Ryan, we had a facility in the Chicago suburbs where a woman at a high level in the facility was taking bribes for drivers' licenses but was also…Drugs were changing hands at the facility, through her. Our internal affairs people had the goods on her. But the Cook County States' Attorney—and I don't know what level [of] the states attorney's office they dealt with—didn't want to prosecute, basically taking the position, "Look, we are up to our ears in rapes and murders. I am sure this is a problem, but it's not our top priority."

Like I said, they were very creative. They, using an undercover agent, arranged for her to accept a bribe, just over the county line, in DuPage County, at which point, Jim Ryan sent her to prison. I don't say that in a deprecatory manner towards Cook County State's Attorney. It was just the way things were.

So that was always an issue. We were always vigilant. We always told people, you know, "Don't do it. Don't take bribes. Don't promise people things. One, you can't deliver; two, you'll get in trouble." Still it was always going on somewhere.

Czaplicki: When you say the internal affairs division, was this something that was directly under Governor Edgar for all the offices?

Schnorf: Under Secretary Edgar at the time.

Czaplicki: Right. Secretary Edgar or—

Schnorf: It was for all the offices

Czaplicki: So there was no drivers' services specific—

Schnorf: No. This was an internal affairs division for the whole secretary of state's office.

Czaplicki: Obviously, there's probably different ways you can set up stings, do this sort of thing. But I would imagine it was mainly accountants, sort of looking over the books to catch them?

Schnorf: No. It was stings and undercover infiltration. It was either shoppers or get an undercover agent in there, because they only had a small staff, and before long, everyone knew who they were. They would borrow someone from the state police or something for three months for an undercover assignment or something.

Czaplicki: Did the Secretary of State Police ever get involved in that kind of thing?

Schnorf: These guys technically were Secretary of State Police officers, moved off into a separate division. They held ranks in the Secretary of State Police.

Czaplicki: It's a fascinating office. There are just all kinds of things undersecretary of state that people tend not to think about.

Schnorf: Yeah. I'll tell you one, extremely fascinating. How do you think all of the FBI and homeland security and state police and all those other people that used undercover investigations get their ID's? Well, one of the functions that the drivers services department with the Secretary of State's office has, or at least had at the time I was there, was a person, the only person, who

issued fictitious ID's to law enforcement personnel. That was her only job, and she was the only person who knew who these people were.

Czaplicki: That is interesting.

Schnorf: Yeah. But it's something I'd never thought of. But if you are going to have an undercover agent with a fictitious Illinois driver's license, how are they going to get it? Well, there's only one way to get it. Someone's got to issue it to them and create a record that's there in the computer and stuff like that.

Czaplicki: She only gets a picture, digitally sent from the federal agency, or did they actually send the person in?

Schnorf: It wasn't even digital then. She would go—

Czaplicki: She would go

Schnorf: …with a camera, get the picture, and issue the license and stuff. As far as I know, none of the agents ever walked into one of our buildings.

Czaplicki: That might be a little dangerous, I imagine. One of the things I want to ask you about, in '83 there's a pretty major accident, apparently. A family of four gets killed by somebody having an epileptic seizure. Apparently that led to a reform where Secretary Edgar tried to put in some changes of reporting, so people who have medical conditions, but wanted to get licenses…You guys changed how that was reported. Do you recall that?

Schnorf: I recall a little bit about it. It was—

Czaplicki: It was in Riverside, I guess. Somebody was driving and—

Schnorf: Yeah, I remember it. I remember the accident, and I remember generally the stuff we worked on as an aftermath. We got a group of people together, everything ranging from physicians—somehow I think the guy that was the head of the rehab institute at the time was one of the members—a group to work on re-writing the requirements and those sorts of things. Why?

Czaplicki: It just seemed…Maybe it turns out not to have been a significant event. At the time it seemed significant. It just seemed that there was a pretty big outcry about it. And it seemed that you guys acquired a lot of computers to upgrade everything that maybe had not been there before. So it—

Schnorf: Everything is significant at the time. It's—

Czaplicki: I guess in some ways I was wondering if this was a catalyst towards modernization at the office.

Schnorf: That I don't know. You know, the office was antiquated. Part of the reason that it was antiquated was that it ran on a mainframe [computer] that was no longer in the mainstream. I can't even remember the name of it now. But a company that was one of the giants in the mainframe business and, as you know, over a period of several years, IBM basically drove everyone out of the mainframe business.

