Interview with Taylor Pensoneau
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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Friday, April 17, 2009. My name is Mark DePue. I'm a volunteer with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. This is part of a continuing series of interviews I've been having with Taylor Pensoneau. Good morning, Taylor.

Pensoneau: Good morning, Mark.

DePue: To further introduce this, I think this is perhaps the fourth session I've had. [This was the fourth day that they met. This was the seventh session.]

Pensoneau: I think number four. DePue: Of course, this is part of the overall project on Jim Edgar's administration. But today we get to talk about Jim Edgar's predecessor, Jim Thompson. Big Jim Thompson, right?

Pensoneau: Right. (chuckle)

DePue: We finished off last time after a fascinating discussion on Dan Walker. Of course, we expect nothing less, talking to Walker's biographer (Pensoneau chuckles). You know, I keep hearing stories from you that we didn't get recorded, either, so I'll have to figure out how to incorporate those somewhere down the road. But I know that we ended last time's discussion, I believe, with a discussion about Walker's losing in the primary in '76.

Pensoneau: Correct.

DePue: So let's pick it up from there, because the person who won the primary, of course, was Michael Howlett.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: Maybe let's take a step back and let's talk a little about Jim Thompson's background before we get there, if you can. What did you know at the time, or what do you recall, about the things that propelled him onto the political scene? That caused him to be a credible candidate?

Pensoneau: We're talking about Thompson?

DePue: A credible candidate. Well, 1976.

Pensoneau: I think Thompson's ambitions were centered in the political world from early on, as I understood it. I had actually heard of Thompson when for, I think a short period, he had some role, I think, in the chain of command under Illinois Attorney General William J. Scott, I believe. I did not know Thompson then. I met Thompson personally back in – I think it would have been, I'm going to say – 1973 or '74 when he was United States Attorney in Chicago. Excuse me. He was doing some investigation on various political figures that involved some downstate individuals. He was always investigating major political figures. That was his hallmark as U. S. Attorney in Chicago. But I remember I interviewed him about some downstate political figures that reportedly were under the microscope in his continuing investigation. I think that was in 1973 and 1974. I found him to be very down-to-earth and relaxed in the interview, which I thought a little unusual in terms of my impression of the United States Attorneys, because they were, I thought, pretty formal and high-powered. Thompson certainly was high-powered, don't get me wrong, but he was awfully relaxed and conversant with me and I was rather impressed with his almost informal style, even though he was the U. S. Attorney in Chicago.

DePue: When you first met him had he declared his interest in running for Governor?

Pensoneau: No, not publically. I'm sure of that. He may have entertained such an ambition privately, but he had not declared such publically. No, the answer is no.

DePue: Okay. Anything else that struck you about him?

Pensoneau: Well, I was struck by his extremely casual, informal attitude or personality. At the time, I was the Illinois political writer for the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*. He made me feel very relaxed. It was almost like an informal situation. Because when you interviewed federal officials, if they were not up-tight, they always said, Well, I'm really limited on what I can talk about. I mean, federal officials, in terms of interviews by newspaper reporters, were always generally more formal and hesitant than state officials. Okay? It was always

like they had a number of restrictions placed upon them of what they could go into or what they could talk about.

Thompson was a different animal in that regard. It was like, Ask me anything you want to know. I remember he sat in a chair and put his feet up on a desk and it was like, Fire away; what do you want to know about my investigations? Of course, at that time, he was already a super-accomplished prosecutor because he had put Otto Kerner away. He had put umpteen captains and members of the Daley machine away. And he had established, not just a big name in Chicago, but within the prosecutorial community he was a big name nationally. So, in view of that, as I met him I was struck by his informality the first time I sat down with him. He was still U. S. Attorney in Chicago. I was the only political writer for the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*. I really don't recall specifically what got me in to see him in Chicago when he was still U. S. Attorney, but the conversation veered off into downstate political figures and that's when he made some comments about the purview of one or more of his investigations encompassing some downstate political figures as well as the normal Chicago targets.

DePue: Yes

Pensoneau: And I remember specifically one was then a potent Democrat in the Illinois House, Clyde Choate from Anna. I'm sure Choate was never indicted. But Thompson was quite giving with me in his acknowledging Choate was under investigation. I can't remember exactly for what, but, as I recall, he went pretty far, and I thought that was very unusual. Well, I wrote an article two days later back in my bureau office in Springfield in the Illinois State House. I wrote an article on Thompson and on the Thompson interview, and in there I mentioned a few of the names he had freely dished out to me about individuals under investigation by the federal prosecutor's office in Chicago. And I remember that I mentioned Choate, and Choate threw a fit with me when I mentioned his name. I mean, Choate said, "The guy is just politically ambitious. Why he would give you my name?" Because I knew Choate.

DePue: Yeah

Pensoneau: Choate was a downstate Democratic House leader. I remember Choate was quite upset with me, not Thompson. And I then went through a two or three year period when Choate wouldn't talk to me. (DePue laughs) But I will say that changed before I left the *Post-Dispatch*. I should point that out. But I remember, I mentioned Choate and it was a vague reference. Choate was very upset that in this long interpretive piece I wrote about Thompson, that Choate was mentioned and Choate didn't like it. I remember that. And really let me know it.

DePue: Well if my math is right here, this is possibly the time that Choate was actually the Democratic minority leader in the house.

Pensoneau: Yes, I think it was.

DePue: 1973-'74.

Pensoneau: I believe this was in 1973. The answer is, I believe you're right.

DePue: So Thompson at the time would have been riding the wave of all of the juicy… Maybe that's the wrong word to use, but…

Pensoneau: No, exactly the word.

DePue: You mentioned Otto Kerner.

Pensoneau: Yes

DePue: And Kerner went down.

Pensoneau: He had put Kerner away by then.

DePue: Theodore Isaacs?

Pensoneau: Yeah. Whatever he did to Isaacs was done by then.

DePue: And how about Thomas Keane who was one of Daley's main aldermen from Chicago.

