

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Denny Jacobs

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

Interview # ISL-A-L-2017-012

Denny Jacobs (Democrat), a long-time mayor of East Moline, Illinois before becoming an Illinois State Senator in 1987, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft - Legislator* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Mar 8, 21 & 22, 2017 Location: Jacobs home in East Moline, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

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

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 2:20 + 2:10 + 2:42 / 2.33 + 2.17 + 2.7 = 7.2 hrs.

Session 1: Early life, and experiences as mayor of East Moline from 1974 thru 1986

Session 2: Early years in the Illinois State Senate from 1987 thru the mid-1990s

Session 3: Experiences with Barack Obama and IL Senate in the late 1990s-2004

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on June 20, 2017.

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

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Abstract

Denny Jacobs, *Illinois Statecraft-Legislator*, ISL-A-L-2017-012

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Dennis J. (Denny) Jacobs was born on November 8, 1937 in Moline, Illinois, and grew up in East Moline. His parents owned a small restaurant in the heart of East Moline where the family lived as well. Denny's father Oral was a labor supporter and strong Democratic; he became an Illinois state representative for many years, while Denny's mother spent her life in the restaurant, catering to both blacks and whites, unusual for the day. Denny graduated from United Township High School in 1955, and married his high school sweetheart, Mary Ellen Duffy, shortly after that. He graduated from Augustana College in 1959 and made a living as a sales representative for a few years, then ran a successful music juke box business, J & J Music. Because of that job, he became well known throughout the community.

In 1973 Jacobs ran for mayor of East Moline as a Democrat and won. He served as the city's mayor for the next fourteen years, leading the city through some tough years, including a period of labor strife, factory closings and the deep recession of the early 1980s. In 1986 the region's state senator, Clarence Darrow, became a judge, and Jacobs was appointed by the local party leaders to the Illinois Senate. Later that year he won his first election for the Illinois Senate with over sixty-four percent. Jacobs stayed in the Illinois Senate for the next eighteen years, finally retiring in 2004. He was a moderate Democrat, describing himself as a social liberal and fiscal conservative. He also had the reputation for speaking his mind, and was generally popular with the press. One of his first initiatives in the Senate was a bill to take 9-1-1 service state wide. He also was an early advocate for the gaming industry, and led the fight to bring riverboat gambling to Illinois. He was proud of his ability to bring state dollars to his district, enhancing the region's infrastructure as well as the Quad Cities Civic Center. He formed a close friendship with Senator Barack Obama when Obama joined the Senate in 1997, and was a regular at the same evening poker game that Senator Obama frequented. They stayed in touch thereafter.

Subject Headings/Key Words: East Moline politics; State Senator Barack Obama; riverboat gambling; 9-1-1 service in Illinois; Quad Cities Regional Economic Development Authority; Senator Phil Rock; Senator James 'Pate' Philip; Gov. Jim Thompson; Gov. Jim Edgar; Gov. George Ryan; Senator Emil Jones; Speaker Mike Madigan; Oral Jacobs; Mike Jacobs

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