So, the whole operation is sitting there running on a legacy system that literally, by the end, you couldn't even buy parts for anymore. The programs had all been patch-worked together, as changes needed to be made. So you literally had to keep the history of the people who had worked on them, who were the only ones that knew how they did what they did now.

Getting the computer replaced, the mainframe replaced, was a big deal. The driver's license stations were not online. They basically batched their work at the end of the day, so we could renew a driver's license for someone whose license was suspended. One of the things we did was we put everything, you know, online real time. There was a lot of that went on. I don't know if it was so much that there was any particular impetus to it as…

When I was at the senior citizen place, one of my bright ideas [was] everyone who takes the review course and then passes and renews their license, that has a good driving record, should get a congratulatory letter from Secretary Edgar, congratulating them on their safe driving record, the foresight of taking the review course, the success in renewing their license, and stuff like that. We printed them on high speed printers and bulk mailed them. That was a nice deal, except for one thing. The printers would only print in all caps, because that's what they printed in to print driving records and stuff like that.

So here go all these letters out to tens or hundreds of thousands of people, over a period of time, all printed in all caps, until we…So it's those kind of things that you saw immediately that you had to replace everything over a period of time.

Czaplicki: It made it easier to read anyway.

Schnorf: (laughs) Sure made it look like a personal letter too.

Czaplicki: How did you evaluate such new technology then? You have all these systems, and the market is in flux. Would you set up review panels?

Schnorf: There were a series of people that moved through that office in the ten years we were there, who were in charge of the information processing part of it. My recollection is some were good; some weren't quite maybe so good. They were basically relied on as the experts.

Czaplicki: Another issue that was really important is DUI reform and Edgar's signal campaigns. I was curious what role you had in the development of that policy. You already alluded to the fact that there were some discussions going on.

Schnorf: Well, the responsibility for that fell mainly on a guy named Phil Howe.

Czaplicki: Howell?

Schnorf: Howe, H-o-w-e. Phil was in charge of the hearing officers and was chief counsel for the secretary's office at the time. And so Phil—I assume in consultation with Jim, probably a lot of consultation, knowing Jim's interest and details—Phil basically wrote the policies and procedures, and we just implemented them.

Czaplicki: But in your earlier remark, it sounded like there was discussion happening. For instance, you said, "Have we gone too far?"

Schnorf: Well, there was always—

Czaplicki: I was wondering if that was a conversation happening outside the office between Edgar and just the people he talked to about politics, or if that was something more internal to the department. There was debate.

Schnorf: Oh, I think it was both, but certainly we talked about it internally. I was a proponent of a simple saying, trying to make the point that if you make the penalty severe enough, you'll never convict anyone. I would always say, "If you make drunk driving punishable by the death penalty, you will never convict anyone of drunk driving, because no one's going to send someone to the gas chamber for driving drunk." There's got to be some sort of balance for you to maximize your return on investment.

Jim felt that—he probably would never have agreed to the death penalty—it was something the public was ready for. It was something that we should be very aggressive on, and we could be very aggressive on and that every time backlash began to develop, sure enough sometime in the next two or three months there'd be another tragic accident in the paper with the prom queen or a family of nine or something, and that was going to continue to be there and that we really couldn't push it too hard, that there was no such thing as too hard. It was the right thing to do, and we would never get blow back for any extended period of time over it.

Czaplicki: Did the governor's office get involved much in those discussions, or was that just—

Schnorf: Not that I know of. If they did, it was way above my level.

Czaplicki: That seemed like such a politically powerful issue. It is controversial, and Edgar gets national exposure out of it.

Schnorf: Actually, not as visible and not as controversial, but every bit as hard or harder to do, probably harder to do legislatively, was the uninsured motorist stuff. People had tried for a long time to make auto insurance mandatory in Illinois and had not succeeded. And Jim—like he did most things, very thoughtful, very organized, very methodical—succeeded.

Czaplicki: So Phil Howe was one of the key men in DUI who was—

Schnorf: The key man. Another key person was a woman named Karen Sincere.

Czaplicki: Spelled like sincere?