Pensoneau: I know he put Keane away. I don't recall if he'd done it yet by then. He probably had. I just was, he'd done the job on Kerner and Isaacs. I know we were past that stage.

DePue: Another one of his scalps, if you will, would have been Cook County Clerk, former Illinois treasurer, as well, Edward Barrett.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Yeah. I remember the Barrett thing. Because of his age at the time, I don't think Barrett actually ever went to prison, but Thompson did successfully, in a prosecutorial way, bring him down. Barrett was an interesting figure from the past. He had held, I think more than one state office.

DePue: Yeah. I had Secretary of State, Auditor, Treasurer.

Pensoneau: Right, right. When Thompson took him to task, I think he had a Cook County office, as I recall. He was no longer in statewide office.

DePue: It's interesting, because you've got Dan Walker, of course, who made his career based on an attack on the Daley machine, and now you've got Jim Thompson who is building his resume by chipping away at the Daley machine.

Pensoneau: Chicago machine, yeah. That's true. That's an accurate comparison.

DePue: Did you know that he had political ambitions when you first encountered him?

Pensoneau: I did not. And I did not know him until that first interview in his Chicago office when he was U. S. Attorney for the Northern District. No, I did not. I thought he was very, extremely accommodating, especially for a United States Attorney. They were usually quite formal and relatively stand-offish in dealing with the press, especially reporters that they didn't know; Thompson, to my knowledge, didn't know me then. He was very giving and very loose, and almost informal. I had never experienced that with comparable figures like United States Attorney in East St. Louis and maybe another United States Attorney here and there in the Midwest. He was extremely informal and loose and relaxed and I wasn't used to that in meeting with and asking questions of a United States Attorney. So that impressed me. I still remember he put his feet up on the desk and kind of relaxed, was relaxed. What do you want to know? Well, I had questions and he actually answered the questions. That was unusual (DePue laughs) for a United States Attorney, okay?

DePue: Especially about ongoing investigations.

Pensoneau: It was. I agree with you. And I was surprised at that. I was a little caught-back myself on how giving he was. Now in looking back, you know, he may have been informed that I was the political writer for a major newspaper that's circulated rather significantly in downstate Illinois. When I went in, I'm not going to say we were like old pals, but it was extremely informal. I mean, I cannot over-emphasize that.

DePue: What was your reaction a year or two later then when you heard – I think this was done about middle of 1975 –

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: – that he announced that he was running for Governor.

Pensoneau: It certainly didn't shock me, but, I'm sure some of the Chicago political writers had been maybe "clued in from an early point on." I was not in that group, though, at that time, in that situation. What was my reaction? I was rather… I was surprised and pleased. I had been told that he had political ambitions, but what I had been told – obviously, if not erroneously, wrongly – was that he had his eye on the mayor's office in Chicago, I just thought that was interesting. But, I'm trying to remember what the situation was there. Okay, if I've got it right, Illinois Attorney General William J. Scott, Republican, very popular and very potent, I had been led to believe he was going to run for Governor in 1976. Okay? And I don't recall, because I'd been led to believe that, I didn't think much about Thompson, although his name was always in the news. Thompson, a major newsmaker because of his successful prosecutions in Chicago.

DePue: But to kind of put it in a frame of reference here, he had the same position that Patrick Fitzgerald has today.

Pensoneau: Correct. Correct. You're right.

DePue: And also another prosecutor who made his name by going after politicians.

Pensoneau: Correct.

DePue: Okay. Go ahead.

Pensoneau: Correct. A good reference point. So as I recall – and this is off the top of my head, Mark – we were told that William J. Scott, the Attorney General of Illinois, was not going to run for Governor in 1976. Okay. It seemed to me almost within a few days of that realization Thompson announced that he was going to seek the Republican nomination for Governor in 1976. I remember he paid sort of quick visits to certain parts of the state, including, I'm sure, Springfield. I remember that I went out – it was probably at Capital Airport – and went through the routine with other reporters of asking some fundamental questions. That was in 1975, if I recall, and that was the second time that I had met him or seen him. And along with others, I asked him some fundamental questions because it all came up so quickly. It was like, Scott wasn't going to run. I think, by the way, he maybe no longer was U. S. Attorney in Chicago. We can check the records on that. He may have stepped down from the post.

DePue: I think he did. He had returned to private practice.

Pensoneau: I think so. That rings a bell with me. But the time difference wasn't that much, and all of a sudden here he was. I remember he was very, very sharp. I remember, I saw him, I think it was, as I said, at the airport in Springfield. As I remember, he reminded me of when I'd met him about two years earlier in his Chicago office – about which I just talked – and how he quote "enjoyed our conversation and that he had read the article I wrote…" –which was a long analysis piece in the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* – …and "thought it was very fair" and all that stuff. I mean, he was kind of, you know, doing some buttering up effect there because I was the only Illinois political writer for the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch.*

DePue: He would have been at Winston and Strawn at the time in 1975, a law firm up in Chicago.

Pensoneau: I guess. I know that's where he went after the Governorship. I believe he was there before, too.

DePue: Okay. We talked about this and I know we discussed it quite at length, but I think it is probably fair to talk very briefly about how Michael Howlett ended up being the Democratic candidate for Governor in 1976.

Pensoneau: All right. That was basically engineered by Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley. Howlett, of course – I think its fair to say from a downstate viewpoint – was part and parcel of the Chicago Democratic organization, some would say machine. Daley had failed in his attempts to reach some kind of rapport with incumbent Democratic Governor Dan Walker. As a result, Daley marshaled his great influence and followers in the statewide Democratic organization to take out Walker in the 1976 primary election, and he decided Howlett was the man to do it. And I think we mentioned this last time, but I can go into it again if you want.

DePue: Just kind of touch the highlights of it.

Pensoneau: Yeah. He asked Howlett to run. Howlett, I felt at the time, did so reluctantly. I think Howlett was very, very comfortable as Illinois Secretary of State, a position he could have occupied until he died if he had so wished. But Howlett was like a good political soldier and Daley was the boss. If that's what Daley wanted, I guess the way it kind of worked, Howlett – I would go so far as to say – had little choice but to run for Governor, to seek the Democratic nomination for Governor.

