Interview with Morton Kaplan

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is January 8, 2008. This is Mark DePue. I am the Director of Oral History with Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. It's my honor today to be with Morton Kaplan. I'm sure you prefer to be called Mort.

Kaplan: I certainly do.

DePue: Mort is a friend and colleague of Governor Dan Walker for many, many years.

Kaplan: That's right.

DePue: We're here to learn a little bit about yourself, but primarily about your association with Governor Walker.

Kaplan: Fine.

DePue: Why don't we start at the beginning and when and where were you born?

Kaplan: Chicago, Illinois in 1931.

DePue: Okay.

Kaplan: Thanksgiving day.

DePue: So, you're a city kid born and bred?

Kaplan: City kid born and raised.

DePue: You grew up here as well?

Kaplan: Grew up here.

DePue: Tell me a little bit about your parents' background.

Kaplan: Both my mother and father were born in Chicago, which is unusual for someone at my age. My maternal grandparents, as well as my paternal grandparent, all came from Russia. My maternal grandparents emigrated from Russia to Manchester, England, where several of my aunts and uncles were born and then they came to Chicago. My paternal grandparents were also born in Russia and they came here also. Each came here because they had a relative here that allowed them to come here and go to work and so on.

DePue: Here, being directly to Chicago?

Kaplan: Directly to Chicago.

DePue: Were they Jewish?

Kaplan: Yes.

DePue: Okay.

Kaplan: Yes.

DePue: On both sides?

Kaplan: On both sides.

DePue: Okay.

Kaplan: In fact, my grandfather used to tell me about some of the pogroms in Russia and what they would do when the Cossacks would come riding into, you know, their village. He was just a young boy at the time and they would hide the women. They would send the women and children into the forests, because they knew the ransacking was going to take place, but they didn't want anything else.

DePue: So you had parents, and grandparents especially, who had an appreciation for the things that the United States offered a person.

Kaplan: Oh, yeah, absolutely, absolutely.

DePue: Okay. What did your parents do for a living?

Kaplan: My father was in banking from the time he was 16 years old. He started out as a messenger and worked his way up to the point where he was vice president of several Chicago banks. My mother was pretty much a stay-at-home mother and she took care of the family. We were a very extended family. You know, at one time there were 10 of us that lived in one six-room apartment with one bathroom, and I had an uncle that lived with us, my maternal grandparents lived with us, a cousin lived with us, an aunt lived with us: my mother, father, my brother, myself. So, it was…nobody knew you were poor in those days. You had great family support. It

wasn't until later I realized we didn't have anything, but we were all very happy. So it was a very happy childhood.

DePue: Well, nobody else did either.

Kaplan: No, nobody had anything, nobody had anything.

DePue: Was this one of those wonderful ethnic neighborhoods you hear so much about?

Kaplan: Yeah, it was.

DePue: What was the neighborhood?

Kaplan: It was not too far from where we are now, which is Streeterville. It's now Bucktown, pretty much called Bucktown. It was in Chicago on Potomac and Damen, which is kind of right in the heart of what is now kind of a flourishing re-gentrified area. It was part Wicker Park, near Humboldt Park, pretty much called Bucktown today.

DePue: Okay. East of Humboldt Park?

Kaplan: Oh, don't ask me directions, you know.

DePue: Did they still speak Russian in that neighborhood?

Kaplan: My grandparents spoke Russian and Yiddish and my parents were always saying, "Speak English, speak English." (DePue laughing). And now I am so upset that I never learned the other language because my grandparents began to speak English, because my parents wanted us to speak English. But, it's really too bad because you lost the language, you know. You can't retrieve it.

DePue: No, they had a different attitude about what it took to be successful and adjusting to the new environment at that time.

Kaplan: Well, they did and that was part of the reason for it, because even my grandfather, who came here because his brother had a flower shop called Schack's Florist, (the maiden name on my mother's side was Schack), and got him here so my grandfather came here and spent two years here before he was able to bring the rest of the family over and one of the children died on the boat, so he left with three children; he left Manchester because that's where they had emigrated to; and only two arrived. So, it was a pretty tough situation for them. But he went to work and he thrived here and invested in real estate –even though he really didn't do more than work for a flower shop –but he saved his money and invested in a few buildings, which he promptly lost during the Depression.

DePue: Um-hm.

Kaplan: And on my father's side, my grandfather was a tailor, and so he got work here as soon as he came and was a tailor for most of his life.

DePue: Are you a product of the public schools then?

Kaplan: I am, I am the product of Hibbard Elementary School, Von Steuben High School, went to DePaul University here, graduated from DePaul, marketing major, so on and so forth. But, you know, I had a very good public school education and sports was everything to me.

DePue: What sports?

Kaplan: I played baseball and basketball. I played basketball on a Chicago city finalist basketball team, and as I observe it today, I couldn't even make … (laughing) the athletes are so big and so fast and so strong, I couldn't even make a scrub team today, but in those days we had a very good team and we lost the city championship to Marshall High School.

DePue: What year did you graduate from high school?

Kaplan: I graduated in 1949.

DePue: So you grew up during the Second World War.

Kaplan: I did.

DePue: And your memories of the war?

Kaplan: Oh, yeah. I remember very well I was sitting in the living room in 1941 on December 7, and I was listening to the Chicago Bears play on the radio and they broke into the broadcast to talk about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. So, at that time I was 10 years old and didn't exactly know what that meant and I ran into the kitchen and one of I said we had an extended family –an aunt of mine was there and I said, "What does that mean that they bombed Pearl Harbor?" and she said, "Oh, my God," and she ran into the dining room where our big console stood on the floor and she listened and she said, "It means we're going to be at war." I knew what war was, but I didn't know that that would be the precursor to the war.

DePue: Yeah. But in an extended Jewish family that had been here for one or two generations, I would assume there are relatives still back in Russia.

Kaplan: Not anymore.

DePue: Did they have any feelings that they expressed to you about what was going on in Germany with the Nazis?

Kaplan: Oh my God, yes. Oh my God, absolutely, you know. And we did have, you know, we had no relatives left in Russia, because these were my aged grandparents at that

time and so my parents were born here, so what we did have were some relatives that also had emigrated to England; I remember taking little packages that we would mail to them, you know, powdered eggs and whatever my mother was able to cobble together I would take to the post office and send it off to them, just walk over to the post office from our house. So she did that. Unbelievably, years later, one of my cousins who also lived with us went to Manchester and looked up the hall of records and found a remaining relative just a couple of years ago.

DePue: Wow.

Kaplan: A remaining cousin. At the time we referred to him as little Harold. (Laughing) Well, now, he was pretty close to 80 years old and I remember the letters. My mother would cry. She would get letters from cousins that said this is the saddest day of our lives, we have to send little Harold to the country and send him away from us so that he is away from the bombing because that's what they did with the children in those days. They put them on a train and they sent them elsewhere, sent them out of the city.

DePue: During the war, I'm sure there were rumors, things that were discussed among the family or discussed in the community where you were living, about what was going on in Germany.

Kaplan: Of course, of course.

DePue: But it really wasn't until we started to liberate the camps at the end of the war that some of that was actually discovered.

Kaplan: Right. And in 1941 I was 10, you know, and all I was interested in was sports. But my parents, we had a household that was very discussive; they would talk about everything. So, you had to be deaf, dumb, or blind not to know what the conversation was all about and we began to hear the stories about the atrocities and so on.

DePue: Hard to understand, comprehend?

Kaplan: Very hard to understand. I still don't understand it except that it's part of people, I guess, the dark side. I still don't understand it, but it's history, it's historical, so we know. My family were very pro-Franklin Roosevelt. It wasn't until many years later and considerably after the war, when I read stories about how some ships with Jews were not allowed to come here, that I began to question it. But, the Roosevelt image is still so strong with me and my whole family that he was a hero to our family. I think partly because he put our family to work, you know, between creating the WPA and other projects that he did because nobody in our household worked. There were no jobs. My father could not get a job in banking. My father was parking cars at the time. My uncle finally got a job through a politician where he became a liquor inspector. When he came home it was one of the happiest days in our family, because he was the first one to get a job among 10 people and my

aunt finally got a job as a secretary. So then things began to pick up a little bit during my childhood.

DePue: Your father had a WPA job then?

Kaplan: No, my father was parking cars for a nightclub and then ultimately he got a job in a bank.

DePue: Okay.Kaplan: You know, a menial job, but he got a job in the bank.

DePue: But there were other relatives that certainly benefitted directly from the New Deal program?

Kaplan: Oh yeah, absolutely, absolutely. My uncle and another friend who I forgot lived with us for a few years during those formative years, he got a political job. Interestingly enough, the man who gave my uncle the first job, you know; well, not the first job, but during the Depression; when he finally got work and got a job, was the father of Congressman Rostenkowski. It was Joe Rostenkowski who was the ward committeeman of that particular ward at that time and my uncle had been a precinct worker for him, a precinct captain for him, and I know he appealed to him all the time that we needed work. Nobody had any money, you know, it was hard to subsist, and Joseph, he called him Rosty, the same way they called Rostenkowski, Rosty. He called him Joe Rosty. And he said Joe Rosty gave him a job as a liquor inspector and that was it.

DePue: So that's how Chicago politics worked at that time.Kaplan: Still does probably.

DePue: Still does to a certain extent.

Kaplan: I think so.

DePue: Was just growing up in that venue your political awakening?

Kaplan: I think so. Yeah, I think so. I think that so many of us grow up inheriting the political views of the family and then later on you change or you don't change, depending upon how your thought processes work. It's like anything else, you grow up in a labor union family, the likelihood is you're going to be a Democrat, you know. If you grow up in a very, very wealthy family at that time, we don't want any more government, you know, we don't want any more government control, the likelihood is you'd be a Republican. You know, the same as it cuts across society. If you grew up a devout Roman Catholic, you are likely, not necessarily; you're likely to be pro-life. If you didn't, then you've got a 50/50 chance that you might be pro-choice. So, it works that way, as you well know.

DePue: When you graduated from high school, in forty-seven you said?

Kaplan: Forty-nine.

DePue: Forty-nine. You went straight to college after that?

Kaplan: Went straight to college.

DePue: DePaul?

Kaplan: Um-hm.

DePue: Did you have your college interrupted by the Korean War?

Kaplan: I did, but I had the college interrupted by myself, because, I went to DePaul and I really didn't know what I wanted to do, so I decided to try law school. Well I was so totally disinterested in law school, but I didn't really know what I wanted. So, I think I got some of the highest and some of the lowest grades (DePue laughing), because the classes I didn't want to go to, Property, Mortgages, that kind of stuff, I went to the movies on Friday. It didn't take long for them to throw me out.

DePue: Why law school?

Kaplan: I didn't know what else I wanted to do. I thought, you know, I was 17 years old. What do you know when you're 17? I had no lure for anything and so I thought, Well, I've seen lawyers around and it seems like a good profession.

DePue: Was that something that the family was encouraging?

Kaplan: The family encouraged me to do it, but my family always encouraged me to do what I wanted to do. My family never, ever, ever put the pressure on me to do what they wanted me to do. They were probably the most encouraging people that you could possibly imagine. Both my mother and father thought my brother and I could do anything that we wanted to and so did my maternal grandfather. You know, You do whatever you want. Do what you want to do. Be happy.

DePue: So did you?

Kaplan: I always thought I could do anything (both laughing). Yeah.

DePue: (Laughing) And have done quite a bit of it, right?

Kaplan: And I have, yeah. But, you know, it's funny how that works, because I can remember incidents of support. I remember I was having a terrible time with physics, high school physics, and I was up at about 2 o'clock in the morning studying for an exam and my father got out of bed and he said, "Go to sleep." I said, "I can't, I've got this physics exam and I really don't have it down." So he sat down on the sofa next to me, he had to go to work the next day, and he said, "Let me get you a glass of milk?" "No, dad." "Let me help you, I'll ask you questions?" I said, "No, dad, you don't know the questions to ask me." (DePue laughing). So,

he just sat in the corner and he sat there, all night with me. I never went to sleep that night and neither did my father. That's how they were, though. If I said to my father –my father died a few years ago at 96 –if I said to my father when I was 60, "I think I'm going to go to medical school, Dad," my father would say, and so would my mother, "I know you can do it and you'll be a great doctor. So you're going to have to work hard and you have to make some sacrifices, but go for it; you can do it." You know, so I grew up with that feeling that I could do anything I wanted to do. Great. You know, and I tried to instill that in my kids, and certainly in my grandchildren. I'm a much better grandfather than I was a father. (DePue laughing).

DePue: But you had your college interrupted by the Korean War.

Kaplan: Yeah, and when I flunked out of law school I was drafted. (laughing) It didn't take them very long.

DePue: What year was that?

Kaplan: That was in '53. Yeah, that was in '53.

DePue: So you had graduated from college.

Kaplan: No, I had to go back after the war to graduate from college. Because at that time, you did not have to go for four years to get into law school, so I entered law school after two years at DePaul. You were allowed to do that.

DePue: So you didn't have a degree per se when you went to law school.

Kaplan: No, I had no degree when I went to law school. I only had two years of undergraduate. So, then I went to law school and proceeded to flunk out that first year and wound up in the service. Afterwards, I went back and finished.

DePue: Okay. Well you got drafted in a good year, '53, the war was tailing down at that time.

Kaplan: It was, it was.

DePue: Very quickly, talk about your military experience.

Kaplan: Well, I had a great military experience because I wound up being selected during basic training to go to counterintelligence school, which is in Baltimore, Fort Holabird. And I went there and I was a basketball player and I was working out in the gym – I think I may have told you this story, I'll try to make it fast – and the base commander saw me playing and he called me over and he said, "I'd like you to play for us, for the base team." I didn't know who he was and I was concerned about flunking out. I said "I want to become a counterintelligence agent. I don't want to go out for basketball, as much as I love it. I need to study." He said, "I want you to come out for the team. I'm the base commander. We've never beat

Aberdeen Proving Grounds. I want to beat them this year. I've been hanging around the gym looking for ball players." So he put me on the team. Bottom line, we beat Aberdeen Proving Grounds. I had a great game. He called me in and he said, "You're going to get your orders pretty soon and I can help you." And I said, "Great. I want to go to Paris." I saw myself as James Bond, you know. There's a counterintelligence detachment in Paris. "I can't send you there." "There's one in Vienna, I'd like to go there." "I can't send you there." He says, "Where do you live?" I said, "Chicago." "I'm going to send you home to 5th Army Headquarters." I said, "I don't want to go home." He said, "You ungrateful little so-and-so." (DePue laughing). He said, "Your parents will appreciate it," even if I don't. "Or I could send you to Korea and you'll get your butt shot off." So, bottom line was, I came back to Chicago. I had a clothing allowance, a food allowance, I had never made as much money in my life (both laughing) and I was only a kid and I was a counterintelligence agent here in Chicago for the next 16 to 18 months.

DePue: So what in the world does a counterintelligence agent do in Chicago in 1954?

Kaplan: Well, you did a lot. You got case files of people who were applying for secret and top secret clearances and so that was basically it. You checked them out and, of course you would go to their references, which you paid no attention to, but I would say to you, "Mark, can you tell me two or three other people that might have known him?" and that's who I go and see and when I see them, "Could you tell me somebody else that might know." By the time you get to the third power you find out some lousy things about some of these people.

DePue: Yes.

Kaplan: So it was basically checking on people who were considered for secret, top secret jobs, defense jobs, government jobs, that type of thing.

DePue: Were you involved in politics at this time?

Kaplan: No.

DePue: Of course, the Army would have frowned on that in the first place.

Kaplan: Yeah, and I had no inkling that I would … you know, I didn't even know what I was going to do. I hadn't graduated college yet. I was 21 years old.

DePue: But during the time you're bouncing around Chicago, working as a counter-intelligent agent, just doing background checks …

Kaplan: It was mostly clerical.

DePue: …what did you think you wanted to do with the rest of your life?

Kaplan: I wasn't sure, because I had been visited by a couple of CIA agents at that time, who were painting a very rosy picture to me about joining the CIA. It would have

been a natural evolution as far as they were concerned, because I had some basic training already and …

DePue: Was some of that language training?

Kaplan: No, I didn't, but they wanted to send me to Monterey to study Russian at that time.

DePue: Well, not a bad place to go.