Schnorf: As far as I know. She also was married, and her name was different, but I don't remember what it was. Oh yeah, I do; her name was Karen Loeb, L-o-e-b or Sincere. She came to Jim's attention. She was like the volunteer leader of one of the volunteer traffic safety groups. I don't know if it was Mothers against Drunk Driving or what, but it was one of those sorts of groups. She was very, very enthusiastic, very competent, very assertive. Jim, after having met her a few times, hired her, and we created a traffic safety division at the Driver Services Department, a small shop, a handful of people, but basically working on traffic safety, especially DUI related issues.

One of the most effective things she did for Jim, she put together an annual report, showing the conviction rate in each county of DUI prosecutions. How many people were arrested? How many people went to trial? Of those, how many were convicted? And stuff like that. It shown the spotlight just bright as hell on places that were not treating it as a serious issue. It was very effective.

Czaplicki: How would you operationalize that kind of knowledge? Would you issue a press release? Would you make sure to visit that place?

Schnorf: Issue an annual report.

Czaplicki: Annual report. And distribute it to—

Schnorf: Yeah. As a matter of fact, by the second or third year of it, it was a media event. They were waiting for it, to see if so and so, down in such and such a county had cleaned up his act yet. She was very good at stuff like that. So Phil was kind of the regulation and legal person, and Karen was kind of a policy and public relations person.

Czaplicki: Did they have a counterpart, in terms of mandatory auto insurance?

Schnorf: I don't know; I just don't know. I can't remember who was the point person on mandatory. Just too long ago.

Czaplicki: What do you think explains the timing? Why was it finally able to get pushed through, under Edgar?

Schnorf: I always thought that a big a piece of it, at least, was Jim's background. He had been a legislative staff person. He had been a legislator. He'd been a governor's staff person. He'd been a legislative staff person in the House and Senate both. Jim knew how the process worked, and he respected that process. Because of that, he was able to make it work.

Czaplicki: Another, maybe it's not as big. At the time it seemed to be a big one. You guys changed the rules about elderly driver testing.

Schnorf: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

Czaplicki: Late '80s. That seemed to cause some controversy.

Schnorf: Oh yeah. Crap hit the fan.

Czaplicki: Where did that policy come from?

Schnorf: From me.

Czaplicki: That came from you?

Schnorf: Yeah.

Czaplicki: What was the impetus behind it?

Schnorf: I remember Edgar saying to me, "You're smarter than that. What do you think you are doing?" I don't even remember what the impetus was. I am sure it was something—

Czaplicki: I think there might have been some car crashes again or something like that?

Schnorf: Maybe, maybe. So anyway, the idea of how frequently someone gets tested, how extensive the testing was, gauged against age, it turned out to be a snake pit. I thought, you just…I'm kind of linear. You look at it. You study it. You understand it and move ahead. Well, I just hadn't given sufficient thought to how controversial it was going to be, to how many people. As a matter of fact, that was one on which Karen Loeb really was the one who bailed me out.

She created a senior citizen task force, worked on it for months, until people's energy finally began to burn out, and compromises were reached, and eventually changes were made. As much as anything, probably, what I

had ignored was making sure that everyone had had a seat at the table before the final decisions were made.

Czaplicki: You just wanted to test elderly more frequently than they had been in the past? Was that the major change?

Schnorf: Yeah. I don't remember what the rules were at the time, but I think, basically, if I remember correctly, no matter how old you were, you still got tested once every four years. Someone walking in at sixty-four and someone walking in at ninety-eight, both got a driver's license, good for four years, although the likelihood was that their circumstances might change dramatically differently over the next four years. What's your life expectancy at ninety-eight, a year and a half or something like that?

Basically, yeah, we wanted to go to a graduated testing system, where you would test more frequently, as people's ages advanced. So the key was reaching really an agreement on how often. The final agreement that was reached was an improvement over what we had before and was something I think pretty much has stayed fairly constant since. I don't remember what it is. I think you start getting tested maybe every two years when you're eighty or something like that, maybe every year when you're ninety or something.

Czaplicki: This wasn't a plan that you had talked about with Edgar before?

Schnorf: Oh, no, no, no, no.

Czaplicki: You just announced new rules?

Schnorf: Well, modification. I certainly didn't handle it well. I certainly misjudged how big a deal it was going to be.

Czaplicki: So what was his style then? Did you get called on the carpet? Is he a woodshed-like guy or is it just—

Schnorf: It is more of a … At least with me, it was more of a "For crying out loud, you're smarter than that;" "If you do something like that…" "You know better than that," kind of thing.

Czaplicki: And this was much later. This was right before he runs for governor, I think, right, '88 or '89?