I think I repeated this last time. Later on, not too long before he died, I had an old-time sit-down with Howlett in Chicago. He was almost bitter about having acceded to Daley's wish to run for Governor in 1976 and that's when he told me that Daley had told him that if he got elected Governor, Daley would do his best – and his best meant a lot – to see that Howlett at some point would get the Democratic nomination for president. (both chuckle) Howlett specifically looked at me with an incredible look. I think we were sitting there in a coffee shop in the Conrad Hilton and Howlett looked at me and, with an incredible look, said, "Daley told me I'd be the second Catholic president." Howlett kind of looked at me with disdain and something to the effect, "I guess he expected me to swallow that."

I just never forgot that conversation.This was, I think, the last time I talked to Michael Howlett before he died. It was in a hotel along Michigan Avenue, I know that. But anyway, Howlett, I felt, was drafted, reluctantly to take out Walker. Daley, obviously, pledged his considerable political army to work overtime to secure the primary, to secure victory for Howlett in the Democratic primary in 1976. Of course, that's exactly what happened because, going back to what happened last time, the cadre of people working for Walker in 1976 differed significantly from the army that was out there for him in 1972, and a lot of that support had dissipated over the four years that Walker was Governor. The Walker effort to retain the Governorship in 1976 did not contain, in my view, anything near the vibrancy of what we had witnessed back in 1972 when Walker won the Governorship.

DePue: I don't know if I asked you this last time. Why do you think there was that difference?

Pensoneau: That's really a good question. You know, Walker's governorship was one of seemingly unending embattlement, and I think some people just grew kind of tired of it even though, on a number of things, I thought Walker was right. But the cards in the political establishment were stacked against Walker from the day he was sworn in. As I said in our last conversation, he didn't allow rapprochement to ever occur with the Chicago Democrats. He developed no allies among Republicans. Walker's continued support was among a cadre of downstate Democrats who always had been dissatisfied with the iron hand of Daley's rule in the party, and Walker was a natural figure for them to throw their allegiance to.

DePue: I imagine that the Republicans were downright gleeful that they had this Democratic Governor who couldn't get along with Daley, couldn't get along with the legislature.

Pensoneau: Well, I think they were.

DePue: Couldn't get along with the press.

Pensoneau: I would simply say amen to what you said. Yeah, you're right. And didn't get along with the press either, certainly not the State House press corps. That's true. And I think that some of the original Walker people had become disaffected or discouraged by Walker as Governor. I think that a lot of them were young idealists who found out it was a lot more fun to be involved in an upstart political campaign than it was to actually be part of governing. (chuckles)

DePue: There are some parallels about that today, are there not?

Pensoneau: Okay. There certainly are.

DePue: We don't need to go there.

Pensoneau: Okay. And a lot of them just weren't up to another. The enthusiasm and the spirit just wasn't there in 1976 like it was in 1972. A lot of those same individuals were still around. Walker had placed a number of them in state positions, but again, the enthusiasm and the idealism and the energy that had all gone into the effort to get Walker elected in 1972 just wasn't there in 1976.

DePue: Okay. Let's get back to Jim Thompson, because he is every bit as fascinating a political figure as Dan Walker.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: How would you describe your understanding at that time of what Thompson's political philosophy, his leanings, would be?

Pensoneau: Well, he was a Republican. I never assumed from day one that he was a conservative Republican, and, indeed, in my opinion, he was not. He was a pragmatic Republican, a practical Republican. Thompson was an expert in the give and take. He was more interested in solutions than in political philosophy. I mean, in some ways, Thompson could have been a Democrat, too, but I think the Republican party at that time certainly offered more of an avenue for big time advancement. Of course, you have to remember that Thompson had put away a number of the Daley machine lieutenants. Need I say that that did not endear him to the ruling political hierarchy in Chicago headed by then still-sitting Mayor Richard Daley.

DePue: So to a certain extent he's positioned himself to run pretty much the same platform that Dan Walker would have run on four years before, being the anti-Daley candidate.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Except this time the Republican Party was still very formidable in the state and Thompson had all that to begin. I mean, that in itself would have been enough to put a super candidate over and, really, Thompson drew south of Chicago. South of the city Thompson drew considerable bipartisan support. I mean, you know, he was just viewed as kind of a young white knight. He had this tremendous reputation as being this star, young, aggressive United States Attorney in Chicago, and a lot of people in the middle who could be swayed either way were solidly for Thompson from day one. You now, he kind of entered the Governor's race as a white knight on a white horse.

Another thing, too, which I always will point out, Thompson was brilliant in working with the press. He had charmed even the toughest old curmudgeons in the Chicago newspaper world, and he wrapped downstate political writers around his finger with ease. He was very charming. He was glib. It was like, Here's this guy, he came out of Chicago and he had accomplished these incredible things in bringing down all these major political figures as U. S. Attorney for Chicago, but, hey, he's just a regular guy. He's just like us, you know; he wears jeans and he dresses informally. He's hip. He knows about things that more formal political figures wouldn't engage in a conversation with reporters. Thompson could hold a conversation on anything. He did his homework on some of the downstate reporters, including yours truly, and he would throw out in conversations surprising things he had picked up about your background or knew what you had done.

For example, I had done some significant investigative stuff in my role as the Illinois political writer for the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*,[1] and Thompson brought some of it up to me. He'd obviously done some research because he knew about some of my investigative pieces and talked about them. And a couple of times said that if that had occurred in my bailiwick as U. S.

[1] The Post-Dispatch is influential in the large territory of Illinois near and particularly south of St. Louis.

Attorney, so and so would have been indicted, but it was a downstate Illinois story and it wasn't in my jurisdiction. He would throw out comments like, "I may have even told so and so, who was U. S. Attorney in Springfield at the time, you ought to look at what the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* has revealed there but that was their call. I couldn't run their office," and so on. But he was that informal with me, you know, and he was really, really very approachable and very well informed. He did his homework before he engaged in conversation with a person like myself.