Kaplan: No, and they asked, "Have you ever been to California?" and I had not, you know. And they said, "How would you like to go to Monterey and you'll study Russian and you'll live in the San Francisco Bay area and you'll have this wonderful career which you've seen in the movies?" and so on, which sounded pretty good to me at the time for a kid who didn't really know what he wanted to do, but I was kind of turned off a little bit during my training, because I had some instructors that they would play music that I loved, Burl Ives, the Weavers, and they'd say, "Now listen to those lyrics; those really are communist inspired lyrics." And I thought that was baloney. I mean, I really like them, that music, and it was that era where there was a communist under every bed and maybe there was at that time.

DePue: Well, it was the height of the cold war, height of the McCarthy era.

Kaplan: Yeah, and I couldn't swallow that and I thought I think I can do something else, but it did turn my head for awhile and I thought seriously about it for a little while and then I decided, no, I want to go back to school, I want to finish college. I always thought I was a good writer and I was a good writer, so I thought maybe advertising is the thing that I wanted to do. I had never even dreamed of public relations, but I didn't even know what it was.

DePue: But as a writer, why advertising versus something that might sound a little bit sexier?

Kaplan: Well, I thought about journalism, but I kind of enjoyed commercials and seeing ads and that kind of stuff and during my second year in college I got a part-time job with a one-man advertising agency, Jerome Reese. I was everything: I was his go-fer, I was his office administrator, his secretary. I begged him to let me write a commercial, I begged him to let me write a commercial. At that time I was 18 years old, 19 years old. So he came up to my desk one day and he said, "Here's a patent medicine. We're going to tape some radio commercials. See if you can write me a 30-second commercial and I'll take a look at it." I'll never forget, it was Doctor Lemke's stomachic drops.

DePue: (Laughing), I love it.

Kaplan: It cured everything from an ingrown toenail to a lousy love life, you know. (Laughing) I mean, it was a cure-all. So, I wrote this little commercial. I was very proud of it, and I gave it to him and he made a little editing and he said, "Not bad, not bad. We're going to run it." And I said, "Oh, please, let me know when it's

going to be on," and so on and so forth and, "I want my family and friends to listen." Well I told everybody to listen and we tuned in and it was in Polish. It was on one of the Polish radio stations and the only way I could know it was mine is because it said, "La-ta-da-ta-da-ta-da Dr. Lemke's stomachic drops." That was my baptism in the field of advertising. So I thought advertising might be a place for me as a writer. I thought about journalism also. I also thought about being a coach, because I loved sports and I played sports in high school, maybe become a physical education instructor. So I was weighing everything and I got out of the service and I felt I needed to do something and I had met my soon-to-be wife when I was back here stationed in Chicago and it was shortly after my discharge that I went back to school.

DePue: When was that?

Kaplan: It would be in '55. We started dating. I was back in school trying to finish real fast, which I did in 3 semesters.

DePue: This was DePaul again?

Kaplan: At DePaul, back to DePaul, but in marketing.

DePue: With a clear notion of what you wanted to do at the end of the rainbow.

Kaplan: A clear notion of what I had no idea still what I wanted to do.

DePue: (Laughing) Okay.

Kaplan: We got married and I spent every penny I had on our honeymoon. I had no place to live. I figured we would come back and live with her parents or my parents for a time. I met a cousin – we called him Uncle Harvey – on our honeymoon in Florida who had a place on Marine Drive in Chicago and I told him our plight: I was going back to live. And he said, "That's not a good idea. Take my keys; I'll be home in three months at the end of the winter. Live in my place." And we did. And I got a job.

DePue: That's a pretty good wedding present.

Kaplan: Yeah, it was a great wedding present.

DePue: What was your wife's maiden name?

Kaplan: Samuels. S-a-m …

DePue: Her first name?

Kaplan: Carol Lynn. Carol Lynn Samuels.

DePue: Another good Jewish girl then?

Kaplan: Um-hm. Their family name was Yolinsky, but when they came through Ellis Island they couldn't handle Yolinsky, so they just gave them the name Samuels.

DePue: This is the classic immigrant story.

Kaplan: Yes it is.

DePue: Their whole family is from the United States.

Kaplan: In fact, on my father's side, their name was Smith and I said, "Wait a second, Smith? How did you get to Smith?" Well, their name was Cooperschmidt and when they came to Ellis Island it was anglicized to Coopersmith and then, again, they didn't handle it very well so they knocked off the Cooper and just made it Smith. So my uncle, Reub Smith went to Des Moines. My grandmother's name was Smith, you know, and that's what it was.

DePue: Reuben Smith: that will raise some eyebrows.

Kaplan: Yeah, absolutely.

DePue: Talk about your early days back in Chicago, just married, just out of the military, graduated from college, now what do you do?

Kaplan: You look for a job and I was having a tough time getting a full-time job; I applied everywhere. Mostly to advertising agencies, but just about anyplace I could imagine: public relations agencies, advertising agencies, and I got a call from somebody at a place called Julius Klein Public Relations. Now, Julius Klein had been a major general in World War II and he had a public relations firm with offices in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Chicago, New York; he didn't call me, someone else did, but I went in there for an interview and they sent me into the general's office. Now …

DePue: He was still a general?

Kaplan: In his mind he was, you know. He had two-star flag stationery, (DePue laughing) license plates. Well, you'll appreciate this as a former military man. I mean, he never gave up the emoluments of being a general. So, I walked into his office and I sat down and he's got my letter there; he throws the envelope at me and says, "Did you write this?" And I said, "Yes, sir." And he says, "It says Mr. Julius Klein." And I said, "Yes." He said, "Did you know I was a general?" And I said, "Actually, I did." He said, "If I were a judge and retired from the bench, would you call me mister or would you call me judge?" I said, "Well, I imagine I should call you judge." He said, "Then why did you write Mr. Julius Klein?" He looked at this and he threw the letter at me and he said, "Okay, you can leave." I got up to walk out and then he said, "Until you can figure out how to comport yourself." So I turned around and he said, "Sit down." And that was the beginning of my relationship with him. I must have quit a dozen times. Every time I quit he would say, "You're doing a wonderful job," you know, and he'd say, "Here, take your

wife out to dinner," and he'd give me a hundred dollar bill in my breast pocket or something like that (laughing). He was an amazing guy, really an amazing guy.

DePue: But you quit because you were upset about something.

Kaplan: Because I was upset about … I was always upset with him, because he was a martinet. You know, if he was in Chicago on the weekend, you worked on Saturday, and we all went to lunch at Fritzel's Restaurant downtown, which was a wonderful restaurant, a historic restaurant in Chicago. He was the kind of person where you loved him and you hated him all at the same time. I woke up one Saturday morning late and we had a 12 o'clock lunch; I hadn't eaten breakfast. So we went into the restaurant and he ordered for everybody. He said, "Twelve Weiner schnitzels," and I said, "I don't want Weiner schnitzel. I'd like some eggs" and blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. So he said, "Eleven Weiner schnitzels, one eggs, and two checks." (DePue laughing).

DePue: Hey, I got the message quick that way.

Kaplan: Yeah, yeah, absolutely, absolutely. But on the other hand, he was more lobbyist than public relations. He had big accounts: Pan American Airways, Schenley Distillers, these were big, big clients. He was kind of a human broker. He would get senators from both parties together; he would have events. He was friends with everybody in Washington and it helped him because he used to get calls from the vice president of, I think, the airlines saying, "You know, there are some bills going on …" It was the kind of call he would get, which said, "There's a movement on in Washington to try to ban liquor in airlines. You have to get on it for us." So he would call a lot of his friends, senators, committee members, in the House and in the Senate, because he collected people. He got them contributions etc. So when it came time to collecting on the chit he would call and say, "We need some help here."

DePue: But he wasn't a licensed lobbyist or anything like that?

Kaplan: He might have been, but I didn't know enough about it then. He could have been, but he might not have been.

DePue: Well, that's my guess, that you walked into this business and in the back of your mind you're saying, "I wonder what a public relations firm does?"

Kaplan: I didn't learn it there. I learned different things there, but not that. There was one episode there; you tell me if you want to veer away.

DePue: No, go ahead.

Kaplan: There was one episode there that was so typical of how the general operated. I was recording phone calls. To this day I don't know whether it was legal or illegal at the time because there were no beeps and there were no indications. So he would record every phone call and for a lot of legitimate reasons, because they always had

something important for him to do, that they wanted him to do. So, he would record the call, I would transcribe it. So I would transcribe all the calls Pan American, Schenley whatever the account was, and then I would give him the transcription. So, there was always a call that came in. This was in 1950… … when was it? … it was '55, it was '56. The state of Israel was established in 1948 and there were still tremendous hostilities over the next six, eight years. There was always a call from General Klein to Colonel Powell, and it was always the same call, "Colonel Powell, our friends need a couple hundred thousand dollars." Colonel Powell says, "Sounds like an important operation." And General Klein would say, "Very important." The conversation was always the same. Colonel Powell would say, "I'll have the money for you. You pick it up. It'll be on flight 55 tomorrow from Las Vegas." So, Julius Klein would send his driver and sometimes me and sometimes another staff person to meet the plane, you know, and bring a satchel, bring stuff back, and then he would turn it over to someone else here in Chicago for transmittal to Israel. This happened about while I was there, I was with him for two years I think it was –about every four months or so this would happen, two to three months, the same conversation: hundred thousand, three hundred thousand, four hundred thousand, and it was always the same conversation. "General Klein, Colonel Powell." "Colonel Powell, General Klein." So I asked him once, (DePue sneezes), bless you, I asked him once, (DePue sneezes), ditto.

DePue: There are always two.

Kaplan: Yeah, always. I asked him once, who was Colonel Powell? And he gave me this stare like, don't ever ask me that, you know. I got the message, I didn't. Years later, flash forward many years later when I had my own public relations company and he was rather ill and he was dying and I went to visit him. He was very, very happy to see me. He was always happy to see me because I was one of his boys that made good, so to speak. So, we were chatting and I said, "You know, I have one question that I really want you to answer for me. I couldn't ask you then. Who was Colonel Powell?" He proceeds to tell me this unbelievable story. Colonel Powell was a Jewish guy who was the power, or owner, of the Desert Inn Hotel in Las Vegas. He had come out of the Cleveland underworld, gangdom, head of the gang …

DePue: I was going to say, I think I've heard this name?

Kaplan: Probably have. He's dead now. But he had moved to Vegas, controlled –like a lot of these guys did –the Desert Inn Hotel and he understood that this was for clandestine operations in Israel. When Julius Klein said, "We need three hundred thousand dollars," he would call the other Jewish guys that owned or ran casinos. You know, if they didn't own it in name, they ran it. And they were all mob guys and they would skim from the casinos. They would take the cash because they loved the idea that the Jews were kicking ass against the Arabs, because these guys were muscle themselves, you know, and they just loved the idea that the Jews are finally striking back. They would steal the money from the casinos and Colonel Powell would call them all together. God, I hope this isn't going to be something

that gets me in trouble. I've never told this story to a microphone before. My understanding was, from General Klein, that he would call the group together and say, based on the size of their operation, "I need twenty-five thousand from you, I need fifty thousand from you, I need thirty thousand from you. We've got to get it all to Chicago the day after tomorrow." That's the story he told me. I have no way to authenticate it, except that I did transmit and transcribe a lot of those messages from Colonel Powell and Julius Klein.

DePue: Were you thinking at the time that this was his money?

Kaplan: I had no idea what it was. I had no idea what it was. I was so green behind the ears.

DePue: That's a lot of money at that time.

Kaplan: Yeah. Oh, I knew it wasn't for him. I knew it wasn't for him because the conversation was always "our friends", you know, something like that. "Our friends need two hundred thousand dollars." It was that kind of conversation.

DePue: Well, that's a fascinating story.

Kaplan: Yes it is.

DePue: I'm glad you decided to share it with me.

Kaplan: Yes, it is. I would like to add that this is the story that was – I'm protecting myself now – this was the story General Klein told to me. I have no idea whether it was accurate, but I have no reason to doubt it.

DePue: Well, we started this conversation with World War II and your family's conversations and impressions about what's going on in Europe at that timeWho can blame them for having very strong feelings about the future of Israel?

Kaplan: Right, right.

DePue: When did you start your own business and go your own way?

Kaplan: I had another job afterward. I went to another public relations firm after two years. I felt I needed to make some quantum leaps and get into what was a more classic public relations, so I joined another firm by the name of Herbert M. Kraus Company. Herb Kraus had a small public relations company and there I really learned the rudiments of public relations. I spent a few years there and then at that time my evolution led me to Dan Walker ultimately, because at that time, again, I felt that I needed to make a quantum leap and I felt I was ready. I felt that I was stultified in this job; I was just another account executive at a small public relations firm, and I dreamed of bigger things. So, an opportunity from someone that I knew, who introduced me to an industrialist here by the name of Arnold Maremont and Arnold Maremont was the CEO of what at that time was probably maybe a Fortune

1000 company. It was Maremont Corporation, which was the automotive after-market; they dealt in ordnance, they had owned ordnance plants. It was a holding company for a number of ventures. Arnold Maremont had been tapped by Governor Otto Kerner, for whom he was a major contributor, to become the head of Public Aid. It was a commission at that time. It was the Illinois Public Aid Commission; it wasn't a department. So, the commission was headed by a chair and a number of commissioners who made policy, and Maremont said, "I need you to do this." The Governor told him, "Our public aid, public welfare situation's a mess. We probably could use a strong businessman to get it under control." So, he persuaded Maremont to take on the job. Now, it wasn't a full-time job. He was the CEO of a corporation, but as chair of the commission he went to the commission meetings and he ran policy. One of the commissioners was Dan Walker. I did not know at that time that he and Dan Walker had had a prior history because Maremont, an extremely wealthy and prominent industrialist, was also a left-of-center Democrat, but a very hard-headed CEO type and if it made sense we do it and we do it today. You know, we don't wait until tomorrow and we don't get a consensus. You know, we do it. That type of person. Well, he became my mentor; I became the Public Information Director. The first thing he said was, "I want a public relations person, because I have programs that I want." A mutual friend introduced us and I became the Public Relations Director for the Illinois Public Aid Commission. One of the commissioners was Dan Walker, as I said; Maremont had funded an organization called the DFI, the Democratic Federation of Illinois, and Walker was heavily involved in that.

DePue: About '58 or so?

Kaplan: Boy. It was before my arrival on the scene, so it had to be the late fifties, because I came on the scene in the early sixties, so it was a little before my time. And I think that the Executive Director of the Democratic Federation, if I am not mistaken, was Victor de Grazia.

DePue: Yes. That's right.

Kaplan: Maremont funded that organization. So, Walker was the president, de Grazia was the managing director, the staff person, and then when Kerner became governor, Vic came into government as a cabinet officer. I think he was either the Executive Director of the Capital Development Board or one of the state agencies, I cannot remember which one.

DePue: Tell me a little bit more about what DFI did.

Kaplan: As I understand it –I came on the scene afterwards –it it was moderate and liberal Democrats who were really trying to create change from the old order of how Democratic politics was practiced in the state, a bunch of young Turks.

DePue: So, you've talked about this a little and what Maremont's politics were, and suggested a little bit about what the Democratic Federation was about and it's

obviously a change in the way politics operates. What were your political views at the time?

Kaplan: At that time, I was pretty much a liberal Democrat and when I came on board …

DePue: A New Deal type liberal Democrat?

Kaplan: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I was a Roosevelt supporter, a Franklin Roosevelt supporter; I grew up at that time and my parents loved FDR. I can still remember when FDR died and I came home from school, and my uncle and my mother were crying and I said, "What happened?" And they told me that FDR died. I mean, I knew how strongly they felt about him, but to see my mother and my uncle weeping at that time… I was still a kid, you know, it really bothered me. I was imbued with that whole New Deal spirit and so on and that stayed with me. I would say I'm still a moderate Democrat. The woman that I live with, Hedy Ratner, is a knee jerk left-winger and we have spirited discussions. Years ago I would have been with her. I'm much more moderate now, but I'm still a moderate Democrat. In any event, so I became the PR director for the Public Aid Commission. Maremont was still to be confirmed; you had to be confirmed to have that job.

DePue: By the state legislature?