Schnorf: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Like I said, it worked out. But, yeah, I had not managed it well. He was absolutely right.

Czaplicki: In terms of how we proceed here, we've been at it for about two hours. I don't know how you are doing.

Schnorf: I'm okay so far.

Czaplicki: You're okay so far? I have a couple of questions about the secretary of state's office *vis-vi-vis* other agencies and then a few questions about Edgar as a manager. Then I thought we might break before the governor years and take that up in another interview.

So, in terms of these other agencies, the one I was thinking a lot about was IDOT [Illinois Department of Transportation]. I was wondering, to what extent did the secretary of state's office interact with IDOT?

Schnorf: Well, I think that—

Czaplicki: Because it seemed that you had sort of overlapping areas in some cases, seatbelts or even—

Schnorf: Yeah. I think the major interaction, at least as far as I was concerned—I couldn't speak to some of the other things—but the major interactions, as far as I was concerned, was between our traffic safety people and the highway safety people at IDOT. The highway safety people at IDOT—and they do more things than this—a big piece of what they do is they manage federal highway safety grants to the state. They are the single state agency. So, a lot of the stuff we did in the area of traffic safety was funded by grants from them. That was the major interaction.

From time to time, we would have a … I remember calling one of the deputy secretaries a couple of times. We'd have a driver's license station that would say, "Boy, it sure would be easier to take our seniors on a drive test if there was a stoplight at this intersection. We have a heck of a time." And I remember calling to see if we could do something about that. The answer was normally, "No, we couldn't." You know, they have pretty strict rules on traffic count and stuff like that. Oh, they would always say, "If you guys want to pay for it, we will put one in. But if you want us to pay for it, here's the standards it has to meet."

Czaplicki: Not in their plans. I was thinking about those grants. It always made me wonder if there were times when you would share resources to pursue something legislatively or if they would ask you to help on their bills.

Schnorf: I think in that area there was a great deal of cooperation. I think they viewed us as a significant resource for research and data and stuff, and we viewed them as a significant resource, because they had access to the latest federal thinking and the federal money. We had the traffic accident database. I just thought of that. That's probably another reason why we were important to them; we had the accident reports.

Czaplicki: Not the state police?

Schnorf: No. No. The state police could access them, but we were the repository.

Czaplicki: Some questions about Jim Edgar, and you've touched on a lot of this as you went along. I was curious; what was he like as a manager, as secretary of state? In his interviews, he'll tell you that, when he first got in there, he wasn't much of a manager. He didn't really have a lot of background in that. He just said he surrounded himself with really good people.

Schnorf: I think that it is a very, very good answer by him. He did bring in very, very good people around him, and they stayed with him for the main part. They became personally very loyal to him politically. I think they found, as I and my wife had found out years and years earlier, that he embodied things that they could feel real good about working for and supporting.

Jim is, I believe, extraordinarily bright. I suspect his tests on standardized tests are every bit a three standard deviations or more, above the norm. A little bit of what would happen to him…And again, he's thorough; he's thoughtful; he's well read; he's widely read. It wasn't terribly difficult for him to come to believe that he might know more about something than someone else.

There was probably this…It was for different reasons. There was this inclination to want to be extremely informed, and there's not a great distance between informed and involved. In the beginning, I think you can attribute a decent amount of it to, "Hey, this is the rest of my life, and I got lots of people that I've only met three times before, that are in charge of doing things that are going to determine whether or not and how successful I am." I think it evolved into…As he learned the drill, it was like the guy that worked at the factory for fifty years. He can do every job there as well as anyone there can do it.

One of the things that became very, very noticeable with Jim was that, if staff would come to a consensus, he would agree to something, even if he didn't agree with it. If there is something that involved five of his staff, and they all met repeatedly, and they really came up with what they thought ought to be done, and they came in, and they presented a united recommendation to him, he'd go along with it, even if it wasn't his preference. Frequently he'd go along with it. He believed that the process was important.

In all the time I've ever been in government, he's probably the best question asker I've ever seen. You could prepare yourself for a meeting with him on something you were going to present to him, to where you knew that you could recite; you could answer; you could explain; you could point out; you could demonstrate that you knew the facts; you knew the data, and somewhere within the first question or two, it'd be something you never ever thought of. He was very good at that. A lot of the way he managed was

by people understanding that his expectations, when you came in to talk to him about something, were going to be extraordinarily high, and you were going to be tested.

