

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Robert “Bob” Wengel

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2022-44

Robert “Bob” Wengel, Senior Vice President of Facilities and Security at the Shedd Aquarium, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library’s *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: May 27, 2022

Location: Wengel at his office at the Shedd Aquarium and Riggenbach in the ALPLM’s recording studio

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Amanda Riggenbach, *Tumultuous 2020* project manager

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript being
processed.

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 48:00 / 0.80 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on August 12, 2022.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

Abstract

Robert “Bob” Wengel, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2022-44

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Robert “Bob” Wengel was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1970. He attended Curie High School where he played baseball all four years. He graduated in 1988 and attended Moraine Valley Community College before getting his Bachelors in Aviation Maintenance from Lewis University in 1993. He married his wife, Sally, the next year. He worked for a variety of places before starting at the Shedd Aquarium. He started as a project manager in 1995 before becoming the maintenance supervisor. He was then promoted to Operations Manager and then Director of Operations. His next roles were as Senior Director of Facilities, then Vice President of Facilities. In 2018 he moved into the role he held at the time of the interview, Senior Vice President of Facilities.

Throughout the interview, Wengel discusses the different ways the pandemic impacted the Shedd Aquarium. He describes the moments when shutting down was discussed by the executive team. He outlines the steps they took in order to keep essential staff safe from the virus. The Shedd Aquarium officially closed to the public on March 12. Though it was originally only for two weeks, they extended it for almost sixteen weeks as the pandemic continued. Wengel describes the closure and how it allowed them to focus on projects in public spaces. They also prepared for their eventual reopening in order to ensure the highest amount of safety for both the public and their staff. Wengel details their reopening in July 2020 and their closing in November 2020. During their second closing they focused once more on projects in public spaces. They were able to reopen at the end of January. Wengel closes by sharing his personal perspective of the virus as well as some of the personal impacts it had on his life.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Tumultuous 2020; Tumultuous 2020 oral history; Bob Wengel; Robert Wengel; Shedd Aquarium; Chicago, Illinois; aquarium; COVID-19; COVID-19 pandemic; COVID’s impact on aquariums

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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