Kaplan: By the state legislature. He was still being confirmed and he had some problems, because one of the first things that he decided after he looked at what was going on in public aid was: Why should all of my wealthy friends on the north shore be able to get birth control information and the indigent can't. Because the indigent couldn't, you know, at that time. Not through public aid. If they had money on their own, they could go get it. So, Maremont said, "Well, then why should we have all of these inspectors for the lame, the blind. The blind are not going to regain their eyesight all of a sudden. People who can't walk aren't going to have a miracle and get up and walk. We can cut out a lot of these inspectors. And if somebody regains their eyesight, big deal, wonderful, bully for them." So, he started immediately to take a look at what was going on, but he said, "We're going to have birth control for the indigent." You know, in the largest Roman Catholic archdiocese outside of Warsaw, I think. So this was the businessman's approach. And everybody said, "Hold on, hold on, you can't do this." He says, "Why not. It makes all the sense in the world. If I ran my business like they run the state, I'd be out of business." So, he had all these ideas that he was going to put across, but he didn't reckon with what happens in the state legislature. I think it was, was it Mark Twain that said everybody is in danger, or something like that, when the legislature is in session? So, he immediately started going public with all of these pronouncements. Well, the commission …

DePue: Deliberately going public.

Kaplan: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Makes speeches. I was writing speeches for him. Had a very funny episode. I was getting so bored with the speeches I was writing and I needed

to inject humor and I took a course called the Hollywood School of Comedy Writing, you know, a correspondence course. (DePue laughing). So, I got to the point where I would come in and he would say to me, "All right, before we get serious, give me today's lesson so that we can get that out of the way," because one of the lessons was, you must think of the world on a tilt and consequently you take a major premise and you know, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da. So, before we could get serious he always had me tell him my latest lesson, then we could get serious. So, I took this course and I was writing a lot of speeches for him. He always knew what he wanted to say, he knew how he wanted to say it, and I became pretty good at working with him. So, he was giving these speeches at the City Club and everywhere else, that this is what we need if we are going to really shake up public aid in Illinois, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da. At the same time he was a real maverick. He wouldn't give a corporate penny to your charity, because he believed, as Milton Friedman suggested, that the business of business was to make money for shareholders, nothing else. Now, he was very charitable. He would give money himself out of his own pocket; but if you asked for a corporate donation, you had no chance. So, you know, he …

DePue: So, as a liberal Democrat was he opposed to corporate taxes?

Kaplan: I don't really remember.

DePue: Okay, that's unfair question, so.

Kaplan: Yeah, I just don't remember. But, in any event, he was a very strong-willed guy, a very successful guy. So, he started making these pronouncements. Well, on the commission were a hell-of-a-lot of Catholics appointees. I think one was Frank Lorenz who was, I believe, either a judge at that time or he might have been Attorney General of the state, but there were a number of businessmen; I think, Mike Howlett was on the commission at that time. Well, naturally they opposed the hell out of him at that time, and Walker was on the commission who supported him. I had a drink with Dan one night during this contretemps that was going on about birth control, which exploded all over the headlines, and I was in the middle of it because I was the spokesperson. So, Walker said, "Boy, I'm in a lot of trouble." Walker was foursquare supporting of Maremont and the birth control issue. And I said, "Well, it's not easy for anyone, Dan." And he said, "Well," he said, "My kids are all being raised Catholic. My wife is Catholic, my kids are all Catholic, and they're having problems at school. You know, they're being taunted …" and all that kind of stuff, because it was headline-making stuff at that time.

DePue: Well, and Roberta was a very staunch Catholic herself.

Kaplan: Yes she was. And I said, "Wow, I didn't know that." But he never wavered. He never wavered. The same way Maremont was, Walker was. If he saw the righteousness of something according to him, he never backed down, and I thought, "Wow, boy, that's pretty brave to do what he is doing under the circumstances." And I remember I said to him, "If you ever run for public office, I promise you I

will be there, I will be there, Dan." And he said, "I really appreciate that," but at that time he was a trial lawyer for Hopkins Sutter and he was a brilliant litigator and little did I know he was going to call me on it at some point.

DePue: Did you have the sense that he was the kind of ambitious personality that wanted to do that.

Kaplan: That he might, that he might. I had the sense that Dan could do just about anything that he wanted to do. You know, he was brilliant, he was articulate, he could get to the nub of a matter and see both sides immediately. You know, he'd cut to the chase. He was always able to cut to the chase. Just like Maremont was. You know, Maremont would cut you short. He'd say, "I got it on the first bounce. Now tell me what you want to do about it." You know.

DePue: The kind of insight that makes a person impatient when other people can't see it the same way?

Kaplan: Um, more Maremont than Walker. Maremont was, but not Walker. I remember so many funny asides with Maremont, but I don't want to get into it. So, at that time that whole period lasted nine months, ironically, as long as it takes to have a baby when birth control (DePue laughing) was at the nub of the issue. And Maremont was still up for confirmation. They were delaying his confirmation; they were stalling his confirmation during that period, trying to get him to change his views. The governor called him and said, "Look, I have my whole budget here that's being held up. We got to come to some understanding." And Maremont said, "You need to support me on it, you need to support me on this. I'm really determined to do this." So the governor didn't say anything; he didn't say yes and he didn't say no. I asked Maremont, "Is the governor going to support you?" and he said, "I think the governor is going to let it lie and see what happens for a while." So, Maremont made this unfortunate speech, and I knew the spit hit the fan as soon as he made it. He challenged the Republicans in the legislature. He called them a name. I mean, he said it was something like –I don't think he used the word Nazis, but it was something very vituperative –that they are holding Public Aid hostage. He called them either villainous or –you know, it was a terrible, terrible thing to do –in a speech that he gave in Chicago. And then he had to fly out of town. He flew down to Champaign or Springfield or someplace else and as soon as I heard the speech I said, "Oh, boy, am I going to get calls on this," and, naturally, I did. You know, the press called, the governor's office called, and, "What the hell is he doing?" I said, "That's what he said." You know, there's no backing away from it, that's what he said. And the press called and I said, "That's what he said. He said it and he'll have to explain it. I can't elaborate." So, now he called me from wherever he landed –it was in Southern Illinois somewhere –and I said, "Arnold, it's really hit the fan here over this issue." Immediately, immediately the legislature decided they were going to de-confirm him, because they had now just confirmed him like a few days earlier –in an act that I still maintain –Bill Goldberg could probably give you a better idea of this –in an act I still say is unconstitutional. I've never heard of de-confirmation.

So, they said that they de-confirmed him. They took a vote of de-confirming their confirmation. I don't know if you can do that. I don't know if it's legal to do that.

DePue: Well, I was speculating that it wasn't just Republicans that were opposed to his nomination, but perhaps some …

Kaplan: A lot of Democrats.

DePue: Catholic Democrats.

Kaplan: Absolutely. Absolutely. And ironically, the one person who made a favorable statement for Maremont at that time was Mayor Daley, Richard J.

DePue: Wow.

Kaplan: And on television – I never forgot it, because I've used it many times in classes and in speeches and so on – he said, "Well, he made a mistake; that's why they put erasers on pencils." (DePue laughing). Which I thought was a great line. It's still a great line, a very serviceable line. "I made a mistake. That's why they put erasers on pencils." And so Walker, Maremont, de Grazia, myself were kind of holed up the day of the de-confirmed hearings in the Executive House Hotel here in Chicago, and Dan suggested a course of action for us to take. The first was for Maremont to call the governor, because all the governor needed to do was twist a few arms, okay? The second was that I should write all the possible scenarios for his statement, depending upon what happened next. So, I began to write statements: if he were confirmed, if the de-confirmation didn't take place, if he resigned, if he was fired; you know, all of these statements that we would issue at the time. We call it a standby statement, when you know there are going to be some outcomes and you better be prepared for it, because you can't tell the press, "Tomorrow I'll give you a statement." So, I mean, Walker was instrumental in helping me write those statements, deGrazia was, Maremont was, and I had all these statements made. Maremont called the governor; the governor said, "I can't do anything Arnold, they're holding my budget hostage and you're the pawn and I can't do anything." Maremont was furious, and he accused him of having no cojones, and he said, "Okay, then I'm out." And he was. He was out. And Walker became the interim chairman of the Public Aid Commission and asked me if I would stay on for awhile and work with him. Well, at that time I was really ticked off at the governor, too, because I thought, ahhh, I mean, no courage, no courage at all.

DePue: This is Kerner.

Kaplan: Yeah. But precisely at that time, Dick Thorne, who was the governor's press secretary, decided that he was going to return to private industry. Dick had been a radio personality before he became Kerner's press secretary and Dick called me and met with me and asked me to be his successor as Kerner's press secretary, because the governor knew he was leaving. He asked me to do it because, even though they were at odds with Maremont, he felt that, in the eye of a hurricane that I had comported myself very professionally. I thought it was wonderful; it was a great

kudo for me, I felt. Here's the governor's press secretary, knowing that I was on the opposite side on this internal squabble, and asked me, he said, "That's politics, Mort." He said, "I want you. If the governor would ask me to find a replacement for myself, I'd like it to be you." I said, "I can't do it. I just can't do it after what I saw of the government." He said, "Mort, you're being naïve. The governor, who had a budget to save and had to sacrifice somebody …" blah, blah, blah. But I couldn't do it anyway. So, after Walker was the interim guy for a while he left and I left and I had nothing. I didn't know what I was going to do at that point and Maremont called me.

DePue: Was this a paid position while you were there?

Kaplan: Oh, yeah. For me it was, yeah.

DePue: For Walker it was not.

Kaplan: No, they weren't paid. No, they were all just commisioners.

DePue: Was deGrazia on the Commision?

Kaplan: He was not on the Commission. He was operating one of the cabinet positions at the time, but he was an advisor to Maremont, because his loyalty was to Maremont.

DePue: Was the DFI still an ongoing entity?

Kaplan: No, no.

DePue: But that idea of bringing change to government had not died?

Kaplan: No, and it was alive and well in a lot of legislators that I worked for: Paul Simon, Ab Mikva, Tony Scariano, Bob Mann, these are all the young liberal Turks in the … Alan Dixon … in the state legislature at that time.

DePue: When you say that you worked for, that you were public relations?

Kaplan: I did the public relations for Ab Mikva's congressional campaigns.

DePue: This is Abner Mikva.

Kaplan: Abner Mikva, who of course became a federal judge and White House Counsel to Bill Clinton. I handled three of his campaigns. I didn't handle, but I was instrumental on one of Paul Simon's campaigns for lieutenant governor. I handled Alan Dixon's campaign for state treasurer, secretary of state, and the United States Senate. When I met them all they were all these young Turks in the legislature who were committed to change. Tony Scariano, who later became a judge. I knew them all.

When I was figuring out, "What am I going to do now? I have three little children and I got to do something." I decided, with more brass than brains, I was going to open my own firm, but I had no clients. So, Maremont called me and he said, "Come on, let's have lunch." He said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I'm opening my own firm." And I told him that I just turned down Kerner's press secretary job and he said, "That was dumb, Mort. That was really dumb." you know. But, underneath his hard heart he knew why I had done it and so he said, "I'm going to be your first client," and I think he did it out of generosity because there wasn't that much for me to do.

DePue: With as much clout and as many financial resources as he had, he was a great first client.

Kaplan: He was. He was the best. He wanted to write a book, he wanted to make speeches, and he had me doing things that were, I mean, so wild, I can't even begin to tell you. He said, "You know, before I pass on, I'd love to get an honorary degree from my university, the University of Chicago." He said, "See what you can do?" (Kaplan laughing). Now, what do I know about it? So, I called and I called the business school. Who do I talk to at the business school? George Schultz.

DePue: Wow.

Kaplan: George Schultz is the dean of the business school. And I said, "Do you know Arnold Maremont?" He says, "Yes, of course." You know, he's one of our illustrious graduates," and so on and so forth. And I said, "I really don't know how to suggest this, but maybe I can send you all kinds of stuff and maybe the University could consider him for an honorary degree." Schultz could not have been nicer, he could not have been nicer. He said, "Well," he said "it's not an easy thing to accomplish, you know," he said, "but send me all of the material and we'll see. I'll put it before the powers that be." He was just the dean of the business school at that time and he said "I have to see first whether I can support it myself," you know, and, "then we'll see what happens." Well, it never went anywhere. But it was the kind of stuff I was doing for Maremont. I flew to New York to talk to a few publishers because he wanted to write a book about *my nine months going from a CEO to a fired public official, public appointee;* he wanted to write a book, so I went and saw some publishers and that's the kind of thing that I did over the next year, but that kept the wolf from my door and I was able to build on my public relations practice at the time.

DePue: When was it that you started your business?

Kaplan: fIt was either '63 or '64, Mark. I'm not really good on years, but it had to be '63, '64.

DePue: So that sounds like it was still in Kerner's first term.

Kaplan: Might have been; yeah, I think it might have been his first term, because he later got in trouble and went to prison and that was not at that time, so it had to be his …

DePue: That was ’68 I think.

Kaplan: Yeah, it had to be his first term.

DePue: This was the Morton H. Kaplan Associates of Chicago.

Kaplan: That’s what it was; that’s what it was. And I proceeded to get client after client and grew the company and wound up with about 30 or 35 people and a lot of big accounts.

DePue: How many of the accounts were political accounts?

Kaplan: Well, none of them until …. well, I take that back. I was always handling a campaign, which is very hard to do when you have an agency, because I had Motorola, I had two sections of the American Bar Association that I represented, I had Tischman Spier Realty Company, so I had a lot of blue chip clients at the time, but I loved politics and government and I really believed in it passionately, and the ability to be paid while doing what you really believe in was, I thought, the best of all worlds; although, I took not a nickel in the Walker campaign.

DePue: So the public relations business was paying the bills and running campaigns was the avocation.

Kaplan: Right, and fortunately I had some very good staff so that I could take time, but I never could really divorce myself from the business; that would have been suicidal. And I maintained this friendship with Dan Walker throughout and, as I said, I was handling congressional campaigns for Ab Mikva, worked on Paul’s Simon’s lieutenant governor campaign. Alan Dixon then was just getting into statewide office, state treasurer, then secretary of state and so on.

DePue: Well, let’s talk about Walker certainly having his burning ambitions, but he wasn’t the only one. I mean, there was deGrazia and Dave Green who also had burning ambitions, apparently, for Walker.

Kaplan: Right; both of them did. Neither of them had the burning ambitions for themselves.

DePue: Right.

Kaplan: Dave was a very successful businessman. He had a company called Quartet Manufacturing and Quartet Manufacturing made all kinds of office equipment. What did they make? They made corkboards and kinds …

DePue: Governor Walker said bulletin boards.

Kaplan: Bulletin boards, corkboards, all kinds of stuff for presentations and that was Dave’s business, Quartet Manufacturing Company.

DePue: Were you in contact with both of these gentlemen?

Kaplan: I was, all of the time, you know, because we were …

DePue: Were they bending your ear about, Dan's the kind of guy we need in government?

Kaplan: Well, ultimately sure. I mean, at the time I was busy cobbling a living together, but we all maintained a relationship. You know, we still had a relationship. Dave was never inside government because he had his company and Vic was still with the governor at that time, I believe still was, for awhile. I think he still was in the governor's cabinet, although very unhappy with the governor at that time, and I can't remember now what Vic tran … Oh, I know where Vic transitioned. I don't remember that period of Vic's, but I do remember we would get together and talk politics, talk government, and it wasn't long before Dan became the campaign director for Adlai Stevenson's campaign.

DePue: The third? [Adlai III]

Kaplan: Right.

DePue: Okay.

Kaplan: Right. But he had worked for the original.

DePue: Right.

Kaplan: And then he became campaign manager and I think that was a point at which … but, see, I was handling other campaigns at that time. I was handling Dixon campaigns and so on. Dan at that time hadn't really talked about running himself. He was running Stevenson's campaign and Vic was involved in that. To a lesser extent I think Dave Green was involved in that, and I was building my business, but we maintained contact. We also had a contact going. All of that got its push, came to a head after the Stevenson campaign ended and Dan was then given the Kerner report to write during the riots of 1968.

DePue: Was this the Stevenson senatorial campaign?