Czaplicki: Was that stressful?

Schnorf: It was in the beginning, but you began to get a sense. For example, you walk into him and say, "Here is what the surrounding states are doing." "Why should I care what Kentucky's doing? What's Ohio and Pennsylvania and New York and Texas…What are the big states doing?" So you'd begin to get a pattern of it. But still, he could…I'm sure today, if he were here today, the first question he'd ask would be one that I'd never thought of, getting ready to answer. [It] wouldn't be impossible one to answer; [it] just would be one I hadn't prepared for. So it was a very effective part of his management technique. Yet his willingness to accept staff consensus recommendations was also a very fulfilling part. It made staff work hard at getting along with each other, figuring things out.

Czaplicki: Can you think of any cases where…Overruled isn't the right word, but where staff came to consensus that was maybe at odds of his original position?

Schnorf: Gee, too long ago.

Czaplicki: How frequently would you meet with him at the secretary of state's office? Was he someone who was big on weekly staff meetings, or was it more—

Schnorf: At the secretary of state's office, I had the last eight years sort of a good position. Driver services department's located out on Dirksen Parkway, so I wasn't around the office every day. And I was far enough away that people didn't call me, just to come by casually to sit down. By the time I got in my car and got down here and got parked, it would be half an hour. It's not like calling someone two offices away, saying, "Hey, can you come by the office for a second?" So I probably wasn't directly around him as much as a lot of people who were in the capitol were.

Now, for those of us out on Dirksen, we thought it was perfect. You controlled your own parking. There was plenty of it. You were out of sight. You didn't get called downtown a lot. But I went downtown when I needed to meet with him, [when] I needed to meet with the assistant secretary, Joan, in the beginning and then Al. So I don't know, maybe I was downtown on average of two or three times a week. It might have ranged from a high of eight or ten to…I'm sure there were weeks I wasn't downtown at all.

Czaplicki: And what would you generally talk about? Nuts and bolts of the department, or would it be more big picture?

Schnorf: When I would come downtown for a meeting with him…That was a meeting at my request; it was almost always a specific "Shall we do this?" or "Shall we do that?" He would, though, regularly host small lunches in his office, where we would get together, though. I don't know; maybe over the course of ten years, averaged once a month, maybe a little less frequently than that. But we would get together and just talk generally about things, basically him and a group of senior staff.

Czaplicki: Did he talk about his political ambitions much, at this point?

Schnorf: He didn't talk about his political ambitions much, at least publicly. I don't think, those particular lunches, there would have been anyone at them that didn't understand what his political ambition was, while he was secretary of state, but no.

Czaplicki: When he was talking about surrounding himself with good people—

Schnorf: The lunches, by the way, were either pizza or…We would all kind of even almost guess ahead of time what the lunch was going to be this time, a certain kind of fried chicken, I think.

Czaplicki: Yeah, that's his favorite apparently.

Schnorf: This was before the heart stuff. After the heart stuff, the lunches were chili made out of ground buffalo meat and stuff like that.

Czaplicki: But you still had chili.

Schnorf: Cookies with no sugar or flour kind of stuff. But I remember, we would kind of wonder what we're having this time, which of the three choices we get today.

Czaplicki: When he was talking about staff, putting good people around himself, you were one of the people he mentioned, by way of example. He described you as saying he used to read books on management things, and he knew all this theory and stuff. So I was wondering what books on management you were reading, or what he was referencing there? Had you gone back to school to take anything or just…If you had a different style when you would have these discussions, if your points tended in a certain direction.

Schnorf: I probably had a general tendency to intellectualize things a little bit. It's like I exist at two extremes. One is, we can talk about this question and what we should do about it on an intellectual level, and we can talk about what other people have done. We can talk about what has worked and not worked in other situations. We can talk about what's morally right or wrong. We can talk about what works best economically, what's most efficient. Or we can talk about what does this mean to you tomorrow, in terms of votes and voters and elections? It's kind of like there is no middle ground.

Czaplicki: Right, switch modes.

Schnorf: Yeah. I think that was part of it. The other thing—this is interesting too because it would drive the other guys nuts—when we would have quasi-political get togethers, particularly in the governor's office, not so much at the secretary of state's office, but some at the secretary of state's office—he would remind the others that I was the only one that had a real job also. I had actually run a department, in addition to helping him plan and think and stuff like that.