DePue: Do you think this reaching out to the press was a reflection of his real personality, or was he trying to work you guys?

Pensoneau: I would say a combination. I was always told, even when I didn't know Thompson, Chicago reporters who I knew who dealt with him up there said he's very amenable to the press. He "likes the press", and he's very comfortable dealing with and talking to the press. Some would go so far as to say he's more comfortable talking to reporters than he is with some high level officials in other aspects of government. He just knew how to push the right buttons in the press – either he himself, or more likely an aide – and he right away put some sharp people to work for him, I should point that out. Well, one of the first persons that went to work for him was David Gilbert who had been a political reporter for the *Chicago Tribune.* Dave knew me well, and, obviously, Dave had prepped Thompson very well on how to deal with me and so on, because Thompson was as quick to note some of the investigative pieces I had done through the years in terms of downstate politics. A couple times he would say things like, "You know, David thinks a lot of you. David told me about how you pulled off that situation getting so and so well indicted down in this county or that," and so on. I mean, it was very, almost folksy, you know, and very, very, very smooth. As I think I said, obviously in my whole political writing career, the two individuals that were supreme, by far, in dealing with the press were Thompson and Paul Simon. They were in a league by themselves.

DePue: Okay. Tell us a little bit about Thompson's style as a campaigner beyond just dealing with the press.

Pensoneau: Extremely informal. He announced. Once the campaign started, most of the times I saw him – I would pick him up downstate at county fairs and other venues – over half the times he was dressed in jeans and maybe western-style shirts. I don't recall the shirts, but definitely the jeans. He just looked kind of hip. He was always so relaxed and glib, very, very glib. He liked to have a give and take repartee with reporters. He'd always done his homework and that put him above so many other major political figures. He knew about your likes or dislikes. He cultivated and studied the press – he really did – the individual members of it.

DePue: You've mentioned the term glib a couple times. I would think that works for an audience like the press much better than it would for the general public, though.

Pensoneau: He was very smooth. Well, okay, he was more informal. If I can explain it accurately, he was more informal in dealing with the press than he was in a public forum; he was a little bit more of what you might expect. Especially, the larger the audience, the more formal he was and the more forceful. He wasn't glib then. It was more what you might have expected. But I mean it was like he'd make a semi-formal talk to a large political gathering, say in Winnebago County; then, if you were following him at the time, once he got off the stage and you were with a couple other reporters tracking him, going with him and travelling with him to his next stop, he'd get real informal and say, "How do you think I did?" I mean, it was like…

DePue: This was his first political campaign ever, was it not?

Pensoneau: Yeah, to my knowledge, yeah. I mean, then it was the informal, almost irreverent Thompson. He'd say things like, "Can you believe that one guy asked me that question? Where the hell has he been?" He would say things that if we quoted him accurately might have been gotten back as an insult to the audience or to the rally, but, of course that didn't happen. Thompson had a way of spinning members of the press around his finger, probably like nobody else I ever saw. He was probably even better at that than Simon. I was amazed.

DePue: Was he able to connect with these audiences he was talking to?

Pensoneau: Oh yeah, he did;, oh yeah, yeah, yeah, he did. He was a good speaker. He's a good speaker . I have to give him – using this praise loosely – all the credit in the world. No, he wowed audiences. I thought I was looking at a boy wonder in politics. Of course I knew the Democratic party was bitterly divided and disassembled because the sitting Governor had been defeated in the primary; although he was not a favorite of many party regulars around the state, "Katie bar the door"[2] in terms of political repercussions when primary voters deny re-nomination to a sitting Governor of their own party. I mean, that's just kind of a recipe for disaster, in my opinion, political disaster, and it turned out to be so.

DePue: I think you mentioned last time that Walker still had a considerable amount of support in the Democrats downstate.

Pensoneau: Oh yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

[2] "Katie bar the door" was a colloquialism for "Watch out", Watch your backside", "Look out" and similar expressions.

DePue: How would you describe Thompson's platform. What was the message when he was going to these communities?

Pensoneau: Oh, I can't recall specifics on terms of issues, but I think the theme was: I'm the young prosecutor who's attracted national attention for putting away some of the most corrupt officials in the Democratic political machine in Chicago, and, you know, I will be a top-notch steward of Illinois government because I've proven I won't tolerate corruption; you already know what I'm capable of and I'll continue at the state level. He had a lot to work with because we'd had all the horse racing scandals and all that stuff.

DePue: Paul Powell.

Pensoneau: And Paul Powell. And he was able to capitalize on all of that and point out that we've had all these problems, our state government's been brought into disrepute. I've been a major factor in trying to clean it up within my jurisdiction, the Chicago area. Necessarily, the corruption's been so widespread that my net had to bring in some of the downstate political figures, which it did. It was like, I'm a clean-cut alternative. We've got the old story, we've got to return our state government to the people and to someone who is clean and someone who's going to bring fresh ideas and be a vigorous presence in the Governor's office, someone that we can be proud of, and I'm your man. I'm here. I've decided I want it and I want your support. And it worked.

DePue: The next question I want to ask you is, here you have a guy who's, I think, around forty or somewhere around there.

Pensoneau: Yeah.

DePue: He gets married in the midst of this campaign to Jane Carr, June 19, 1976, to be exact.

Pensoneau: Uh huh.

DePue: How does the cynical, old, crusty press corps react to that? (pause) Maybe I've really set this up in a way I should never have in the first place.

Pensoneau: You know, in all my days as the Illinois political writer for the Post-Dispatch, I was never privy to the personal lives of a number of the major figures I covered. Beginning a long answer here: for example, Kerner was Governor when I arrived here from St. Louis. You know, I never did pay much attention to the apparently tumultuous personal life of Kerner in terms of his wife and her problems and things like that.

DePue: And, of course, she was the daughter of…

Pensoneau: Mayor Cermak.[3]

DePue: Mayor Cermak.