Kaplan: I'm trying to remember whether it was senatorial … or gubernatorial and I can't tell you. It might have been his gubernatorial campaign, but I can't remember; I just can't remember. But Dan was the campaign manager, the head of the campaign and whether that was his title, campaign director, campaign manager. And right juxtaposed with that, I guess, was when the Kerner Commission, after the riots here in '68, asked Dan to head the investigation and write the report. In the meantime, Dan had been President of the Chicago Crime Commission, so he was building some credentials of his own apart from being a litigating partner of Hopkins Sutter; as a matter of fact, I think that around that time he might have left Hopkins Sutter for Montgomery Ward.

DePue: Yes, he did.

Kaplan: And he was the Vice President and General Counsel at Montgomery Ward at that time and President of the Crime Commission. So he was building his credentials.

DePue: But at that time he hadn't really crossed ways with the Daley administration yet?

Kaplan: No, no, not at all, not at all, because the Daley administration was supporting Adlai Stevenson, you know?

DePue: Yeah.

Kaplan: And Dan was involved. It's hard for me to bridge the exact time periods there, one to the other, but all of this was happening in that same decade. When Dan wrote the Walker report, he asked me to help him prepare it also, and Vic was very instrumental there, and I think Bill Goldberg was and Dan.I It seemed inevitable: we had all the information and Dan had this incredible idea about what to call and when those two words "police riot" appeared in the report, that it was a police riot, everything hit the fan.

DePue: His words.

Kaplan: His words. He called it a police riot. And we talked about it and he said, "There's no getting away from it. It was a police riot."

DePue: Of course the report didn't whitewash anybody's involvement. It certainly didn't make the protestors look like saints, who were close to it.

Kaplan: Not at all. Not at all, and they weren't.

DePue: Those are the two words that continue to live to this day.

Kaplan: That's right. In fact, the protestors were, if anything, culpable as hell. I remember that we would look at the reports that the investigators submitted and one of them had this conversation with Abby Hoffman, who was one of the notorious Chicago 7. By the way they're making a movie out of it right now.

DePue: Fortieth anniversary.

Kaplan: Yeah, and he asked Abby Hoffman, "Why…" Can I use profanities here?

DePue: Yes.

Kaplan: Okay. He asked Abby Hoffman, "Why did you write the word motherfucker on your forehead?" And Abby Hoffman said, "I didn't write it on my forehead except when I didn't want to be on television," (DePue laughing) and I thought, wow, this guy should've been doing something constructive. (DePue laughing). He said, "The only time I used that, the only time I wrote that on my forehead is when I didn't want to be on television." So, I mean, we had all these reports of the riots and I still remember anecdotal information where some kid was beaten badly near

Lincoln Park, but wasn't *at* Lincoln Park, was blocks away. The police said they found no clues, no information about who might have put this kid in the hospital, so one of our investigators went over to the same alley where the kid was found and saw a garbage truck. He said to the garbage guys, "Were you here that afternoon when the kid was beaten?" They said, "Sure." He said, "What happened?" They said, "The kid was just standing here in the alley and the cops got out of the car and they came out and they beat the hell out of him." So, the cops could have done the same thing, you know, gone over to the alley and see if anybody saw anything, but they weren't about to do that, you know. But I must tell you, we spent a lot of time on those two words because I think we knew what the repercussions were going to be. We didn't know the extent of those repercussions, but we knew it was going to be big time.

DePue: "We" being you and Vic and Dave?

Kaplan: Vic and Dave and Bill.

DePue: Was everybody saying you need to change those words?

Kaplan: Well, no, no. Everybody was saying what do we call this? I mean, what is this thing that we've got here? What do we call it? How do we describe it? You know, police riot seemed to be the phrase.

DePue: Walker was the one who would not waver.

Kaplan: No, he wouldn't, he wouldn't. He said it was a police riot.

DePue: I would assume then that's the beginning, the origin of the animus, the intense dislike between Daley and Walker?

Kaplan: Oh, was it ever, was it ever.

DePue: Now, it's certainly not the origins of Walker's disdain – and hatred almost – for the machine politics of Chicago.

Kaplan: You know, Dan wanted change. I never heard Dan speak… How do I phrase this? I never heard him really attack Daley. I never heard him really be vituperative against him. He hated machine politics. He felt machine politics was corrupting and that he wanted change. I think that if I had to characterize Dan's entire stewardship I would use a phrase that subsequently has become more popular, and that's transparency. He wanted government to be transparent. He didn't want these deals, these back room deals. He didn't want the politics as usual, and he wasn't the only one. All those guys that I mentioned in the legislature, they wanted the same thing; they wanted change.

DePue: I wonder: did you have any personal experience with the machine, with running for office or helping with precinct elections, or anything like that?

Kaplan: Sure.

DePue: Can you explain how the machine operated?

Kaplan: How did it operate? It was … I think it's characterized so much …

DePue: A challenge for public relations.

Kaplan: Well, the first thing that came to mind when you asked me that question was what – it was either Patty Bowler or William "Botchy" Connors or one of their contemporaries as ward committeemen said – when someone came there for a job – you may have heard this before – when someone came to them for a job they were supposed to have said, "Who sent you?" and they said, "Well, nobody sent me?" and they replied, "We don't want nobody that nobody sent." (DePue laughing). It's a classic and it's really pretty much how the machine worked. That's the first thing I thought of when you mentioned that: how did the machine work? And I think that was absolutely right on. We don't want nobody that nobody sent, you know. You had to come from someone if you wanted a job with the machine, with the Democratic politics. And there was control. The slate making was a sham. If you went before the slate makers, you better have it wrapped up before you went in there.

DePue: And, of course, Governor Walker, probably in his naiveté, went before the slate makers in 1960 looking for the attorney general slot.

Kaplan: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DePue: And I think it was William Clark that ended up getting it.

Kaplan: It was; it was Bill Clark who wound up getting it. Interestingly enough, Arnold Maremont wanted to run for senate and went to Mayor Daley and Daley said, "Go out and drum up some support and come back to me and see me after you've done that."

DePue: Support being money in part?

Kaplan: No, no, support around the state, you know, from the various counties, Democratic organizations, and so on. Maremont took a barnstorming tour of the state and came back with lots of support, came to Daley with it and Daley picked – I forgot who – I think he picked Sid Yates to run that year. Maremont had a lot of support, because he had a lot of money and he was willing to spend it, so he would go downstate. He had never campaigned for anything before. He was a businessman. And I remember the first trip: he went to – oh god, what county? He came back and told us a wonderful story. He saw the committeeman, the township committeeman; he said he introduced himself and said, "I'm here because I'd like your support and I want to run for Democrat nomination for the senate. I came here to say I would support you and I'll always have an open door for you," and blah, blah, blah. So the guy said, "Okay, start campaigning." And Maremont said, "What do I do?"

And he said, "Come with me," and he took him into a tavern and he said, "Hey fellas, this is Al Maremont from Chicago; he wants to run for Senate." "Go say hello and talk to these people," and Maremont had never done anything like that before. That was his first foray, but he came back from a barnstorming tour with lots of support, because nobody had ever gone to them yet. He presented it all to Daley and Daley was like a sphinx, "Nice going," you know, and so on and gave the nomination to Yates. So, like you said, Dan appeared and I'm sure a lot of people slapped his back and said, "Nice going, good presentation," and so on and when they caucused they gave it to Bill Clark. I mean, these are all the inside people. And that's what it was. I mean, the machine was like inside baseball. You know, if you didn't have what they called a "Chinaman" at that time … Have you heard that expression?

DePue: Oh, yeah.

Kaplan: Okay. If you didn't have a Chinaman you weren't going to get very far and Daley was very canny. I think that of all the people that I have dealt with across the political spectrum, the person who had the most intuitive understanding of political power was Richard J. Daley. By that I don't mean an intellectualizing of it, I mean an intuitive understanding of political power and how it works. Richard J. Daley. I think he was just great at it.

DePue: And I've also heard that the machine had mastery over turning out the vote, manipulating the vote.

Kaplan: At that time they did. That began to wane.

DePue: How exactly did that work?

Kaplan: From what I can recall, there were always precincts that were late reporting, that if there was a problem in a precinct there was always some irregularity. You never got the results until they wanted you to get the results.

DePue: But otherwise were considered by the Daley machine as reliable precincts?

Kaplan: Right, right. They were reliable precincts. There was no reason to play any games with them, you know. And in many instances, I can't really tell you who, but I had heard this many times, that they would put up a candidate in a particular ward as a Republican – if it was a heavily Democratic ward – who Daley wanted to put up and would say, "You run," and the guy got slaughtered of course, but that's because they needed some opposition in that ward and they didn't want real opposition, so Daley anointed somebody from the Republican party. Those are the stories that were rife at the time; I didn't see it, so I couldn't really verify it, but that's what you heard, you heard that from time to time.

DePue: Well, let's get to 19 … (phones ringing). Well, let's take a break here.

Kaplan: Let's take a pause, yeah, yeah. … But, I'd rather keep going.

DePue: Okay. We were just at the transition point when the phone rang. Let's pick it up with this Mort. You were getting to 1970 and that crucial decision that Walker and the rest of his very close associates made about his running for governor. Before we go into that though, what was it about Dan Walker personally that you saw that really clicked for you, that made you think this is a guy that I could really support, that he could do something?

Kaplan: I thought he was courageous. I thought he stood for what I stood for. I thought that he had great fortitude and great courage of his convictions and I thought he was fearless. I thought that he really was intent on changing the face of government and I thought, of anybody that I've ever seen that was committed to doing that, I never met anybody who I felt could do that better than Dan Walker.

DePue: I'm not sure I can recall the exact words you used, but what was your desire, your hope for government?

Kaplan: Better government. Better government. I wanted what he wanted. I wanted what Dave wanted. I wanted what Bill wanted. I thought that it's time that it wasn't just the good old boys making all the decisions again, that it had to be opened up, that the process should be opened up. I never would have done it out of love. I mean, I didn't get a nickel for the campaign. I worked my tail off and so did everybody. It was a kind of a crusade.

DePue: But why not turn to the Republicans instead of trying to reform the Democratic Party from the inside?

Kaplan: Basically because I was a Democrat. You know, I was a Democrat.

DePue: You never envisioned yourself as anything other than that?

Kaplan: No. I mean, yes and no. I never envisioned myself a Republican, although I did work for several Republicans that I thought were terrific. There was a state representative who ran for county judge by the name of Elroy Sandquist and Roy was, I thought, a terrific guy. I had met him and I became an advisor and I said, "You know what, Roy, I will do whatever I can behind the scenes. I don't want to go public." And I became a special advisor to him and his campaign.

DePue: What was his last name?

Kaplan: Sandquist, S-a-n-d-q-u-i-s-t. He was a state rep. Might have been a state senator, but I know he was a state rep and I think at some point he ran for county judge and lost. I became very involved in his campaign.

DePue: I want to get your thumbnail description, character assessment, of some of the other people that were close to Walker.

Kaplan: Okay.

DePue: We should start with Victor.

Kaplan: Probably one of the smartest political tacticians that I have ever met. Vic was … and also by the way, a charming Renaissance man, a classical pianist, fun to be with, connoisseur of wine and food, extremely well-read and had more than a touch of Machiavelli.

DePue: Well, that's what I was going to say, that I've heard that word used, that his brother, I think, wrote a book about Machiavelli, did he not?

Kaplan: Yes, yes. I'm not sure whether his brother is Sebastian or, I can't remember, but, yeah, I think that's true.

DePue: But those aren't normally words that you hear associated with each other – charming and also Machiavellian.Kaplan: You asked me for a thumbnail sketch of Vic and that was the best that I could do.

DePue: Okay. Manipulative?

Kaplan: I don't think I'd use that word for Vic, because I would use "a cunning strategist." I don't know about manipulative. I don't think I would say that about Vic. He wouldn't tell you something to your face and then go around your back and say something else. He wouldn't do that. He was more direct than that.

DePue: So, very well respected among the circles?

Kaplan: Absolutely, including his opponents; his adversaries respected him as well. They may have hated him, but they respected him. You could not, not respect Vic.

DePue: How well did you know Nancy de Grazia?

Kaplan: I knew Nancy well, because Nancy was involved in the campaign. I had met Nancy, I guess, during the campaign, yeah, so I got to know Nancy during the campaign. They weren't married to each other at that time. They each had respective spouses. I'm not sure … I assume the campaign was the genesis of their relationship, but what ultimately happened is they both got divorced and ultimately married.

DePue: David Green?

Kaplan: Dave was probably the best numbers person I have every met in politics. He could analyze the numbers like nobody I had ever seen before and I had been involved in a lot of political campaigns with a lot of pretty smart people. Dave could take a look at where we were going to win and how we were going to win and he didn't know we were going to win, by the way, until … He had a eureka moment and he came in to a meeting one time as we were right down the road and he said, "We're going to win." And everybody said … you know, I mean, the odds were so daunting, you know. You had to beat the Daley machine in the primary and not just the Daley machine, but the Daley machine had Paul Simon running as their candidate.

DePue: A fellow young Turk?

Kaplan: A fellow young Turk, liberal Democrat, and the Daley machine. You had to beat him and then if you got through that gauntlet, you had to beat the incumbent governor, Dick Ogilvie, who was a good governor, but took the unfortunate position – which I subscribe to by the way – but pragmatically he talked about tax increases.

DePue: He imposed the income tax in this state.

Kaplan: Right, and that killed him.

DePue: And …

Kaplan: That gave us our opening.

DePue: Governor Walker said he supported it as well, but he recognized a political opportunity.

Kaplan: Of course, as do I, you know. I mean, I would right now; we need an increase, you know. If we needed a tax increase, I believe we should have a tax increase, but I would never advise a client of mine running for political office; there's something about a suicide wish. Dave was like a numbers guy nonpareil. He would analyze it county by county, precinct by precinct. He gave you stuff that was hard to believe and then he had this – as I said –this eureka moment and he said, "We can win."

DePue: Bill Goldberg.

Kaplan: Very smart lawyer and a guy whose opinions I really respected. You know, Bill would come in and talk about, is it legal, is it illegal? And not is it legal and is it illegal, but does it make political sense? So, Bill, was a first rate legal mind who could superimpose the political realities on the law and the law on the political realities and give advice that was always very sound. Bill was always a guy that never, never, would say, "I think we should do this." He always said, "I think we should do this because …," and I was used to that because that was our old Maremont, too. He would say, "What's your opinion?" and then he'd say, "Why? Tell me why?" Never let you just get away with that. Bill was pretty much the same way. He'd say, "I think this is what we should do because …" blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and he'd lay it out.

DePue: So, very analytical.

Kaplan: Very analytical, very analytical.

DePue: He also strikes me as being quiet, maybe even reticent to a certain degree.

Kaplan: No. No. I think I wouldn't say quiet and I wouldn't say reticent. Probably maybe more of a counterpuncher, so that if you introduced the subject … He may not

introduce the subject, but when you introduce the subject for discussion, he would always be responsive, always, in a very intelligent way.

DePue: And Nortie Kay? [Norton Kay, Walker's press secretary]

Kaplan: Well Nortie was a political editor of one of the Chicago newspapers at the time and before Nortie came on board I really turned that down. I was building my PR firm and I did not want to go to work in state government. I wanted Dan to win. I did not want to go into the administration, because I was building a successful PR firm at the time and so Nortie had been the political editor of *Chicago Today*, I guess it was, and he became press secretary, but I was always in there at the critical moments on all the decisions that we made in the campaign and even after.

DePue: This might be an awkward question for you to respond to: Because he was the press secretary during Walker's administration, we naturally think of him as something of a political advisor in that respect.

Kaplan: He was a political advisor.

DePue: But I get the impression that you were more central, more key in those early days.

Kaplan: I don't know if I was. I'd say we had shared responsibilities. Well, before he came on board it was me, you know, because he wasn't on board yet.

DePue: When did he come on board?

Kaplan: I think he came on board right after the campaign got going, if I'm not mistaken.

DePue: Okay. Well, this is all leading up to the critical discussions between this group of core supporters of Dan Walker about the decision to run for the governorship. We've got a Republican governor who just passed an income tax, who just pushed through the constitutional convention, which was a major accomplishment as well. This is two years out from the election itself. How did that come to pass?

Kaplan: You know, if I could give you a one word answer, if I could even give you an intelligent answer, I would. It just seemed like it was inevitable. We started talking about it; he started talking about running. I suspect that he and Vic, and maybe Dave, may have decided during the Stevenson campaign, or some time right after the Stevenson campaign, when he got known more, that he wanted to go for it.