I think he appreciated that, that I kept the biggest department, the one where he probably had the greatest exposure, whether it's lines in the driver's license station or people not getting their renewal notices timely or whatever, where he was going to have his name and face exposed to the most people, running in a way that may have brought him some credit, but at least didn't bring him crashing down. I think that he appreciated that I could and that I would keep both balls in the air at the same time, his political interests and the day-to-day operations of a large department.

Czaplicki: How about his way of thinking? Was he kind of extreme, one or the other, different modes? Did you get a sense of what he preferred? Or did he change as a thinker over time? You've talked about this kind of hunger for information and learning a lot.

Schnorf: This point is one that I believe that surely everyone that has ever become governor of this state, at least in the twentieth century, realized. Jim may have been one of the most prepared people ever to be governor of this state. He had been involved in local politics. He'd been involved in college politics. He'd run for election. He'd served in the state legislature. He'd been a staff in the state legislature. He had been the head of the second largest constitutional office in the state for ten years. If he hasn't already—I'm surprised if he hadn't; I'm almost sure he would—he would have told you we were absolutely unprepared to be governor, that there is just no way to understand the change that happens when you go from being something else to being governor.

Jim was someone who I always felt learned and evolved quite well. He didn't change what he was, but his styles, his ability…One of things that developed greatly was his ability to tolerate frustration, to tolerate dissatisfaction, to tolerate things not being done exactly the way he would have had them done. He was no more accepting of it. He was just better able to handle himself, in terms of dealing with it.

One of the things that made Jim's shop good was that everyone knew he had high expectations. That's one of the things that has troubled me so much with what I've watched in the last several years. My goodness, I go to a legislative hearing, and the directors of the departments don't know

answers to questions. You'd have been embarrassed not to know the answer to that question. Who in the hell is running the department if you don't know the answer to that question?

Everyone knew that he had those kinds of expectations. You were not going to look uninformed. You were not going to look stupid. You were not going to look out of touch with what you were responsible for. But he himself, obviously…He's got 3,000, 3,500 people working for him at the secretary of state's office. He's got 68,000, I think, in the governor's office. You're obviously going to run into people that, at that point in time, don't live up to your expectation on that particular issue. He got better at how he dealt with that. In the beginning, it was hard for it not to just visually drive him crazy, right in front of people. So it was like many things; he grew at managing.

I think part of what he considered himself was growing as managing was being able to take consensus recommendations from staff who had worked hard on something, even if it is not particularly the first conclusion he'd come to, in terms of what ought to be done. He developed the ability to sit back and ask questions. Early on with him, in a briefing meeting, you might not get through the first…There might be five or six of you at the table. There might be, oh, Joan and, Mike whatever, Mike Walters, her husband, and me and George Fleischli or someone and him, maybe Janice or someone. You'd get through the second sentence, and he'd be right up there like that, and you'd never get to the third sentence, because you're going to spend an hour on his questions about the…He got much better about sitting back, listening, waiting, asking questions.

The questions were no less sharp, and they were no less aggressive, but he grew better about his methods, in terms of whether it was conducting a meeting or what. He was well served by his high expectations of his people. And he was well served, for the main part, how his people grew toward those expectations. And he was well served by how he himself grew towards handling those people.

Czaplicki: That's very interesting. So it's not just a matter of demanding quality from your people for your own benefit but also being very aware that they are going to go to legislative hearings, and they are going to be asked questions.

Schnorf: Oh yes, yes.

Czaplicki: Do you think he was aware of that aspect of it as well?

Schnorf: If he thought you couldn't answer the questions, you wouldn't be at the hearing. He's not going to let someone go and represent his administration, who's going to act like a fool publicly; you'd better. Like I said, it's

something I haven't just been able to understand the last several years. Maybe ignorance is bliss.

Czaplicki: Stepping back from that level of abstraction, here's more of other mode question. How did information flow from voters, the public, to policy makers like yourself? Did the secretary of state's office have an office that handled correspondence and directed everywhere? Say you propose this elderly program, did letters come pouring into Edgar? Did people send them to you?

Schnorf: Well, they must have come pouring into Edgar. I don't remember particularly getting a lot of correspondence. That would be consistent with Edgar's view of how the governor's office works, how a constitutional office works. It's the elected guy who attracts the heat. The fact that I don't remember getting many letters probably means that he was. It's his name on the driver's license, his name on the front of the door, and his name on the renewal sticker and stuff like that. He was probably getting it directly. I don't know.

