

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Dave Blanchette

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
IHPA Legacy Oral History project

Interview # HP-A-L-2015-023

David Blanchette, who worked at IHPA from December 1989 through 2013 as its Public Information Officer, and Deputy Director for a year, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *IHPA Legacy* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Jun 19, 2015 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Date: Jul 6, 2015 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Date: Aug 5, 2015 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston, Massachusetts

Edited by: Leslie Struble and Jan Culp, ALPL volunteers

Total Pages: 137 pgs Total Time: 1:40 + 2:20 + 2:19 / 1.67 + 2.33 + 2.32 = 6.32

Session 1: Early career as journalist and the 1990s at IL Historic Preservation

Session 2: Press dealings for the planning and construction of ALPLM

Session 3: Opening of ALPLM, Lincoln Bicentennial and management changes

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on October 13, 2015.

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

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Abstract

David Blanchette, *IHPA Legacy*, HP-A-L-2015-023

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Dave Blanchette was born on January 23, 1960 in Kankakee, Illinois and subsequently moved with his family to Jacksonville, Illinois in 1972, where he lived at the time of the interview. He earned a BA in Journalism at MacMurray College in Jacksonville, Illinois in 1982. Thereafter, Dave found work as the Radio News Director and Reporter at WJIL-WJVO Radio in Jacksonville from May 1979 through November 1987. In 1987 Blanchette began work as the Public Information Officer (PIO) for the Illinois Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, and in 1989 he moved to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA), serving as agency PIO.

For the next two and a half decades, Blanchette represented the agency to the general public, helping publicize and/or react to issues at the state's many historic sites, including the Dana Thomas House, the Old State Capitol, the Pullman Historic Site and scores of others. Among his most challenging moments were the flood of 1993 at Fort De Chartres, and a fire that burned down administration buildings at the Pullman Historic Site in 1998. By that time, much of Blanchette's time was spent on the agency's efforts to create a new facility to house the Illinois State Historical Library's extensive Lincoln collection. That effort eventually led to the creation of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. David discusses that process in great detail, providing insight into how something so ambitious came about. He talked about the crucial role that Julie Cellini, as the chair of the IHPA Board of Trustees, played in creating ALPLM. He also addressed the key role played by State Historian Tom Schwartz and IHPA Director Susan Mogerman, as well as the creativity and energy of Bob Rogers, whose company, BRC Imagination Arts, designed the museum's world-class exhibits. He fondly remembers the exhilaration of opening day on April 19, 2005. In 2012 he became ALPLM's Deputy Director. David concludes the interview with a discussion about his decision to take a position in Governor Pat Quinn's administration in 2013.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Illinois Historic Preservation Agency; Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum; Julie Cellini; Susan Mogerman; Gov. James Thompson; Gov. Jim Edgar; Gov. George Ryan; Gov. Rod Blagojevich; Dr. Thomas Schwartz; Eileen Mackevich; Richard Norton Smith; Rick Beard; Dr. Michael Devine; Gov. Pat Quinn; Amy Martin; Flood of 1993; Pullman Historic Site; Dana Thomas House; Robert Coomer; Maynard Crossland; Bob Rogers of BRC Imagination Arts

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