DePue: His story, and, again, I'm going to be off on the timeframe here too, but I'm thinking it's early 1970s, that Vic and Dave came to him and said, "Dan, we think it's time."

Kaplan: That could very well be.

DePue: And he says he latched on to it because he always had ambitions to be governor.

Kaplan: That very well could be. If it was I wasn't part of that part; I wasn't part of that part, so I can't really … It sounds right to me. It sounds logical to me, but now when I think of it, it sounds totally illogical given the players at that time and who was on the landscape. Yeah.

DePue: But I find it curious that it's some very close personal friends and political associates of his that first introduced the idea, that it wasn't his idea.

Kaplan: Could have been.

DePue: So, what was the nature of the discussions now that the egg had been hatched, so to speak?

Kaplan: How do we do it? How do we do it? What do we do now? What do we do now? And how do we do it? And how does he get known? And we talked about and talked and talked and talked about, you know, you can't just do it. There's got to be a reason. You have to make announcements. You have to raise money. How are we going to do that? Where are we going to do that? How is he going to get known? We have no money. We had no money. DePue: He didn't have much of a reputation either, did he?

Kaplan: No, no, not at all. I mean, he was President of the Crime Commission, he had issued the Kerner report …

DePue: The Walker report.

Kaplan: The Walker report, right. No, it was a few one-shots here and there, but I mean, he wasn't a household word. So, we talked about how are we going to do this? How are we going to travel through the state? Are we going to fly around the state? Are we going to camp out? We even talked about taking barges down the river ways. We talked about everything that could draw attention, and then I'd like to say that I supported the walk, which I did; I was a big supporter of the walk, but I don't think it was even invented here, because Lawton Chiles had done it in Florida. Dan had known Lawton Chiles from the Naval Academy. I remember he said that Lawton Chiles had walked in Florida and I said, "What a great idea." And I started my little taxicab poll, where I would ask everybody, "Have you ever heard of Lawton Chiles?" Nobody even knew who Lawton Chiles was. "Who's Lawton Chiles?" you know. My theory was always, if it's not on the 10 o'clock news, it didn't happen. It has always served me well in PR. If it wasn't on the 10 o'clock news it never happened. So, I kept coming back and saying, "So what if Lawton Chiles did it? Nobody in Illinois knows it was ever done?" Remember, I was a real advocate of it once I heard that and everybody else kind of felt similarly, although some felt it stronger than others. I can't remember who was who, but the discussions took place about: He cannot win unless he is well known. You're not going to vote for somebody you don't know.

DePue: Well, the governor mentioned that deGrazia wasn't all that supportive of the idea.

Kaplan: No, he wasn't.

DePue: That he wanted him to focus his attentions here in Chicago.

Kaplan: Well, because had other considerations; part of the considerations was, where are we going to get money? We've got to get money before we can do anything. And my feeling was, if he's not known, he's not going to get money. You know, what comes first, the chicken or the egg. I think some of us felt you can do both at the same time, the chicken and the egg. And Roberta advised she didn't like the idea at all.

DePue: Was she fond of the idea of his even running for governor in the first place?

Kaplan: No, no, not at all, not at all.

DePue: Why?

Kaplan: Well, Roberta is much more introspective, much more laid back. Roberta never really wanted the spotlight, you know. She like the idea of having her home, her family, her kids, and didn't really want to be out there at all. She wasn't that kind; that wasn't her nature. You know, her nature was much more private, much more private. Even if you engaged Roberta in conversation, it was always a gentle private conversation, you know. So she was not happy about it; she was not happy about it. But, it just seemed like a natural, but very unnatural for somebody to be able to do that for over a year, you know, almost like the presidential campaigns here.

DePue: A marathon.

Kaplan: Yeah. And I'll never forget, when the decision was made to go and he said, "I'm going to do it. I'm going to walk." I mean, you got to be in physical shape. He soaked his feet in brine I think. He was soaking his feet before the walk, you know, toughening them up and so on. We had to plan out every aspect of it. When he announced, when he announced, I remember I went over to the Hyatt Water Tower Place on Michigan Avenue, which was a small hotel – now it's a big high rise condo unit – and I said, "I want the smallest room you have." I was afraid that we wouldn't have a big crowd and I wanted a big crowd. I wanted to get Walker's supporters, of which there were … nobody knew he was running, you know, we didn't have anybody yet. I rented a room there, not a large room. I helped prepare; I think I did prepare the press announcement and stuff, and he announced there. Now, we had almost no money and I said, "Let's take some full page ads," and we had a big discussion about that. I mean, we didn't need full page ads. We could hardly pay our bills. I felt it was important, and so did … Vic ultimately was a big supporter of this, that we blow our load because we got to show he's for real; anybody can announce that they're running, but how do you prove that you're really viable? And the only thing that we could figure is, we're going to take a couple of full page ads in the Chicago paper announcing his candidacy, as well as the publicity we got. And I remember the buzz afterwards. People saying, "Well,

geez, he's got money to buy a full page ad in the Sun Times, the Tribune …" all that kind of stuff. Little did they know we had to raise money for the rent on headquarters and pay the bills and so on. So it all happened at the same time, and then some of the people that he knew from the corporate world came aboard. I remember, I think it was a guy named Maynard Wishner – I think he's still around - if I'm not mistaken he was an executive of one of the big investment banking companies and really came on board with some significant help in fundraising.

DePue: Any help from Montgomery Ward as well?

Kaplan: He got some help from Montgomery Ward and he got some help from Tom Mulroy at the old Hopkins Sutter firm. That was the initial … And then, of course, it started to spread and then the walk.

DePue: Can you paint me a picture of where and what it was like in some of these early discussions, these long philosophical and complicated discussions you had about how to do this?

Kaplan: You just painted the picture yourself. They were long, they were arduous, they were philosophical, and …

DePue: In bars and restaurants around town?

Kaplan: In just everywhere and in Dan's office. It was in restaurants, it was in hotel rooms. You know, we'd take hotel rooms. They were long and they were full of complicated, you know, what have we forgotten? We probably forgot more than we knew. Forgot to address more than we knew. I mean, how are we going to do this. We got to staff people. We got to find people. We've got to do all of that. And that was largely Vic; that was largely Vic. I mean, I would love to say we were all responsible, and we were, but Vic was really responsible. Vic is the guy that drove the campaign.

DePue: But still, the whole scenario amazes me because to say that he was a dark horse candidate in 1970 when he announced would have been greatly over-exaggerating things, would it not?

Kaplan: It would have. In fact, there was a fellow by the name of Ed Chambers. Ed had been a disciple of Saul Alinsky, who wrote a book called, *Rules for Radicals,* and he was the head of community service organizations. Ed was a very political guy and Ed said, "Your guy doesn't have a chance, Mort. I'll give you 500 to 1." And I said okay and I bet him. He paid me $500.

DePue: You bet him a buck.

Kaplan: I bet him two bucks and he owed me a thousand. I said, "There's no way I can take a thousand from you, Ed. I will take $500." And he paid me $500. So that gives you the idea; this guy was a very sophisticated guy and a Democrat who really wanted Walker. He was a community organizer and he wanted to shake up things.

He said, "Unfortunately, it's quixotic; you have no chance." I said, "Betcha." You know, when you look at it now, like you said, it was almost foolhardy, it was almost foolhardy, but isn't that what happens with dreams? Every once in a while you hit a home run, not even expecting to get to the plate.

DePue: I will tell you, and this is an aside, but when I went down to Mexico to interview Governor Walker, I looked up as I'm sitting there interviewing him and over his shoulder is a statue of Don Quixote.

Kaplan: Is that right? Interesting.

DePue: Yeah.

Kaplan: Interesting.

DePue: That obviously wasn't by accident. Maybe somebody had given it to him, but he …

Kaplan: Possibly, possibly.

DePue: But it meant something to him.

Kaplan: Yeah. And I would say, if you had said that to me at the time, I would have said, "No way, Dan won't have a statue of Don Quixote. Dan thinks he can really do this." I can see it; in retrospect it was quixotic. But if you had told me that story that he is running today and you went to his office and saw that, I'd say, "No way, Dan won't have that. Dan believes he can do it."

DePue: Well, he also strikes me as being a realist in many respects.

Kaplan: Yep, yep.

DePue: What happens then once the walk begins? The belief begins to grow?

Kaplan: It began to grow in a strange way. I think it grew like watching a plant grow. You can't see it grow and then three weeks later you see that it's grown. You can't see it as it's growing. But I remember feeling – and we all felt the same way – something's happening out there. Something is happening out there. We're are not sure what it is, but something is happening, because Dan would walk into a farmer's cornfield and say, "I'm Dan Walker and I'd like to run for governor," and they'd say, "Wow, come on into the house," you know. He'd call his neighbors, they'd come in. Nobody had ever done that before. And the boys, his sons, would have this car, you know, this truck, whatever the hell it was, van, it said, "Honk and wave. Dan Walker walking." There were more things going on out there that it's hard to describe. Some woman sat up all night on her porch, on her rocking chair, knitting socks for him because the radio would say he is coming, and the newspaper would say he'll be here in two days and she didn't want to miss him. She had no idea we flew him back to Chicago for a fundraiser, and he spent the night in Chicago and then we'd fly him back to where we left him on the road. So, he

would come by and she had been waiting all night for him and gave him the pair of socks. Stuff like that was happening and it made you believe there's something going on I can't, you know, something almost da-da-da-da, da-da-da-da, you know, it's a metaphysical thing. And then I heard that Paul Simon hadn't taken a poll. We were taking some polls and we saw some real demonstrative gains taking place that we couldn't believe and that was Dave. Then I had heard that Simon had not taken any polls, all the way up to like two months before the election, and I knew that they were being lulled into some false sense of security. Then the national press was here because I think there was a Democratic primary with Ed Muskie at that time. I think Muskie and, who else was in that primary? Anyway, national press was in Illinois and some of the guys who were covering the presidential primary, when would that have been? Would that have been '72?

DePue: '72.

Kaplan: Yeah.

DePue: So this would have been McGovern as well.

Kaplan: McGovern, Muskie, you know, yeah. And some of the national press would, when they came into Chicago, they said, "Something's happening out there. Walker is everywhere we go; we're hearing Walker," you know. "We're not hearing Simon, we're hearing Walker." And that was, of course, music to our ears, because these guys were fanning out to cover the whole state.

DePue: It's probably worth mentioning here that Simon had one heck of a reputation himself as being a giant killer and an outstanding campaigner.

Kaplan: That's right. And he was. And he was. That's what makes it all the more improbable. Paul was a great campaigner. Paul never forgot your name. He was a marvelous campaigner.

DePue: Had a politician's memory, huh?

Kaplan: He did, he did. At that time he had wanted me to handle his campaign because he and Dixon were very close and I had handled Dixon's campaign. So Paul asked me if I wanted to handle his campaign and I said, "You know, I had made a prior commitment to Dan Walker." And he said, "I understand." I mean, that was Paul; he was very gracious about it. Then I got a call from a pissed-off Alan Dixon who said, "You know, Mort if you're going to handle Walker you cannot represent my office." Because I had had a contract with him: because I had handled his campaigns. I said, "I understand Alan, but I made this commitment to Dan." He said, "Well, okay but Paul and I are very close and I'm supporting him, so it would be very embarrassing for me to have you represent me." I said, "I understand." And to his everlasting credit as far as I'm concerned, after Dan lost in the next go-around he called me up and he said, "I'd like you back on the team."

DePue: Simon did, or Dixon?

Kaplan: Dixon. And he rehired me, which I thought was pretty generous.

DePue: Now, from the opening of the gate, Walker came out swinging as far as the Daley administration was concerned.

Kaplan: He sure did, absolutely.

DePue: And made it clear from the get go that this was a campaign against machine politics.

Kaplan: Change, what is going on right now, the watchword of this campaign is change.

DePue: And then Paul … yeah, I know that you're …

Kaplan: Oh, no. It's four o'clock. No, I'm fine. I'm okay for awhile.

DePue: I think he starts the walk before he even knows who his primary opponent is going to be.

Kaplan: Yeah, I think that's true.

DePue: But, you find out and he finds out that it's Simon, and Simon – correct me if I'm wrong – but he's clearly not a Daley machine politician.

Kaplan: No, he's clearly not.

DePue: But to a certain extent Walker kind of puts him into that category.

Kaplan: Right, right. Well, you could put anybody in that category. You could put God in that category if God is standing alongside Richard J. Daley, you know, who's going to be subservient to whom in political Illinois? DePue: You say that because Daley, the slate making machine, had picked Simon to be running. Is that what you're saying?

Kaplan: Yeah. And, you know, Paul certainly wasn't going to pull the rug out from under them. He would run, but he would probably have some restraints as far as what he could do.

DePue: Because he was beholden to him.

Kaplan: Well, sure, and he wasn't going to attack the machine that gave him the chance.

DePue: Okay.

Kaplan: Dan was unfettered. Dan could do that morning, noon, and night.

DePue: So, Dan obviously didn't have any qualms or reservations about it. It sounds like you didn't.

Kaplan: I did not. I did not. I mean, we had a free "at bat," so to speak. (DePue laughing). We had a free "at bat" because we had Paul, we could attack the machine, and Paul was put in the position of saying nothing or defending the Daley machine. So we were in good shape.

DePue: Were there any other issues that percolated up, especially in the primary campaign, that strike you, or was it essentially that issue of anti-machine?

Kaplan: I think it was mostly anti-machine. It was mostly kicking butt, changing machine, changing politics. You know, it's almost as though you can flash forward to now, with Obama talking about the same thing, talking about the same thing. We're going to have government like we've never had it before. It's going to be open. We're not going to be beholden. You know, we're going to be a change agent. All of that.

DePue: Well, one of the criticisms that Obama's getting, and he's not getting much, but one of them is that: Well what else is he talking about, what else does he stand for other than change? Were you hearing those kinds of comments?

Kaplan: No, not much, and if we did we didn't pay any attention to them. You know, there was no need to pay attention to them. We had a horse to ride and we were riding it.

DePue: Um-hm. At what time in this campaign then did – I think it was David Green you mentioned – who had the eureka moment? Was that in the primary or in the general election?

Kaplan: Well, it was in the primary, it was in the primary. I don't remember, but I remember he had the numbers and he said, "We're going to win." And he had it all kind of planned out. He had his charts and his graphs and he said, "If we can do this, if we can the turn …" It was the turnout. That was the key; if we can get this turnout. Because we knew the machine in the primary was going to get its turnout and we needed to get a turnout and that became our mission: getting people to come out, getting them to turn out.

DePue: The assumption that the machine is going to get a percentage, but if you can increase the turnout …

Kaplan: We'll increase our percentage and we'll win and Dave saw where we could do it. He saw the counties; he saw the areas; he saw where it could be done.

DePue: What were the regions, the parts of the state, he was focusing on?

Kaplan: Boy, I can't tell you that, I really can't tell you that, but I know that part of it was getting our operatives, our own operatives, and forming a statewide campaign group so that we had dedicated people who would work their buns off in every county in the state. Miraculously, they had a bunch of people who got that done. One of them was David Cleverdon. I don't know if you've gotten that name.

DePue: No.

Kaplan: Oh, you need to talk to Dave.

DePue: David?

Kaplan: David Cleverdon. He was like a boy genius. I think he was in his 20's at that time. He now has an organic farm (laughing) and I can't tell you how to reach him. David Cleverdon, C-l-e-v-e-r-d-o-n. He was a guy that went up and down the state and recruited people to form this Walker group against the entrenched Democratic interests.

DePue: The other thing that strikes me about this story is that, unlike most campaigns, average people were getting excited about this.

Kaplan: They were, they were, absolutely.

DePue: And he in the process brought a lot of young …

Kaplan: Lots of them, in every county.

DePue: …enthusiasm and blood into the …

Kaplan: Every county, every county. He got people, he got women, he got men, he got young people, he got older people. He was amazing. He's the one who is beating the bushes constantly, bringing people into the campaign who brought other people. I mean, what he had to do was get a coordinator in 102 counties.

DePue: He hit every single county in the process?

Kaplan: Oh, yeah.

DePue: So that was the goal: you hit that county, you find the people that believe in you.