The governor's office had an office of citizen something or other, a staff of several people, where the mail came in and was sorted and stuff like that. I don't remember the secretary of state having anything like that. But the volume was probably greatly different.

Czaplicki: One last question. This will bring us up to going in as governor, his campaign, his first campaign for governor. Does anything in that campaign stand out to you as especially significant or striking to you, compared to past campaigns? Did you play any kind of a different role, given that you now are working in this constitutional office?

Schnorf: Well, this was a different time and a different place than today. We organized for elections. Every county had a county coordinator, who was someone who lived in that county. Occasionally it might be someone who was on the secretary of state's payroll, but more than likely not.

In most counties the secretary of state might only have three or four or five people on the payroll in the local driver's license office. Shoot, the first five, six years none of them may have changed. They all may have still been there from before. So it was typically someone selected by the county chairman. Although in some cases, it might be someone we knew who we would recommend or ask the county chairman to select as the local coordinator. And then there would be someone from the office, an employee in the office, assigned to a county also.

That person was responsible for regular, ongoing contact with that county, with keeping the campaign apparatus up-to-date on what was going on in that county, what the issues were and so forth. If Jim was going to visit

county x, y, z, it would be that person who would at least write an initial draft of a briefing memorandum for him, you know, "Here's who's going to be there. Here's what questions they're going to ask. Here's what's going on in the county, etcetera etcetera." That person would be expected, on their own time, to keep in regular contact with the county coordinator and other people, as may have been necessary.

In some counties, for example, you always wanted to stay in contact with whoever the president of the local Republican women's group was. In other places, you might want to stay in contact with the mayor, who might not have an official role with the party but had by far the best political organization in the county. It would be their job to visit that county, and it would be their job to subscribe to the newspapers in that county. So they were, in effect…I'm talking about downstate now. I'm not talking about Chicago and the suburbs.

Czaplicki: But these individuals are the secretary of state's employees?

Schnorf: It is their job to become like our ear, our eye out in that county.

Czaplicki: That's a pretty important job. It's not something you just give to anybody, one would think. How did you identify? Were you important in that, from your travels all around the state? Did you kind of have a sense of who would be good for a job like this, or were they self-selecting? Would they volunteer?

Schnorf: It was sort of a thing that would evolve. As you were around, you would learn, as time went by, who you could trust to do what they said they would do. If someone said, "Yeah, I'll take Wednesday afternoon off, and I'll drive supplies down for the Lincoln Day dinner, and I'll put them up, and I'll hand out the literature and stuff like that," someone who would actually do that, as opposed to just say they would. He was in office a long time, and so there was plenty of opportunity for that to evolve and grow. You figure outside the metro area, and I am sure some of the very large counties, Winnebago, Peoria, were handled differently.

But you talk about the small and medium-size counties downstate, there're seventy-five, eighty of them; you need seventy-five or eighty people. Maybe with some of the small counties someone handles two. But they were the campaign's eyes and ears, and we would have regular meetings in the evening. By that I don't mean like once a week or something; although, if it was close to an election, it might be once a week for the last couple of months. It was kind of a camaraderie thing.

Czaplicki: Edgar was in office for a while, so presumably you got to hire some more people. But given all the Democrats that had been protected in there, did that mean that you had some Democrats working for you too?

Schnorf: Gee, I don't know. I have to think about that actually. The answer is probably yes. Our attitude—I don't want to attribute this to Jim, because I've never really talked about it to him—but kind of our attitude at our level was, starting with all the Democrats, be as good a Democrat as you can be. I absolutely don't care who you're for for county sheriff or state's attorney or state representative, j please don't work against the guy that you're working for.

And you do a little checking to see. You know, you drive by a guy's house, and he's a precinct committeeman. He's got fifteen signs in his yard for everyone that's running for office who is a Democrat, except for whoever's running for secretary of state. Rutan[3] just comes to pass at the end of Edgar's time as secretary of state.

Czaplicki: Nineteen ninety.