Pensoneau: Correct. And I kind of followed that pattern. I would answer that this way. The best reporter I ever knew personally or worked beside by far was Edward T. Pound. Pound had gone to work with one of the Chicago papers as an investigative reporter, did a heck of a job, got very close to Thompson, very close, knew him well. Ed Pound basically said, "He's a hell of a guy." I just accepted that. I knew he wasn't married. When I wrote pieces on him – personal pieces, I mean – I pointed out things about his family. His father was a doctor. And I mentioned some other members of his family. I think he was the oldest of maybe four kids; I won't swear to that, it was something like that.

DePue: I know a couple of the siblings are also attorneys.

Pensoneau: Okay. I knew he wasn't married, but, you know, snide comments are always made about anybody trying to reach the higher levels of political involvement, especially to a reporter like me. I was more interested in what they did in office, whether they were honest and things like that. So, in the '76 campaign, I remember I was in my office in the State House pressroom, and I remember he brought around Jane Carr and took her around to each cubicle and introduced her as the woman he was going to marry. I thought she looked younger than him, and I thought she was quite pretty.

DePue: And an accomplished attorney in her own way.

Pensoneau: Right, right. And I frankly thought she'd be an asset to his political career.

DePue: Did you get to know her later on?

Pensoneau: Not much. I must admit that. No, the answer is no. In fact, when he brought her around that one time in the press room I think he was already the nominee. Was it in the summer of '76?

DePue: Yeah, that they got married.

Pensoneau: Okay, well, they weren't married yet, I'm sure, but they were going to get married. I remember he brought her around and she was very polite and soft-spoken. I thought pretty. And he stood there while she and I engaged in small talk. This was in, I'm guessing, the summer of 1976, and then, I'll be honest, I don't think I ever had a conversation after that with her that amounted to anything more. They got married and she was First Lady. Okay, my last year

[3] Anton Cermak, Czech, was the first foreign-born Mayor of Chicago. He was considered the architect of the Chicago Democrat machine. He was killed by an assassin's bullet intended for President-Elect Franklin D. Roosevelt.

as the Illinois political writer for the *Post-Dispatch*, was Thompson's first year as Governor. Outside of seeing her at functions as First Lady of Illinois, I really didn't talk to her. We just didn't talk. I think the longest conversation that amounted to anything that I ever had with her was that first day. It was in the summer of '76. I'm sure it was in the summer when I was in my little, what we called a cubicle, in the pressroom in the Illinois State House and he brought her around. I mean, he was taking her around to every cubicle, not just mine, but he brought her in and he wanted me to meet Jane Carr and they were going to get married and she was very nice. I thought she was pretty and we talked and she asked me a few questions, as I recall, about the *Post-Dispatch*, and it was all very pleasant. That's about the longest conversation I ever had with her.

DePue: Do you remember any other incidents during the campaign that really stick out to you that illustrates the kind of campaigner and the kind of platform and campaign that Thompson was running?

Pensoneau: Well, I can't remember much about his platform. His platform essentially was, I will bring back respectability to the office of Governor of Illinois. We've been through the Otto Kerner thing, we've been through the Dan Walker stuff, but I don't have what?

DePue: Anecdotes or stories from his campaign?

Pensoneau: Well, I remember, I wrote one of my analysis pieces; the only setback I saw was at one of the county fairs, it might have been the St. Clair County Fair at the fairgrounds in Belleville. They wanted him to pose with a horse called the wonder horse and, this is the truth, (laughs) the horse kicked him and it hurt. I witnessed that. It hurt. I mean, the horse kicked him with his hoof. I remember, in one of my analysis pieces I wrote that the biggest set-back I saw Thompson sustain – this was during the summer of '76 – was when such and such the wonder horse unexpectedly kicked him while he was posing with it at one of the county fairs. And I think it was the St. Clair County Fair at Belleville. (laughs).

DePue: That's just the kind of incident that cartoonists would love.

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah, I mean, and it hurt. The horse kicked him. It happened so quick that none of us quite realized that it had happened. No, Thompson came in with an aura around him. Everybody knew who he was. This was Big Jim Thompson. This was the former United States Attorney for Chicago. This was the man who'd sent Otto Kerner to prison. This was the man who'd brought down umpteen lieutenants in the Daley organization in Chicago. This is the man who had been a fearless no-holds-barred United States Attorney in Chicago. You know, this is the man who stood for the utmost in honesty. I think I wrote one time that he almost would be introduced almost like Superman. You know, this is the man who had supernatural powers and

talents in the public realm. The biggest thing – the first thing always – this is the man who sent Governor Otto Kerner to prison.

DePue: Was he the kind of person who, when he walked into the room, owned the room, that he dominated?

Pensoneau: He did. Yes he did. I wish I could have phrased it as well as you did. But the answer is yes. He was magnetic. He was. And people were attracted to him. He could be very glib. He had this awesome reputation, and when you'd go with him, especially in some of the more scattered outlying areas, he'd be in jeans and maybe a western shirt or something, and I don't know, maybe even sneakers.He'd just, would catch everybody off guard. And here he was, so down-to-earth. He was very impressive. I mean, I don't know anyway to phrase it, he was impressive. Later on,, before I left the Post-Dispatch, I would even write that already he was showing signs as Governor of being bigger than life.

You know the joke, or maybe not so much a joke, but the suspicion always was that if he'd chosen to continue running, some thought there was no telling how long he was going to be Governor of Illinois. In fact, there were those who, as his Governorship went on and on, who were starting to call him, and not disrespectfully, Governor for Life.

DePue: But he had ambitions. He'd written on a yearbook when he was graduating from high schools a comment about, "Jim Thompson, President of the United States, 1984-1992," I think, was one of the things. So he clearly had ambitions right from the beginning, I would have to believe.

Pensoneau: Okay. I agree.

DePue: That there was already talk very early in his Governorship…

Pensoneau: I agree.

DePue: …that he had presidential aspirations.