Kaplan: And you come back. When Dan goes walking, they had events for him and he met more people and it grew exponentially. I will never be a part of anything like that. I've never seen anything quite like that. You know, it was so organic. I've been involved in over 30 political campaigns and I've never seen anything like what I saw there.

DePue: So the excitement and the enthusiasm and the …

Kaplan: Amazing, just amazing. First of all, we got known like we never would have gotten known. I remember Lawton Chiles told Dan that your first week out there the press is going to come flocking, the TV stations are going to come, because it's going to be so new and so different. He said, "No matter how tired you are you've got to appear fresh, energetic; you pick up the pace when you're walking." And, sure

enough, the first guy that came was the political reporter from channel 7, Brookport, I think, where the walk began.

DePue: Yeah.

Kaplan: I think. I could be wrong about that, but Brookport sticks in my mind. Anyway, Hugh Hill and Channel 7's crew went out there, like late afternoon, Hugh was wearing a porkpie hat, a suit and tie and had his cameraman. Dan had already walked Dan picked up the pace and started striding; Hugh Hill was walking along beside him, huffing and puffing and doing the interview. He concluded by saying, "This is Hugh Hill, a very tired Hugh Hill, walking with a very energized, physically fit Dan Walker, trying to walk his way into the governor's mansionThis is Hugh Hill for Channel 7 …" and that's exactly what it looked like. I mean Dan looked like this fresh breeze coming down the mountainside and poor Hugh Hill was gasping for air. That was one of the things that Chiles had told Dan, The way the walk was planned, it was like a zigzag, so that he would always cover an area where everybody in the state of Illinois would be no farther than 50 miles from where he was walking. He would come close enough to you so that you would be no more than 50 miles away. Well, people were making a day of it, because the announcements would be in the papers, in local radio and TV: Dan Walker will be coming here a week from Thursday, Dan Walker will come in through here two days from now, Dan Walker will be here tomorrow, Dan Walker is here, Dan Walker was hereI It was a media phenomenon, a media phenomenon.

DePue: Meanwhile Paul Simon says, "Ah, nobody's giving this guy a chance. I'm not going to waste my energy here. I'm going to wait for the general election."

Kaplan: Right. Well, in a way. I mean, that wasn't Paul's nature. Paul did campaign, but nothing like he would have had he had any idea that the machine wasn't going to … You know, I mean you had to believe, who is this guy? You know, here's me with all my following, here's the Democratic machine, what chance does this guy have? So …

DePue: Well, again, you can't help but think about what's going on today, since today happens to be the New Hampshire primary.

Kaplan: That's right, that's right.

DePue: And two weeks ago nobody was giving Obama any chance at all and now he's supposed to win by double digits.

Kaplan: Absolutely, absolutely. So, it was a media phenomenon, it was a human phenomenon. He would stay with people. People would invite him to stay over and he would stay with people in their homes. They wanted him to stay there.

DePue: Well, that reminds me, some of the stuff I read and his own admission, he has said he doesn't feel comfortable with people, that he finds those kinds of situations awkward, but this situation, this experience remade him in that respect.

Kaplan: Yeah, it did, it did. First of all, Dan is, how do I put it, he was such a substantive guy, you know, such a content guy that he was … he's not a cocktail party guy, he was not a cocktail party guy.

DePue: Too intense for that?

Kaplan: Well, chitter chatter and small talk was never his forte, and that's what you get at a lot of these little informal gatherings, so that was not his forte. You know, he wasn't good at that. It was forced. But when he got out on the road and started meeting people and you saw what the agendas were. You know, you think you know what the agenda is because I live here in Chicago and I know what the problems are and so on. You go outside of Chicago and you see a whole different agenda, you know. It has to do with my crops, it has to do with farm subsidies, it has to do with strip mining, it has to do with a highway, we got to get a highway. It has to do with, like Tip O'Neil said, "All politics are local." And, you know, you saw the agenda outside of Chicago was very, very different, and it was a survival agenda, it was a local agenda. What do we need? You know, we need a new firehouse, that's what we need.

DePue: A very populist type of agenda or message.

Kaplan: And Dan was running that populist campaign.

DePue: Well, that strikes me as the right kind of campaign to run outside of Chicago in the collar counties, but how did it play here and how did it play in the collar counties?

Kaplan: It played enough. Downstate it played tremendously, tremendously. In the collar counties not as well, in Chicago it was okay in Chicago because you have a lot of, a lot of liberal, you have a lot of lakefront liberals who gave money, lots of money came from 42nd, 43rd, and 44th ward up here. You had a lot of … you got the support, you got the support. No, you couldn't defeat the Daley machine up here.

DePue: Dave Green was calculating that the machine is going to generate X number of votes regardless.

Kaplan: Right, and we have to get X plus downstate and we have to bring a turnout. If we bring the turnout, if we get the turnout, if we get people to vote who never vote and Cleverdon's armies got that done.

DePue: We've talked an awful lot about Simon. This obviously played well once you got to the general election against Ogilvie as well, but the walk was long done by that time.

Kaplan: Right. But by that time Walker was a major phenomenon. You know, he had burst on the scene and now everybody was startled.

DePue: Well, he's the new wonder boy.

Kaplan: Right, right, exactly. And Esquire magazine now has a big issue, you've probably seen it or heard about it, where the dark horse for the presidency, and there's Dan Walker's picture among the five or six people that they labeled as potential dark horses.

DePue: I mentioned this to Governor Walker when I was interviewing him. I was a young kid in northeast Iowa getting ready to go to West Point. This wasn't big on my list of priorities, right? I heard about him and I heard about the walk. So it was obviously a national buzz too.

Kaplan: It was a national buzz, absolutely was. And that swept him into Chicago. I mean, Chicago is like anyplace else, we've got this new wunderkind and let's pay attention to him and he had a message that was a great message, you know. Because Chicago also, you know, the machine was hallowed and, oh, you can't beat the machine. Well he just did. So everything that he said had credibility. Everything he said about transparency, that we can change, we can defeat the machine, because he just did, so he had credibility when he came in here with his message.

DePue: I would think the national media at this time, since this is just a few years after the '68 Democratic convention where the national media at least was painting Richard Daley in quite different ways, that it appealed to them as well.

Kaplan: It did. Oh, yeah, absolutely. It was a national phenomenon, you know. I mean, how did this happen? And then, of course, he had Ogilvie and that was really a touch-and-go race. I mean that was not decided until the very end.

DePue: Well, I had the impression that that was not nearly as contentious … contentious is not the right word … uncertain as the race with Simon.

Kaplan: Boy, I wouldn't agree with that. I wouldn't agree with that. Well, in a way I would, because that was his first race, an unknown guy running against the machine and Simon. But it was close. It was a very close campaign.

DePue: How would you characterize Ogilvie as a campaigner then?

Kaplan: Oh, Dan had it all over him as a campaigner. Ogilvie was … there was no charisma to Ogilvie at all, you know. Ogilvie was a … it was almost like a CEO in his responses. He was full of content, he would talk about his experience, but, I mean, he didn't light a fire in anybody, but he was considered a very good governor and I think in retrospect he was a very good governor, but that tax thing killed him. It killed him.

DePue: Well, he is working against his base; a Republican that had raised taxes.

Kaplan: Right, right. And that was made to order for us, too. But I remember, it was very close and we were running out of money, too. Ogilvie and Walker, I think it was too close to call in the last month of the campaign and all the polls showed it was too

close to call and we needed money desperately and we got an infusion of money for television commercials along the way and I think that pushed us over the top at the end.

DePue: Did the machine turn around and support his run for governor after he had won the primary?

Kaplan: I think they were lukewarm, because we had our own army and they didn't like that. I mean, there were some differences about that so I think there was some coexistence and I think the support was … There was support, let me put it that way; there was support, but I don't think it was the kind of support they would have given to Paul Simon.

DePue: So the precinct captains maybe didn't work quite as hard and the turnout was lower.

Kaplan: They weren't as excited, right, right. And you know what? They were concerned about a lot of the offices, you know. Secretary of State was big because a lot of jobs and, some of the other local offices they pushed for and they pushed for Walker, but a lot of them pushed halfheartedly and a lot of them didn't push at all. But I think that they certainly were helpful; I would not say that they hurt us, but I heard that some of them cut us out that was the story going around, that a lot of them cut us out and probably did.

DePue: Well, we've been at this for two hours, which doesn't surprise me a bit, because you are a wonderful storyteller. We have just gotten to the point that he is now in office. I know you have other obligations here.

Kaplan: If you could put it on pause and I could make one call … if we could possibly, I'd like to finish.

DePue: Okay. We're back again and where we are in the conversation then is, Dan Walker has miraculously won election, not just beating Paul Simon, but Ogilvie as well. He's now the governor. This is early 1973, so tell me about your involvement in the initial part of his administration.

Kaplan: Okay. I'd like to back up for a minute, because there's a story that I think is very relevant. As I told you, it was touch and go coming down to the wire against Ogilvie. It was very, very close and we got television money and needed television money, and raised it at the last instant. The problem was, Vic de Grazia suffered a heart attack before the election and he was in intensive care. This was right about the election time. I think it happened right after the election if I'm not mistaken. It was shortly after the election. I'm a little hazy on the when of it, but he had a serious heart attack and so we were without Vic for a good few weeks, maybe a little more. A lot of decisions had to be made at that time and they were, and without Vic as a central figure we had to kind of reconstruct what promises were made, what relationships were.

DePue: Oh, wow.

Kaplan: Very difficult. Vic was the captain of the ship, he was the admiral of the fleet, and so there were some very dicey situations that had to be resolved about appointments and who was promised what and, you know, contributors who wanted certain things and we were simply determined not to give the store away and not to do anything illegal or immoral or unethical, so there were some problems that arose at that time, and then when Vic got back on board, I mean, then we were off sailing during the campaign. So now Dan has won and probably … well, one thing that I do remember. Election night, it was a haze, it was euphoria. It was so beyond euphoria I can't even describe it and I've always felt that whether you win or lose an election, there is always some depression that sets in afterwards, because the balloon has been punctured, whether you've won or lost. Hell of a lot better to win, but there's a letdown that's just physical, physiological, psychological. But I remember Dan said, "What can I do for you Mort?" And I said, "Well, I do want something." I said, "I want to play poker in the governor's mansion and I want to sleep in the Lincoln bedroom." And the following week I played poker in the governor's mansion and I slept in the Lincoln bedroom. He didn't really need to do anything for me because I had such a public role that every state agency that had a contract to give for communications was coming and knocking on my door and I would only take the ones where I had some experience. I didn't want him getting in any trouble because I was grabbing every contract I could get, so I took tourism, because my agency had handled the Jamaica tourist board and we had handled a lot of tourism accounts, and I took the toll highway authority because we had represented the CTA and we knew transportation issues. No matter what happened there was a two part series that says clout sells public relations (laughing) and there I was, you know, which is to be expected, and my position was, well, wait a second, I mean, just because I was on the campaign does that disqualify me from … you know, I didn't take the lottery, which I really would have wanted, or I didn't take certain accounts that were offered me that I didn't have any experience, because I didn't want to get the administration in trouble, but it didn't matter, I should have taken them because I got the two part series anyway. But I think probably the first mistake that I can remember that I think even Dan would have corrected if we had it to do over again, was in getting … Now Dan, you have to understand, Dan is not an immediately likable person. He's austere, and he was very austere at the time and very, I don't know how to put it, I mean, there was no "hail fellow well met" in Dan Walker.

DePue: He mentioned himself that he didn't have the kind of sense of humor where he could understand humor all the time.

Kaplan: Right.

DePue: He didn't get it, he said.

Kaplan: Right. There were a lot of things he didn't get. You know, I remember one time on a plane, he didn't know … there was a very Jewish last name and Dan said, "Is he Jewish?" you know, and I said, "Well, what do you think? Do you think Greenberg is an Irish name?" or something. (DePue laughing). That's the way the

conversation went. He said, "Well, I have no idea," you know. But, those are the kind of blocks that Dan had. So the press was not about to immediately like him or embrace him for his personality. And then came the first budget that he developed and in the past the press was used to getting the budget and the summary of the budget in advance, in advance enough so that they had a couple of days to examine it and report on it and digest it and ask questions. Vic and Dave, I believe, lobbied successfully, lobbied Dan successfully that we shouldn't give them the budget in advance because if we give them the budget and our summary, our 20 page, 25 page summary, whatever it was, the day that we announce it they've got to write what's in the summary, they don't have time to analyze the budget. That had not been the tradition. The tradition had been to give them the budget document and the summary, or whatever, with enough time before it was released so that they could ask questions and decode it and so on and so forth, but I think the prevailing view was they're pretty much going to have to write what we give them if we give it to them this way and they did; however, it got us off on a terrible footing with the Springfield press corps and they resented it ever since. I mean, it was real anger about how we had done that and how we did it and it's too bad, because it started us off on a very bad footing with the Springfield press corps.

DePue: Didn't that same budget take Chicago Transit Authority to task by not funding it to the levels that Daley wanted.

Kaplan: Yeah, I think that happened. I think there were a few other things (phone ringing).

DePue: Okay.

Kaplan: Sorry, sorry.

DePue: Too tempting.

Kaplan: Go ahead, go ahead, help yourself. Want a cookie? I've got a bunch of cookies? Okay.

DePue: Okay. We just mentioned the Chicago Transit Authority.

Kaplan: And I think there were a few other things in there too that rankled, but I can't really give you chapter and verse, I don't remember. What I do remember is the enmity of the press corps there from that and I don't think there was ever a real recovery from it.

DePue: Well, the other issue is that Walker never seemed to be willing to do any kind of a compromise with Daley or Chicago.

Kaplan: And that was also the subject of lots of conversations, lots of late night meetings, lots of discussion, because it was the whole philosophy of how we were going to govern and the several sides in that argument and I'd rather not identify who the players were in the argument. But, here's how the argument went: You can't continue to go to war. This is the one side. Everybody's got to sue for peace

occasionally, you know, and I think it's time for us to sue for peace. That's one side. By peace I mean, let's make our accommodations with the mayor, so that he's not going to try to run roughshod over us for four years.

DePue: Politics is compromise.

Kaplan: Right. The other side said: Nope, we cannot do that. We were elected to kick ass, we were elected to do that, you know. I mean, we will be considered traitors if we start making compromises with Daley. And the sad part of it is, in retrospect. Hindsight is so 20/20. The sad part of it is I think if we had made some accommodations with Daley, he might very well have run for president, because Daley, a) would have supported him, I believe, and, b) would have loved to have gotten him out of Illinois. (DePue laughing).

DePue: Yeah.

Kaplan: You know, as a pragmatic politician Daley will say, "Hey, favorite son, we will support the guy," you know, "Let's get him out of here." But the result was that accommodation was never made, you know, and I wouldn't even say that it didn't have to be a total compromise. I would use the term accommodation rather than compromise, but I certainly don't think that continuing to kick him in the head, which is what basically we did, obviously played to our disadvantage.

DePue: But my impression of Dan Walker is that that was the one issue, the one theme, that it was beyond his comprehension to compromise on.

Kaplan: Uh.

DePue: To accommodate?

Kaplan: I'm not sure I would buy that. I think that if everybody had lined up with the argument, I think Dan would have listened to it. Whether he would have agreed or not, I don't know. And I think it would have depended on what the agreement meant. What do I have to give?

DePue: Okay.

Kaplan: Because I think there were certain things … See Dan and the mayor, they would have occasional rapprochement and they were really strange rapprochements. For example, when they got to talking about their families, it was like they had never been enemies, because that's one thing that the mayor was really big on, family; and Dan had a big family. So they would have occasional conversations about the families and the mayor would say, "Well, I understanding that, you know. I'm going through the same thing." They would have some of those, but it was never about … the rapport was never about political substance. When it came to that it was oil and water and it's too bad in a way, because I think that he would have had a smooth ride the second time around, too.

DePue: You mentioned the presidency. It was certainly something that I'm sure was kicked around at that time.

Kaplan: Sure.

DePue: How much was it kicked around within his immediate circle?

Kaplan: We talked about it. I don't think it was too soon.

DePue: Was he part of the discussions?

Kaplan: Yeah, but I don't think … it never really went anywhere. It was way too soon to talk about any of that. We were really flattered that Esquire magazine article. I don't know if Dan still has it, but there were like four newcomers to politics who could be presidential dark horses and Dan was one of them …

DePue: Was Carter one of them?