Schnorf: Yeah, yeah. As a matter of fact, it's his transition into the governor's office. Some of the people we are talking about…Criminy, like I said, a lot of them were hired under Howlett. A lot of them were hired under Dixon. When I got to the secretary of state's office, we had people there that were hired during the Depression. I'm not making that up. I had this idea once, We've got all the driver's records; let's find out who our oldest employee is, have a little celebration for them." Our oldest employee was ninety-two years old, working at a driver's license station in Chicago Heights, Illinois, ninety-two years old. He'd retired from the city; he'd retired from the county, and he'd gone to work for the…He'd only been there eight or nine years. He'd started when he was like eighty-five or something. So we had a lot of people who went way back.

I know that this is something that everyone gets all intrigued by and things like that. It was interesting, particularly with the holdovers. There would be a, maybe a fundraiser in Sangamon County for Edgar or something, and you would literally have people come up to you in the hallway at the office, come up to you at the grocery store, people that worked for you, "Hey, am I on some kind of shit list or something? No one's given me any tickets. Am I in trouble of some kind?" I'm not making that up. It's just the way it was. But again, this was in 1985, with people that may have been hired in 1965 or 1955. It was a very different environment than we have today.

I remember I walked into something one evening. [I] can't remember why I was there; I was down in southern Illinois somewhere. I happened to notice as I was coming in the hotel that there was a thing on the door that the Twentieth Congressional District Democratic Central Committee or

[3] Rutan vs. Republican Party of Illinois was a 1996 U.S Supreme Court decision that the first amendment forbids a government entity from basing its decision to promote, transfer, recall or hire low level employees based on party affiliation.

something was having a meeting there that evening. It wasn't why I was there. I was there to meet someone for dinner or something. So, as I am walking through the lobby of the hotel, here comes one of my guys who's a regional manager, a holdover Democrat and a Democratic county chairman downstate. He sees me and he says, "Jesus, Steve, I'm not here for the Democratic meeting. I just got my wife here at dinner. Don't think I'm here for that." It was a different time.

For most of the people that worked with us, the idea of supporting the guy who they work for was perfectly fine with them. There were some that felt differently than that. Edgar always told us, he said, "You know, don't ever fire anyone for being a Democrat. They're doing their job. They're doing their job."

Czaplicki: Were you confident he was going to win that gubernatorial election?

Schnorf: No, no, no.

Czaplicki: I've heard there were camps. Some people claim they were serene the whole time; others had their doubts.

Schnorf: No. By the next morning…It's so different today, with 95, 98 percent of the results available instantly. By 10:00 or 11:00 at night you got 98 percent of the results. Back then, by midnight or 1:00 a.m., you had maybe 76 percent of the results. Paper ballots [were] counted by hand. County X, with nineteen precincts; they'd counted sixteen of them, and it's 2:00 a.m. They call it a night and go home. They'll come back in the next day and count the remaining precincts. About 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning, Jim was ahead by about 118,000 votes, as far as we could tell. No, no one thought it was… Well, there may have been people who did. No one I knew of thought he was a shoe-in. He was comfortable, fairly early in the evening.

Czaplicki: The pollster apparently had inkling to for Fred Steeper, because he saw the data coming in, so he knew. Were you at the hotel in Chicago on election night?

Schnorf: I'm trying to remember different election nights. I must not have been. I must have been at campaign headquarters here. Oh, it makes sense; that election would have been in Chicago. But I remember Jim kept wanting to see the downstate numbers, see the downstate numbers. He was comfortable. I don't think he was comfortable twenty-four hours **before** the election, but by 10:00 or 11:00 that night he seemed to be comfortable.

Channel three, I think, literally, the Monday before the election on Tuesday, comes out with poll results that shows him three or four or five behind. It was stressful. But, like I said, there was also a lot of camaraderie and stuff like that. It's kind of a challenge or something. People took it that way.

He attracted good, bright, young people. One of the things that was always fun to try to do was hire the student body president from the local university. [It] didn't matter if they were a Democrat or a Republican. Get them around Edgar; they're going to like him personally and be a supporter. Hire bright interns. [It] didn't matter what their political background. We wouldn't even bother to check their political backgrounds. You knew, if you could get them in and get them as part of the process, where they understood what was being worked on and what they were working on, they'd be good supporters. That was something about him; he attracted that kind of people. Done?

Czaplicki: Well, that's a good place to stop. So next time we will pick it up with your time in his administration as governor.

Schnorf: Alright.

Czaplicki: Thank you.

[end of interview]

Note to the reader: Mike Czaplicki was not able to set up a follow-on date for a second interview with Mr. Schnorf, after repeated attempts to do so. Stephen Schnorf passed away on February 27, 2017.