

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with David Gilbert

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Statecraft-Jim Thompson Oral History project

Interview # IST-A-L-2014-011

David Gilbert, Gov. Jim Thompson's press secretary from 1975 to 1985, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft-Jim Thompson* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: Mar 14 (Sessions 1 & 2), Mar 26, Mar 27 & Apr 22, 2014

Location: Gilbert residence in Deerfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Audio Transcription Center, Boston MA

Edited by: Dr. Mike Czaplicki, project historian and Rozanne Flatt, ALPL volunteer

Total Pages: 207 pgs Total Time: 1:51 + 2:28 + 2:05 + 2:36 + 2:55 / 1.85 + 2.47 + 2.08 + 2.6 + 2.92 = 11.92 hrs

Session 1: Early life and journalistic career with the Chicago Tribune

Session 2: Jim Thompson's 1976 gubernatorial campaign

Session 3: First two years of the Thompson administration: 1977-1978

Session 4: The election of 1978, and Thompson administration in 1979-1981

Session 5: Thompson reelection campaign in 1982 and his administration thru 1985

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on July 8, 2014.

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

Abstract

David Gilbert, *Illinois Statecraft*, IST-A-L-2014-011

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: David Gilbert was born in June, 1940 in Peru, Indiana. He grew up in a religious family that moved frequently. He attended Grace College in Winona Lake, Indiana, majoring in history; following graduation in 1963, he pursued graduate studies in journalism at Indiana University before landing a job with City News Bureau in Chicago. He also served in the Indiana National Guard during this time. By the late 1960s Gilbert was working for the Chicago Tribune, and was the Transportation Editor when candidate Jim Thompson asked him to become his press secretary in 1975. Gilbert was the first person hired to join Thompson's initial campaign for Governor.

Gilbert continued to serve as Thompson's press secretary for the next ten years, which included three political campaigns. Thompson won by a wide margin in 1976, beating Michael Howlett, Richard J. Daley's hand-picked candidate. In 1978 he won by the largest margin any governor was re-elected by, beating the State Comptroller, Michael Bakalis. In 1982, Thompson defeated Adlai Stevenson III by less than 5,000 votes, the closest election in Illinois history. Stevenson contested the election, and the Illinois Supreme Court finally decided the race in Thompson's favor only three days from the inauguration. U.S. Attorney Daniel Webb subsequently aggressively pursued allegations of vote fraud, a case that eventually resulted in sixty-three convictions after the discovery of approximately 100,000 votes. Gilbert discussed all of this in detail, recounting many stories of Thompson's special skills as a politician and Illinois's chief executive.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Governor Jim Thompson; Adlai Stevenson; Michael Bakalis; Michael Howlett; gubernatorial election of 1976; gubernatorial election of 1978; gubernatorial election of 1982; George Ryan; cutback amendment; Jim Thompson's campaign style; 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago; reporting for the Chicago Tribune; Richard J. Daley; Cutback Amendment; Jayne Thompson; Samantha Thompson

Note 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 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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