Kaplan: … and Carter was one of them.

DePue: It speaks a lot to say this was 1976, that the '76 election was the election where all bets were off.

Kaplan: All bets were off, absolutely.

DePue: A dark horse exactly like Dan Walker could have, because a dark horse exactly like Dan Walker did.

Kaplan: Yeah. It certainly could have. And I remember, I think I mentioned it to you before informally when you were here, there was a governor's conference here in Illinois and Dan called me and asked if I would do the public relations attendant to that conference and make sure that we were getting the press that we wanted for all the governors who were coming here; it was a Democratic governor's conference; and I remember part of it was I arranged for a high school editor's press conference with four of the governors, four of the Democratic governors and we probably had 30 or 40 high school editors here and Dan spoke and Phil Knoll was the governor, I believe, of Rhode Island. He spoke. Jimmy Carter spoke. Somebody else. There were like four governors who spoke and, of course, these kids were falling asleep, you know, at all the good government talk and then Jimmy Carter in that simple southern way said, "Well, let me discuss with you what I was discussing with Bob Dylan at the house the other night …" (DePue laughing), you know, and all of a sudden the sleepers woke up everybody was paying attention to Jimmy Carter's discussion about his meeting with Bob Dylan. I mean, in that slow matter of fact voice talked about his meeting with Bob Dylan. He carried the day with that. But the tenure, the term was never a quiet term, it was full of strife and rife, but you know, Dan … and it was an interesting way to govern, and to a certain extent is probably governed the same way … Dan wanted to bring in the best and the brightest and he did. He brought in a lot of independents, a lot of people that had

no political allegiance. He brought in a top psychiatrist by the name of Leroy Levitt, to head the Department of Mental Health. He brought in Mary Lee Leahy, who I think is still active in Springfield.

DePue: Yeah.

Kaplan: He brought in a guy named David Fogel, who had made a big reputation himself in the department of corrections in Minnesota, or someplace else. He brought on board, I think, Tony Scariano, he named the president of the racing board. Tony was totally incorruptible, totally incorruptible, and I think he became head of the racing board. He brought in all of these people who were gilt edged. You know, they were top people, they were not puppets of any kind, and Vic said, "Okay, Dan, but the number two person in there has got to be one of our operatives." And so what you had at the top was this layer of really blue ribbon people running the state agencies.

DePue: He did a nationwide search to find some of these.

Kaplan: Yes, and a lot of them came from out of Illinois. And under them, in the deputy position, were Vic's political operatives, just to make sure that they didn't go too far off the reservation without somebody saying, "Hey, wait a second, we can't do that." And that's the way it ran.

DePue: Well, forgive me for saying this, but so much of what Dan Walker was about and that the rest of the people who are surrounding him were about, was: "We don't like machine politics, it's not serving the interest of government;" and yet what you just explained here, what Vic was doing, was very much part of the way any political organization would run.

Kaplan: With one exception. I think that the deputies were there to see that nobody went crazy. I mean, they weren't there to impose policy on the top people. The top people would have left in an instant, because they were top people. But I think that the way it worked was that they were allowed to bring some people on board and to the administration, as were the top people. You know, they wanted some of their own people … and they got them, and they got them. Vic's people also brought some of their own people in, which was understandable, and to my knowledge the deputies really could not overrule the top people. They were there to make sure that the department's function, that there was appropriate liaison with the governor's office, i.e., Vic, and that they didn't do something that would sabotage us. And I don't really remember a heck of a lot of strife over that, because a lot of those top people didn't resign over any bitter quarrels, not to my knowledge; almost no one did.

DePue: But working at a state agency myself, there's always the buzz among the people within the agency like, "Well, that's deGrazia's man and don't cross him."

Kaplan: Yeah, of course, of course. That'll always be the case. I've always felt that you have power if people think you have power.

DePue: Um-hm.

Kaplan: Absolutely. And I think that's true. And I think it was true then, and I think it's just as true today.

DePue: And I would suspect that Walker didn't shy away from exercising power, he used responsible exercise of that power.

Kaplan: Yeah, he exercised power, sure. I mean, he had no compunctions about calling somebody and saying, "What the hell are you doing?"

DePue: It's part of being a very ambitious guy, which he obviously was.

Kaplan: Right,right.

DePue: We've kind of skirted around it; what exactly was your role within the administration?

Kaplan: I was usually asked to be there for any major policy; is it going to play in Peoria more if we do this what'll happen? And then to be there at important meetings, just any important meeting where we were discussing …

DePue: There, being in Springfield?

Kaplan: In Springfield.

DePue: (Sound interference). Okay, that's easy to fix. So, you're occasionally flying or driving down to Springfield?

Kaplan: Oh, mostly flying.

DePue: Putting a lot of hours in then?

Kaplan: I did. I did.

DePue: Or a lot of miles.

Kaplan: I did.

DePue: But, you're never part of the paid staff.

Kaplan: No. Never part. I didn't need to be. I had contracts. I had contracts with Tourism, I had contracts with the Department of Transportation, I had a contract with the Capital Development Board and so it was obviously my proximity to the governor. I'll never forget one client, potential client came to see me, I won't name them, but I was really happy, they had a big war chest they wanted to spend on public relations and I made a presentation, my staff and I, about what I thought we could do for them, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and they were bored out of their skulls and I thought, well, we've really flopped here, you know, we dropped the ball and I

don't know why and then they all left except one guy and he said, "Look, you don't need to do any of that stuff for us. There are a few bills in the legislature that we would like you to take care of for us and that's why we're here." And he said, "You talk to the governor, you get it done, $50,000," boom, boom, boom. I said, "I don't do that, I don't do that." And they left and I never saw them again, you know. But that happened a lot because of my public role, so I was getting calls and so on and so forth, but the only stuff I did; I did a job for the Department of Tourism, for the Capital Development Board, we represented them. They had communications programs that they wanted to expound on and that's what we did. But I was there for many, many; I won't say all, I couldn't; major meetings where it really had some profound effect on what the administration was going to do. A lot of them were in Springfield, a lot of them were in Chicago, but if it was critical, I was usually there; if they considered it critical; if Vic considered it critical or Dave or the governor, you know. I'd go down. I played tennis with him in Springfield. We'd talk, we'd have breakfast, you know.

DePue: Did you have more dealings with Vic than you did with the governor?

Kaplan: Uh, yeah, yeah. I mean, Vic would call and say, "Mortsy, I gotta see you," you know, "I want to get your advice on something." But I had many meetings with the governor. Most of the meetings I had with the governor were not alone with the governor. I had some, but mostly Vic would call and say, "We've got an important meeting. I want you, Dave, me …" because Dave wasn't in the government either.

DePue: No? Okay.

Kaplan: So he said, "You and Dave come down," you know, "and you and Norty and Bill and Dan and I will have dinner, you'll stay over. We'll straighten this out." And often it had to do with policy and how we could play it and how it might resonate and what the advantages or disadvantages would be and Vic being Vic would say, "How about our long-term? Is this going to affect us or have an impact on us over the long haul? Is it a one-day story?" You know, "What do you think?"

DePue: But policy-wise, were you involved with policy decision or political strategy?

Kaplan: I was involved mostly with political strategy and presentations. I was, I would say, maybe 70/30, maybe 30 percent policy.

DePue: How about Vic himself?

Kaplan: Vic was involved in everything, everything. There wasn't anything that Vic wasn't involved in.

DePue: And Bill Goldberg? By that time he's his legal counsel on staff.

Kaplan: He's the legal counsel, so he was pretty much involved in everything.

DePue: Okay. Kaplan: Not necessarily in how it was going to play. Norty would be involved in that, I would be involved in that and, of course, Vic would be involved in that.

DePue: What was his relationship like with the legislature?

Kaplan: Stormy, very stormy. That's probably the best characterization. He had certain legislators that were very cooperative with him. He had certain legislators that opposed him. He had certain legislators that opposed him that he liked and respected. You know, for example, Phil Rock was the senate president at that time and Phil was a guy to this day I still respect, even though Phil, as senate president and was, in a way, a Daley guy, opposed Dan on a lot of things, but if Phil gave his word about something, you could put it in the bank and Phil would say, "I'm not going to support it and here's why I'm not going to support it," and if Phil said, "I'm going to support it unless I'm told I can't," or Phil would say, "I'm going to support it even if I'm told I can't." He was straight and you couldn't help but respect a guy like that. You know, there were others that would tell you one thing and do another, you know.

DePue: Was the contentious relationship, if that's the right word, with the legislature an outgrowth of the animus with the Daley administration …

Kaplan: Oh, sure. Oh, sure.

DePue: … or was it more than that?

Kaplan: I think basically that's where we were harmed, because if it wasn't for that block, that section, we probably could have gotten a lot more done, because those were Democrats opposing a Democratic governor, you know, much the same as we see today in Springfield.

DePue: I know he did a lot of his business through executive decree because he wasn't able to get things done through legislature.

Kaplan: Right, right, right, exactly, exactly. Contributions, stuff like that, contracts, and so on he did by executive order. We even had a problem with some of his appointees who, we thought, were our appointees and turned out to be doing what Daley wanted them to do, and I won't name names again, but I mean I could, but I won't, and that was … I thought that was the height of treachery; you know, you appoint somebody and you assume that they're going to be on the same page with you, only to find out that when push comes to shove, they're undercutting their own administration.

DePue: Some historians, in particular Howard [Robert P. Howard in *Mostly Good and Competent Men: The Illinois Governors*], would put this administration down as a failure, because it wasn't able to accomplish much, because of that animus with the legislature and with the Daley folks.

Kaplan: Yeah.

DePue: Would you categorize it as that as well?

Kaplan: No, I wouldn't. Because I think that it was an important time to try to do what he did and I think that the notion of transparency, the notion of not doing business as usual, I think that all of those ideas were important at that time and if you are talking about bills that were passed, I don't have a scorecard for that. Maybe those who argue that are right about that, but I think that the importance of that administration lay in another direction. That's the direction that I was talking about.

DePue: So, what were the accomplishments?

Kaplan: Oh, boy.

DePue: I guess you just hit on a couple of them.

Kaplan: Yeah. I couldn't tell you. I mean, I really don't know.

DePue: But do you have a sense that there was more openness, transparency in government …

Kaplan: Oh, yeah.

DePue: … that he was successful in that respect?

Kaplan: Yeah, I do, I do. And especially, I think maybe the people that came in to run those departments. I don't know that we've ever had that before or since. I mean, these were top people that were brought in to do what they were brought in to do and that is to head those departments who were really top of the line people and they didn't come from a Daley, they didn't come from a ward committeeman; they came from a search that was engineered by Jack … Dan may have told you his name, I can't think of his last name. Dan brought on board the human resources director from Montgomery Ward and said, "You run the search. You bring me the top people. These are who we are looking for. These are the departments." Most of that came from a legitimate search. That's why they were such top-notch people. They didn't come from the department heads didn't come from politicians and didn't come from contributors. I wish I could think of his last name. Dan will tell you that. He was the human resources director I'm pretty sure … at Montgomery Ward. Dan brought him in and said, "Find these people."

DePue: Certainly the tragedy of Dan Walker, personally, and his administration in general, was, that after he is out of office he got himself into some very serious financial straits …

Kaplan: Yeah, yeah.

DePue: … that ended up putting him in jail, so the Illinois public figures he's just another …

Kaplan: Absolutely.

DePue: … just another governor who was corrupt and got himself in trouble and ended up in jail.

Kaplan: It's a Greek tragedy. It really is a Greek tragedy. I mean, your characterization is right and I think that's the way people think. I think people may think that, and continue to think that way.

DePue: That he got himself in trouble because he was essentially a corrupt politician?

Kaplan: Well, none of that happened while he was a politician. There was nothing that had to do with state funds, state contracts, state breeches. None of that happened. It happened afterwards. But you talk to people, I mean, people don't draw that distinction. Nobody draws that distinction. He was a governor of Illinois and he went to jail, so he was corrupt, and what happened afterwards was a whole different chapter of his life. It's too bad, but that's the way it is. That's the way it is.

DePue: Yeah, and I'm sure, and certainly in talking to the governor myself, he began and he basically finished with, I'm proud that, you now. I'm certainly not proud about landing in jail, but nothing about what I did while I was governor had anything to do with that.

Kaplan: That's right and that's true. But go tell that to the masses. You know, people say, he was governor, he went to jail, ergo he was a crook, you know, and his administration was corrupt. You know, what history writes later on is really pretty simple, you know. How is George Bush going to be remembered 25 … how is Bill Clinton going to be remembered? You know, Bill Clinton is going to be remembered 50 years from now, "Oh he was the president that was fooling around with a young intern and he was the guy that got impeached. That was the president that got impeached." That's how Bill Clinton is going to be remembered 50 years from now, no matter what else he did. And that's the way it is. I know that given what I do for a living I know that's how people react and that's what resonates.

DePue: Well, when I talk to the governor he certainly jumped at the chance of participating in this oral history interview because he wanted another opportunity to tell his story. He also jumped at the chance when I offered up "to talk to some other people in your administration," and you were very close to the top of that list. Certainly he would have liked to have an opportunity for Vic [to be interviewed]. Vic was interviewed in the 80s. Dave Green would have been the other one; I would think that he would have loved to have the opportunity.

Kaplan: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. I think that … I said it's a Greek tragedy and it is because Dan was brilliant. I mean, I had not seen a lot of minds like that. Dan had ambition, but Dan really wanted to do the right thing, he really wanted to open up

government, he really wanted to change the politics of how it worked. He was passionate about that. He also was practical enough to know that he couldn't just walk in there and do it all and, unfortunately some mistakes were made and the mistakes, of course, were … I don't know if he said anything about that, but I think had he tried to make some accommodation with the mayor I think everything would have been different. But, for reasons that I cited I think he felt, "My God, half of my supporters are going to think I'm a traitor if I do that," and I think that weighed heavily on him, that he … He got here because they expected him to do what he said he was going to do and to kick the machine in the teeth every chance he could. Things like that that prevented him from doing what he could have done, and I think that's part of the sadness; you face a lot of quandaries in politics.

DePue: Were you part of the 1976 campaign?

Kaplan: Not as much, because I was really … my company was really thriving and I was … I'd say I had much less to do in 1976 than I did in the seventies; in the late sixties and early seventies.

DePue: Any regrets because you weren't as heavily involved?

Kaplan: Yeah, I have some regrets, but not that I think I could have changed the outcome. The only regrets I have is that I liked Dan, I was invested in that administration and I couldn't any longer devote the time that I wanted to to the administration, because I had a business that was now booming, and I had to pay attention to that. I just couldn't, I couldn't sacrifice what I had by taking a leave and going to work on that campaign. So, although I never did that in the first go-around I had more time to do that. I didn't have the time to do it in the second go-around.

DePue: What had changed about the Dan Walker story as far as the public [consciousness] was concerned that in '76 you have the Daley machine putting up Mike Howlett in the Democratic primary, who then manages to beat a sitting governor, no less?

Kaplan: Well, I think part of it was the fact that the Daley machine when Dan won the primary didn't oppose him, they supported him against Ogilvie. This time around they were going to deny him the nomination and, you know, they put up Mike Howlett to beat him and he had active Democratic opposition plus …

DePue: He being Walker.

Kaplan: Yeah.

DePue: In the legislature?

Kaplan: In the legislature, among the entire Democratic Party except for some of the independents that were out there. They were tooth and nail out to get him and they did.

DePue: And the Republicans are just licking their chops and enjoying the same.

Kaplan: Absolutely. The same way the Democrats are now, you know, looking at the Republican candidates and saying, Oh boy, whoever we beat … you know, let them chop each other up, because whoever we nominate, we think we are going to ride into the White House, and it was the same then. [At the time of the interview, the 2008 presidential primaries were heating up, especially between Democrat candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton.] So I will probably draw a parallel that might be unfair, but it is my view anyway. Here's Blagojevich, who is a democratic governor with a democratic House, a democratic Senate, democratic office holders, and disliked by the Democrats and next time around …

DePue: Dislike is probably a gentle term.

Kaplan: I'm being gentle, but next time around he's not going to have a free ride. The next primary, I mean, they're going to be lining up to take him on. And they're going to get plenty of support in doing that – knocking him off.