Pensoneau: I would qualify that with one comment, though. I noticed that whoever gets elected Governor of Illinois, automatically the early speculation is he'll be a candidate, he'll be in the running at some point for his party's nomination for president. That was true of Ogilvie. That was true of Dan Walker. Well, I don't know if it was true of Otto Kerner, now, I can't say that. It was definitely true of Ogilvie.

DePue: Well, we heard that early on in the Blagojevich administration.

Pensoneau: We've heard it about Blagojevich and it was definitely true of Thompson, so that was not totally unusual or an isolated situation.

DePue: Okay.

Pensoneau: When we say that about Thompson I can definitely qualify that. But, yeah, there's no question he was interested in the White House.

DePue: He won by a margin at the polls of 64.7 percent. I don't know if that's the record, but its got to be pretty close to a record in Illinois.

Pensoneau: Incredible. Absolutely incredible. I don't know if it's a record, but it was incredible. Now, you're talking about the '76 election?

DePue: The '76 election.

Pensoneau: Alright. Of course, Howlett took out Dan Walker in the Democratic primary, and after that it seemed like the air just went out of the Howlett balloon. I mean, Howlett didn't, in my opinion, run a very vigorous campaign in the general election against Thompson, especially when the polls started coming out in the fall, it showed Thompson had a big lead in the polls. Howlett, I don't want to say gave up, but just kind of said, So be it. How many weeks are left to go? I'll do what's expected. But there was no enthusiasm at all in the Howlett camp, okay? I mean, I was covering it, I remember. There was just none at all. In fact, I'd say the last four or five weeks, they were literally resigned to defeat and the only question was how big would the margin be.

DePue: Do you know if the Daley administration was working hard on Howlett's behalf?

Pensoneau: Oh, on record, for the record, I'm sure the Daley crowd said they were. The answer is yes. And maybe they were. I can't give it a definite answer. You would have had an interview with Daley, which I didn't, but if you'd say, How is the Howlett campaign doing. are you doing everything you can for the Democratic nominee for Governor Michael Howlett? Daley's answer, I'm sure, would have been, We're pulling out all the stops for our good friend Mike Howlett; he's a hell of a guy and he's going to get a big plurality out of here and it will be enough to carry him over through downstate. I mean, that would have been his stand-pat answer. Now, in reality, I think the main objective of Daley in the election of 1976 was to get rid of Walker.

DePue: Yet I can't believe he acceptedclose to sixty-five percent for Thompson…

Pensoneau: Incredible.

DePue: …and still turn out with the normal Chicago vote for the Democratic machine.

Pensoneau: I just don't have those figures in front of me. I just remember, as you and I would say, it was a landslide.

DePue: Let's get into Thompson, then, as he's Governor and, of course, I do think he has the record of serving the longest of any Governor of Illinois – fourteen years.

Pensoneau: Fourteen years.

DePue: He goes in knowing that he's going to have to run for reelection in two short years.

Pensoneau: Two short years, right.[4] How did he define his goals and ambitions as he started his Governorship?

DePue: I think it was to restore the common stuff of: I'm a young dynamic leader. I'm going to restore the faith of Illinoisans in their state government. I come in here without any strings attached; I don't really owe anybody, any past major governmental figures. I'm a fresh face. I won in a landslide. The political world is my oyster and we're going to run Illinois government in a way that's going to make the people proud.

DePue: You described him as being the consummate campaigner.

Pensoneau: Uh huh.

DePue: How would you describe his style of leadership and managing or administering the government once he got there?

Pensoneau: Alright. He was a pragmatic Governor. He was not bound by ideological rigidity. He was very flexible. He was very good at forming alliances on any given issue; alliances on one issue may be different from an alliance on another issue. He definitely could cross over and talk to Democrats. He was a very effective wheeler and dealer because he did not limit himself to partisan rigidity. He was very good on the give and take. You would never see an Otto Kerner come onto the floor of the House or Senate during a debate on a major issue. Thompson would suddenly appear as Governor. He'd walk in. If they were debating something that was crucial affecting state government, all of a sudden, you look over, here's Thompson sitting at somebody's desk – Thompson, he's Governor – with his feet propped up, with his hands behind his head, just listening, just taking it all in, just like he's a reporter or something. And yet he's the man who's going to have the ultimate say on how the issue turns out. I mean, he was extremely informal. I'm getting ahead here, now, but several times in my last year as a State House reporter, as I said, it was Thompson's first year as Governor.

Okay. I remember in the summer I was doing a piece that was not going to be complimentary on him. It concerned highway contracts and

[4] Illinois originally held it's state elections in the same years as the national Presidential elections. The Illinois constitution was changed just before Thompson's reign to hold state elections between the national elections.

contributors; that was a frequent topic of interest to the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, and it wasn't going to be favorable to Thompson. I had been asking the right questions but I had not asked Thompson for an interview or anything thing. Well, when I'm up there actually writing my initial draft of my story in my little cubicle in the in the State House, I hear this voice behind me say, "I know what you're writing. Do you want to talk to me or can I add anything to it?" I turn around and it's the Governor of Illinois, himself. No bodyguards. Nobody. Standing right there, three feet behind my little desk in my cubicle in the pressroom. This is now-Governor Thompson. Now this is most unusual, okay? What I'm telling you is, this is not an everyday occurrence. I mean, you'd never see most governors ever in the pressroom, physically, or whatever, unless it would be in a part for a press conference. That's different. But here he is in my little cubicle, just nonchalantly looking over my shoulder and indicating: that's interesting, now there's a couple things I can give you, some input on some of this. And I say, "Well Governor, I was going to try to talk to you." "Oh, you were going to come down? Well, I didn't know." He knew what I was doing. That was interesting. But it was like,You're going to talk to me and, let's see, well, I may have an explanation for so and so getting a contract. I mean, my point was, how informal and off-beat can you be as Governor of Illinois to do something like that? I never had that happen before. What I'm telling you was true. It was in summer of 1977, his first year as Governor, when I was doing this piece on highway contracts and some questionable contracts being let by the new Thompson administration. All of a sudden, there he is, three feet behind my little cubicle in the pressroom and it was like, "Can I help you?"

