

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Bernard Sieracki

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

Interview # ISG-A-L-2017-065

Bernard Sieracki, a lobbyist in the Illinois legislature for over forty years and author of *A Just Cause: The Impeachment and Removal of Governor Rod Blagojevich*, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft – General Interest* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Dates: Jul 21, Aug 4, 15, 24, 29 & Sep 1, 2017

Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:42 + 2:12 + 2:05 + 1:55 + 1:41 + 2:25 / 1.7 + 2.2 + 2.08 + 1.92 + 1.68 + 2.42 = 12.0 hrs.

Session 1: Early life, military experiences and early college education

Session 2: Early career as a lobbyist for Illinois Petroleum Council

Session 3: Lobbying career during 1980s and 1990s

Session 4: Barack Obama, and how the legislature has changed over the years

Session 5: Blagojevich administration and decision to write book on impeachment

Session 6: Legislature's impeachment and trial of Gov. Rod Blagojevich

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on February 14, 2018.

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

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Abstract

Bernard Sieracki, *Illinois Statecraft*, ISG-A-L-2017-065

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Bernard (Bernie) Sieracki was born in Evergreen Park, Illinois on June 26, 1945, and grew up in a working-class family on the south side of Chicago. Following his graduation from high school in 1963, Sieracki joined the U.S. Army, and spent a year stationed in South Korea, working as a finance clerk. He also spent one month in South Vietnam, then returned to the United States. Following his discharge, he enrolled at the University of Illinois – Chicago in the spring of 1966, majoring in history. He transferred to Roosevelt University by 1968, attending night classes while working during the day. Bernie eventually earned a BA in 1975, and went on to earn an MA in 1985 and a Ph.D. in 2008.

In 1972, Sieracki was asked to manage the campaign for Don Moore (Republican), who was running for the Illinois Senate. Following Moore's successful campaign, he began working for the Standard Oil Company in public affairs. That led to work on the Illinois Transportation Study Committee, a legislative organization, which led in turn to a career as a lobbyist for the oil industry, primarily in Springfield, but also in Washington, D.C. on an occasional basis. He represented the Illinois Petroleum Council for many years, then in 1985 began working as the lobbyist for Waste Management, the nation's largest waste management corporation. In 1994-95, the company was broken up, and Sieracki decided to begin Business Government Relations, his own lobbying firm. He retired from lobbying in 2010 after thirty-five years, but stayed active teaching public administration classes for many years after that. Bernie talks extensively about the lobbying profession, and about the many colorful legislators with which he worked, including then Senator Barack Obama.

In December, 2008 Governor Rod Blagojevich was arrested on corruption charges, and in January the Illinois House impeached the governor, and the Senate tried and convicted him. Since Sieracki always had a passion for history, and because he knew all of the key players in the impeachment drama very well, and was an observer for most of the public testimony, he decided to write a book on the Blagojevich impeachment entitled *A Just Cause: The Impeachment and Removal of Governor Rod Blagojevich*. Bernie talks extensively about this experience, and about the actual impeachment proceedings.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Lobbying in the Illinois legislature; Governor Rod Blagojevich; Michael Madigan; state senator Emil Jones; *A Just Cause: The Impeachment and Removal of Governor Rod Blagojevich*; Barack Obama as Illinois senator; state senator James Pate Philip; Gov. Jim Edgar; Gov. Jim Thompson; post Korean War South Korea; 1968 Democratic Convention; state senator Ed Derwinski; Illinois Petroleum Council; Waste Management, Inc.

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