DePue: Well, that is almost inevitable that there are comparisons made between Blagojevich's administration and Walker's administration.

Kaplan: Sure.

DePue: But I think you probably are the first to point out the differences and I'll give you an opportunity to do that.

Kaplan: I think that probably the major difference, as I see it, is that Walker was never, ever talked about as corrupt or corruptible. Blagojevich is being talked about as corrupt or corruptible all the time, for the contracts he's got, for the supporters that are going to jail or under indictment, or that type of thing. That was really never the case with Dan, because that's not what Dan did. I don't know what Rod Blagojevich has done, but I know he's surrounded by the, you know, he can't pass the smell test. There's so much going on around him that it's inevitable that he be involved in it, or maybe not involved in it, but certainly the appearance of being involved in it. That was never the case with Dan. There were no … not that I recall … there were no headlines about corruption in the Walker administration. There were no headlines about the governor being crooked. There were no headlines about any of that stuff.

DePue: He had a couple of his appointments that went south; I can't recall the specific names at this time.

Kaplan: Well, there was one … uh, there was one: Tony, [Anthony Angelos] who Walker appointed as Illinois Insurance Director. Tony had shady connections. His appointment was a major embarrassment early in Walker's administration.] He was going to be the Insurance Director and he withdrew because he had made a significant contribution and he wanted to be part of the administration. That's all he asked. He wanted to be part of the administration and he withdrew because there were some very negative headlines about him.

DePue: Was that in part because Victor was out of the scene for a while …

Kaplan: Yes, yes.

DePue: … and he wasn't available then?

Kaplan: Yes, yes, that's exactly what happened. And I wish I could, I mean, I've got a block against his last name because I held the press conference and guided him through his resignation, because the governor called me and said, "He's gonna withdraw and would you help him withdraw?" And I said, "Of course." There were other kinds of things that I did more or less. When they needed something done and, you know, that was outside of government, they would ask me if I could do this. And I could, of course. I mean, what are they going to do? Are they going to have a press conference with him, and say he's a good boy, but he's leaving us. It just didn't make any sense, so, under that circumstances they would call me and say "He's decided to resign, but he wants to go out with a statement. Will you help him?" I set up a press conference at the Sheraton hotel, he came and saw me, I said, "Here's the way to do it." You know, you don't want to take the hits, your family is upset. You don't want to put them through this, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da. Okay, go across the street and have the press conference. That's one incident, and I wouldn't characterize it as what I did, but I did a lot of stuff like that, but not as part of the government. And, you know, I might have a call that said: So and so has told me that he would support my program and he's going to give a speech about his support for this program and I suggested to him that he contact you, Mort, and maybe you could work on the speech with him. He wants to support it, but, you know, we can do that and he will come and see you and maybe you can help him to write a speech, which he is going to give at the XYZ place, or something like that. So it was not untypical for me to get that kind of request, in addition to the other stuff that I was doing. I wanted to make sure I answered the question about what you think the difference between the Walker administration and the Blagojevich administration is and I think it's what I said; that I don't think Dan ever had any scandals to speak of bursting around him the way Blagojevich has in the administration. Nothing about ethical corruption like that.

DePue: One of the comparisons where they are similar is government by executive decree.

Kaplan: Yep. Well, yeah, I think that's very similar because Blagojevich can't get any support for his programs among Democrats and Walker for different reasons, or maybe the same reasons, you know, couldn't get support, because of Daley. There's a little difference there, because it isn't Daley in this case, it's the Democrats in Springfield who resent and don't like Blagojevich. It's Madigan.

DePue: Madigan.

Kaplan: You know, basically, and so, you know, in Walker's case it was Daley in Chicago and that's not the case here with Blagojevich, you know. Daley [the son] is not

calling shots in Springfield to oppose Blagojevich as his father did to oppose Walker. That's a major difference.

DePue: At the point where Howlett defeats Governor Walker, and he's going to be the Democratic candidate which will give the Republicans a perfect opportunity to get back into the governor's mansion, what's your feeling about that turn of events?

Kaplan: I felt terrible, but, you know, I was busy building my business. At that point I probably had thirty or thirty-five people working for me and a lot of different accounts and, you know, I was focused on building what I was building and, you know, I licked my wounds. I wasn't divorced from the campaign, I just didn't have the same kind of role that I had. I mean, I couldn't, I didn't have the time.

DePue: Would you have advised him to do anything dramatically different than what did occur?

Kaplan: Not that I recall.

DePue: Okay.

Kaplan: Not that I recall. I didn't have the same number of meetings and strategy sessions. I couldn't make them. I couldn't make them. I was flying to New York on business. I was flying to the West Coast on business. You know, we were representing Miller Beer. We had two brands, light beer from Miller that was a huge account that took a lot of my time and energy and effort. I just couldn't say: Well, I'm disappearing for a day and a night, you know, to go to Springfield. I couldn't do it. And then I had sold my company, well, I sold my company later, but I just didn't have the time.

DePue: How about folks like Victor, Dave Green, William Goldberg? I mean, after Walker is out of office they are in the political wilderness.

Kaplan: They are, but Vic developed a concept and it made a really nice living for him and, believe it or not it was jury selection. I'm sure you heard that story, right?

DePue: Yeah.

Kaplan: And he was called upon, I think his lifesaver, if I'm not mistaken, was Texas Instruments. I think Texas Instruments had so many lawsuits going that Vic was heavily involved in jury selection, jury measurement, jury consulting for those lawsuits and I don't think if he didn't have any other clients I think he would have done well. Dave, of course, went back to Quartet Manufacturing Company and Bill Goldberg began practicing law again as he is now and Norton Kay went to work for me.

DePue: The governor made one comment that said, "You know, maybe I should have gone back into a private law firm like I had offers to do in the first place."

Kaplan: Well, he of course told you that he tried to start a statewide law firm.

DePue: Right. And the oil change business.

Kaplan: The oil change business.

DePue: The S and L. [Savings and Loan Association]

Kaplan: And the hunting lodge, you know, the …

DePue: That one we didn't discuss.

Kaplan: Yeah. He made arrangements with people that he knew, you know, from the campaign, who had property, acreage around the state and he thought he would have a sports hunting group where, for a certain amount of money that you paid, you could go and hunt in any number of places throughout the state. It was aimed at hunters.

DePue: What would you say, what was it about Dan Walker that later brought about his downfall?

Kaplan: Yeah. That is a really good question and I think … I'd have to think about that. I think it might have been the fact that, you know, he went from so powerful to maybe underestimating the power that he had when he stepped down from office, that his ego was such that maybe he thought he could do certain things that he couldn't do. I don't know. That doesn't sound like a good answer even coming out of my mouth.

DePue: Do you think some of these financial ventures he got into were particularly risky?

Kaplan: Oh, well, without a doubt. You know, I think that …

DePue: As risky as his political gamble in 1970?

Kaplan: I don't think he thought it was as risky and I'm not sure it was as risky. I think the biggest risk he ever took was running for governor, because I think, you know, I think he got really … it's hard to say … but I think he got a bum rap, I think he really got a bum rap. But having said that, nobody lost any money; he went to jail over the financial institution.

DePue: The S and L?

Kaplan: The S and L.

DePue: To a certain extent he happened to be unlucky when the S and L's went belly up.

Kaplan: Right, right. And I guess, you know, the reserves that he was supposed to have went below legally what he was supposed to have and I guess he took some stuff personally out of there, but to get sentenced for all of that and 17 months, which, of

course, he didn't serve, but it just seemed harsh to me. It just seemed overblown. But you know, I'm not a lawyer, I don't know. They caught him with illegalities. Why did he do it? He'd have to answer that. I don't know how I can answer that question. Can you attribute to him the knowledge that he knew that the reserves shouldn't go below that amount? I don't know. I don't know. What does he say?

DePue: He didn't talk about it in that sense. Again, he mentioned that as far as the S and L situation was concerned, I think he and Keating were the only ones that really spent any hard time on this and he made the comparison that, versus what Keating had done, it was nothing. I'm paraphrasing from a conversation that was six months ago, so I'm probably doing a poor job of it.

Kaplan: Well, also, I know that nobody got stuck in that deal.

DePue: And he mentioned that as well, that this is his understanding of the way that played out, nobody got hurt, nobody lost any money.

Kaplan: Nobody lost any money, right, nobody lost any money and nobody got hurt. So, you know, I guess there's a lot of cases you could make for why he went up, but the bottom line is that there was a violation of the law.

DePue: This I got more from reading his book perhaps, but there is a sense that Jim Thompson had gotten Kerner and I think tangentially he was involved with getting Walker.

Kaplan: That's probably true, that's probably true.

DePue: And again, I'm hedging here because I don't want to misquote anything or make unwarranted contentions.

Kaplan: Yeah, yeah, no, no, I understand. You know, I read his book, too. I'm in his book, but you know, the farther away you get from it the more I think: What did he go to jail for? Why did he get that kind of a term? Nobody lost any money. The reserves, I understand, you're supposed to legally not tap into the reserves below a certain amount. I can't think of the other thing that's involved in it.

DePue: Well, there was a judge who passed down a pretty harsh decree. It wasn't a jury sentence, it was a judge. Did you visit him while he was in jail?

Kaplan: No.

DePue: Why not?

Kaplan: I think that probably, you know, probably at this point feel badly about it, but at that time I was getting less and less and less involved with Dan. Like I said, the second campaign I had much less to do with it. Afterwards, the period that elapsed I had even less to do with Dan.

DePue: After he came out of office, before he got himself into financial trouble, did you see that there was any political future for him?

Kaplan: After he got out … no.

DePue: After he got out of office?

Kaplan: I didn't think so. I didn't think so. I don't ever recall sitting down and coming to that judgment, but, no, I don't think so. I think once you're beaten for reelection, you know, I think it's tough to come back. I don't think it's tough to come back from a defeat, but I think it's tough to come back when you've been elected and then defeated. I mean, we've got lots of examples of people who were defeated and defeated. Richard Nixon, for example, was defeated and then came back. Ronald Reagan was defeated, but I don't think you have a lot of people that were elected and then lost and then came back.

DePue: Well, especially in the manner he lost in the Democratic primary, his own primary campaign.

Kaplan: Right.

DePue: How well did you know Roberta Nelson and how much did that have to do with what was going on with Dan's life after he got out of office?

Kaplan: I knew Roberta Nelson. I had dinner with Dan Walker and Roberta Nelson three days before he went to prison. That was the last time that I had seen him. We hadn't seen each other for, you know, some time and I don't really know how that came about. He was in Chicago and she was in Chicago and we had dinner together. I guess, I mean, I don't want to be unkind. I think that she was used to a style of living and I think that Dan wanted to maintain that style. I don't know that that had anything to do with anything, but …

DePue: He certainly got overextended because of the purchase of the yacht.

Kaplan: They bought the yacht and yeah, I don't know what else they bought, but they were in the oil business at that time I think and she was a part of society and like that, which was totally opposite to Roberta One. And to what extent she influenced what he did? He certainly loved her and that was obvious at the various times that we had seen them, but …

DePue: Were you one of those who were counseling against that relationship?

Kaplan: No, no. I didn't vote one way or another on that. I had nothing to do with it. I mean, it was a fait accompli by the time I met Roberta Nelson.

DePue: Well, let's close things up here then and I'll ask what you are most proud of in terms of your relationship with him.

Kaplan: I think I'm proud to have been part of a campaign that we'll never see again, I don't think; the likes of which we'll likely never see. I think I'm proud of having worked with a guy who really wanted to do the right thing. I've worked with a lot of people that wanted to do that and I'm proud of all of them, but I think Dan had the best chance to do what he wanted to do and I think the whole idea of transparency in government and trying to effect change is something that I'm really proud of having been a part of and having gotten him to the point where he was able to do some of that. You know, the cause and effect doesn't always happen. Oftentimes you perspire and work 24 hours a day and you've lost. And I'll never forget, maybe this is a way to conclude, on election night when he won, Victor and I walked out of the suite and I said something about, "Oh, boy, what about politics?" or some words to that effect and Vic said, "We're not in politics anymore, we're in government." You know, "we're not in politics anymore, we're in government." I can't reconstruct the conversation, but I think you get the idea. We went from political operatives, to running a government and that was pretty heady wine.

DePue: That's a very idealistic tone for somebody who is described as a Machiavellian.

Kaplan: You cannot pinpoint Vic de Grazia. I think I really object, even though I used the term, I would not call Vic a Machiavellian. I would say he had some Machiavelli in him, there's no doubt about it, but he was way more complex than that, way more complex than that. So that comment wouldn't surprise me at all. You know, "We're not in politics anymore, Mort, we're in government." Even though, ever after, we were still in politics, and he knew it. He still practiced politics, but he was in the moment and it was Vic saying, "We've got another horse to ride now," you know, not just politics, but now we can do some things, we can really have an effect on government.

DePue: I get the sense that the whole reason for being so politically oriented in the first place was to somehow launch this person that he's decided to hitch his wagon to, to get to a position of power where they can effect the right kind of changes. Would that be fair to say?

Kaplan: Yep, yep, very fair to say. I really miss Vic. I don't know that I've ever had a friend that I could spend a more enjoyable evening with than Vic, without ever even talking about politics, without ever even talking about politics.

DePue: That was the Renaissance man?

Kaplan: He was a Renaissance man. He really was. You could talk music, you could talk literature, you could talk theater, you could talk movies, you could talk books, you could talk philosophy, you never had to talk politics. But if you wanted to talk politics, you could also spend an entire evening talking about nothing else and that was Vic, which I miss.

DePue: How about your greatest regrets? Not necessarily your personal regrets, but in relation to your association with Walker and the rest of his people.

Kaplan: Oh, that he never had the chance to run for president. I would have loved that and he would have loved it and I think he'd have been formidable. And, I think the regret is that, again, hindsight, that if he had made that accommodation with Daley, that doesn't mean he'd have run for president, but I think he'd have been viable. That's all you can ask and when you're talking about presidential politics, is it viable? And I think it would have been viable. And that's a regret, because you can see, the politics and campaigns, I can't even describe campaigns, you know. I've gained 30 pounds, I've lost 30 pounds, I've been stressed, my adrenaline has flowed, small victories are monumental. When you see an idea become executed, it's just a narcotic; it's a narcotic: the idea that you've created some kind of a profound change in the order of things for the better. Boy, that's, like I said, that's pretty heady wine. Do I miss politics? Yes. Would I want to do it again? No. (DePue laughing). No. I couldn't handle it anymore the way I used to be able to handle it. When you're younger you can do all that. You can go without sleep. Not at this point, I wouldn't try it.

DePue: My last question here is going to start with a quote that I'm taking from [Taylor] Pensoneau and [Robert] Ellis' book on Governor Walker. Then I'll let you comment to that quote and then make any final comments that you'd like to make.

Kaplan: Okay.

DePue: "Walker's followers knew they were part of something special when they signed up and embarked on their improbable drive to capture Springfield from those entrenched interests and they did it, and for most of them it was the time of their lives. God, was it exciting."

Kaplan: I would second that emotion. I would third that emotion. I would add exclamation points to that emotion. It was a high water mark for, I think, everybody who was involved in that, because how many of us have a chance to be part of something like that and to effect that kind of change and to have something like that happen in your lifetime. I've had major clients, I've had major victories in business and in society. I mean, I started organizations that were important to me; the Illinois Arts Alliance, which today it's just so big and I started it, and I have a lot of pride in some of the things like that that I did, but nothing like this. I mean, this was major league stuff.

DePue: Closing comments then?

Kaplan: Dan Walker was a really important part of my life. I was really proud to have known the several Dan Walkers that I knew: the Dan Walker at the Illinois Public Aid Commission who was brave and courageous in what he stood up for; the Dan Walker that I had heard about who really took it upon himself to help integrate Deerfield when that was not a very popular thing to do, housing there; the Dan Walker who ran for governor; the Dan Walker who was governor. And I'd say it was a seminal part of my life.

DePue: Thank you very much, Mort. This has been a great interview.

Kaplan: Thank you. I hope you got what you wanted, Mark.

DePue: You're an easy interview subject. Kaplan: Well, you're a very good, very good interviewer, a very good interviewer.

DePue: Thank you very much. It's been a real pleasure. Thank you.

Kaplan: Thank you, me too.

(End of interview)