DePue: Well I know that Walker…

Pensoneau: See, what I'm trying to say that this is most unusual.

DePue: …Walker prided himself as being the good administrator and working within the executive branch to make sure that the various departments were being efficiently run. Was that something that Thompson focused on as well? Or did he focus his energies on working with the legislature more?

Pensoneau: Well, he definitely did very well with the legislature because he didn't hesitate to cross political boundaries at all. He didn't allow any of those limits to apply to him as they did to previous governors like Otto Kerner and so on. He was just very informal and he was just more pragmatic than anything else.

DePue: Do you know if he was a hands-on administrator, though?

Pensoneau: I don't know if I have a clear-cut answer to that. The way I would judge that was from my narrow viewpoint as a political reporter at the time as to whether there were scandals in any of the agencies or departments or what-have-you. I departed the pressroom early in 1978, which was at the end of Thompson's

first year as Governor. I left and joined the coal mining industry. So, I kind of lost my train of thought, actually.

DePue: Were there any scandals going on in his administration early on?

Pensoneau: Nothing, nothing major in his first year. In fact, as we sit here right now, I'm trying to remember if there ever were any major disclosures. If there were, they probably weren't going to come from any reporter in the State House pressroom because he had them basically all locked up with his magnetic personality and his catering to the press. And, frankly, he was very popular with the political writers of the Chicago papers. There were really no reporters off the top of my head that had an ax to grind with Thompson. There were a lot of them with Dan Walker, his predecessor, and that came through all the time. I answer that question by measuring the reaction to him and the treatment of him by the State House press corps. He was extremely tight with the State House press corps.

I should point out the incident I referred to earlier about him suddenly standing three feet behind my desk as I'm writing this thing and this voice saying, "You need some help there? Can I have some input in what you're writing?" The Governor of Illinois standing there while I'm writing about highway contracts, highway building contracts. There were some other reporters that had similar experiences. It turned out to be my last year in reporting, in newspapering, I made a half-hearted effort to keep a little bit of arm's length. It was difficult. He was so personable and always so well-informed on what you were doing and what your likes and dislikes were. It was incredible, okay? But, I mean, it wasn't unusual for me to walk down in this little narrow hallway in the back part of the pressroom and you look inside; for example, the Chicago *Sun-Times* bureau had more physical space than mine. They had a couch in their's. And, no kidding, here'd be Thompson, the Governor of Illinois, stretched out – he was tall – taking up the whole couch and his feet would be draped over the one end because he was tall, lanky, you know. (DePue laughs) What I'm trying to convey here, this is not an everyday thing. Okay? I mean, you didn't see it in my time with any other Governors. Okay?

It wasn't unusual to go back to, like a card room off one little edge of the press complex, a water cooler there and you had a little coffee stand,and go back there and there were a couple of tables. The public certainly didn't know, and editors in the home office didn't know, the tables were where a lot of reporters spent time playing cards. Anyway, at one of these tables, there'd be Thompson sitting. He's Governor of Illinois and he's sitting right there.

DePue: Playing cards with them?

Pensoneau: No, I don't want to go that far. No, they weren't playing cards, but he'd be sitting there exchanging quips back and forth with reporters. I mean, it was

just most unusual, you know. I remember, oh, I remember so many things about the way he courted the press. He was just a different breed in terms of a Governor with the press. He was totally unconventional, and formality went out the window.

Now I want to point something out here if I haven't earlier, because I have this on good authority. If a business group or some major special interest group wanted an audience with Governor Thompson, they might have to wait for weeks, maybe a month and had to stick to it to pin him down to get his office to allow it, and then they'd have an audience with the Governor of Illinois. But, if a reporter – this is theoretical – from the Shawneetown Bugle was sent up here to spend one day to see what its like in big-time Springfield in the Illinois State House. Gee, what's it like with all the big people running around and so on, just what's it feel like, you know. If the Thompson people got wind of that, that reporter was approached immediately and said, "Do you want to interview the Governor? Do you want to meet the Governor of Illinois?" And, I'll tell you, if he was in that building, if he was in his office, that reporter from the Shawneetown Bugle would be down there in a half hour and he, or she, would get all the time they wanted with Thompson.

DePue: Who was Thompson's press secretary?

Pensoneau: It started out, the first one was David Gilbert, a former substantial reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*. May have been – probably was – the first or second person Thompson hired to go to work for him when he announced for Governor in 1975. Dave Gilbert was a good choice. He had been a good reporter. Knew the Chicago press. Had spent a considerable amount of time in Springfield covering the General Assembly as part of the *Chicago Tribune* bureau. Was likable, solid. Had a good reputation and served Thompson well.

DePue: He had the same kind of rapport with the legislature that he had, or he cultivated the same rapport with the legislature?

Pensoneau: Thompson, basically, wound the legislature around his finger. Yeah. The answer is yes. And Democrats as well as Republicans.

DePue: If I'm not getting this wrong, most of the time, he had a Democratic legislature he was dealing with.

Pensoneau: He did, yeah. I think there were only a couple of years' exception. I know for two years the Republicans had the House and George Ryan was the speaker, but I tell you what, outside of that.

DePue: What was the relationship between Ryan and Thompson?

Pensoneau: It was interesting.

DePue: Because those are both larger-than-life personalities.

Pensoneau: It was interesting. It was interesting. When Ryan became Lieutenant Governor under Thompson… Well, the first Lieutenant Governor was Dave O'Neal. Dave and I were from the same town, Belleville. In fact, we were both graduates of Belleville Township High School. Dave O'Neal was a senior at Belleville Township High School when I was a freshman at the high school. I didn't know Dave. Dave was like a quote "big-man-on-campus." He played basketball and was handsome and popular and so on. And he was the first Lieutenant Governor under Thompson. O'Neill, frankly, just got bored with the office and resigned as lieutenant Governor, and then George Ryan, who had been Speaker of the House, ran on the Republican ticket and got elected Lieutenant Governor. But in those years, it was interesting. I was then at the Illinois Coal Association, but maybe once a year I would have lunch with then-Lieutenant Governor George Ryan, and it came through that Ryan, in my opinion, tried to convey in somewhat diplomatic terms that he really wasn't much a part of what was going on in terms of the Governorship of Illinois. I never quite got this straight, but it was like one time he made a comment to me I remember we were having lunch at the Sangamo Club, something about they – meaning Thompson's people – keep him on a pretty tight leash. I remember that. I wasn't quite sure what he meant and nothing later in the conversation gave me a clear-cut picture of what he meant, but I had the feeling that Ryan considered himself kind of a token. I don't think Ryan was really much a part of the Governorship of Illinois under Thompson. I have to say that. Maybe that's not totally unusual, because many people have a hard time remembering who Lieutenant Governors were under Governors because they were so, in the end, inconsequential.

DePue: That's just kind of tradition in Illinois politics.

Pensoneau: Yeah. That was more the norm than not.

DePue: I think what I'd like to do here is take a quick break for necessities and then we'll get right back at it

Pensonesau: Of course. Absolutely.

(Break)

DePue: Okay, we are back after a very quick break. What I want to turn to now, Taylor, is we have Thompson in the Governor's office.

Pensoneau: Okay.

DePue: From what I have read and recall, the first mark for him is really going after this issue of public safety. Does that ring a bell?

Pensoneau: He, of course, came into the Governor's office with this tremendous reputation as a hard-hitting United States Attorney, a crime fighting United States Attorney, a corruption fighting United States Attorney. Of course, this is, more than anything else, what propelled him into the governorship, and he sought in various ways to continue that as Governor.Early on he indicated a tougher approach was needed against criminals and miscreants and he called for and got passage of a new category of felony called Class X; it was fairly rigid in that if you committed a crime, minimum imprisonment, I think, was ensured, and there was no leeway that a judge could exercise. And I think, if you were a third-time felon on the same issue, you were looking at life behind bars. I know it was something that Thompson got passed early on and dubbed it his Class X section, a revision of the State Criminal Code.[5]

DePue: Were these mandatory minimums his way of…

Pensoneau. Cracking, yeah, cracking down.

DePue: What were the offenses or felonies involved in that?

Pensoneau: I honestly cannot remember what, obviously, offenses were considered maybe more serious than some others, but as I recall, it was pretty broadly-based.

DePue: Guns crimes for example?

Pensoneau: Probably, I say probably, I just don't remember. I know that one of the first hallmarks of his administration was Class X and that got him a lot of favorable vibes, especially with those who are always in favor of cracking down on crime and so on. He considered it a natural outgrowth of his experience as United States Attorney in Chicago.

DePue: Well, if you're pushing Class X felonies and you're getting convictions of Class X felonies, there's something else that comes as a natural consequence of that.

Pensoneau: More prisons. Yeah. Yeah. I don't recall the exact number, but the physical make-up of the state's penal system was enlarged when he was Governor.

Deue: Were a lot of these prisons being built?

Pensoneau: Well, a number? I don't know if the word "lot" is accurate. It seems like a number were built. At the time, I was personally close to a guy named Gale Franzen, and Gale was the state penal director. He was close to Thompson. In fact, Gale and I, together, coached a Little League team; we each had a son who played on the team. Actually, I was the coach and Gale was the assistant

[5] Illinois Class X felony: Short of murder, these were the 10 most serious crimes in Illinois, from Aggravated Kidnapping to Possession of a Controlled Substance with intent to deliver, subject to prison terms of 6 – 30 years in prison, with no judicial discretion allowed.

coach at the time he was state penal director I remember – as an aside – his son played, as I recall, right field, and there would be a security guard who would stand out there to make sure nobody took a pot-shot at Gale's little boy out in his right-field position. Gale was heavily involved in the expansion of the penal system under Thompson and a number of – I think they called them regional prisons – were built. For example, one was down on the edge of Hillsboro, Illinois, I believe.

DePue: Do you recall some of the politics involved in locating those prisons?

Pensoneau: I do, a little bit. They were almost conducted in some ways like contests. DePue:It used to be that having a prison in your town wasn't necessarily something you wanted.

Pensoneau: That changed because of economic conditions. Definitely I can say that. The competition was very heated to get the the new prisons. Areas would stage incredible promotional campaigns to get one of the new prisons. The old cautionary attitude toward having a prison in your back yard really went down the drain in those years because prisons provided jobs and an economic stimulus for an area that was greatly needed in a number of parts in downstate Illinois.

DePue: Was it primarily a downstate thing?

Pensoneau: Yeah. It was. I'm going to say that the answer is yes. DePue: This dovetails nicely with what we're going to get to here pretty soon. I don't want to get there quite yet, but you went to the [Illinois] Coal Association group. Coal used to be one of the foundations of downstate economy, was it not?

Pensoneau: It was. It was.

DePue: How about Thompson's position on the death penalty? Does that factor in at this time?

Pensoneau: Didn't the death penalty resume when Thompson was Governor, if my memory serves me right? Okay, well, then obviously, he was not opposed to it. I guess, I'm not sure what else to say there. I mean, you would not find that to be an unexpected position on the part of a former federal prosecutor.

DePue: Was there a heated political debate at the time about reinstating the death penalty?

Pensoneau: I really don't recall. I just remember that it was reinstated when Thompson was Governor.

DePue: Okay. I think perhaps part of that was a Supreme Court ruling, but I could be wrong on that part.

Pensoneau: You've got me on that. I just don't remember.

DePue: So let's talk about your decision then, your personal decision to go from being this journalist for many, many years and working for one of the nation's premiere newspapers, as you describe yourself, having a primo position at the Illinois State House.

Pensoneau: Uh huh.

DePue: You're going to the Illinois Coal Association. How did that happen?

Pensoneau: That's really a good question and I have to always think about how I want to answer it at any given time. When I made the move, officially February 1, 1978, I ended a roughly sixteen year career as a reporter for the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, something until a year or so earlier I never thought I would do. I assumed I was a lifer with the *Post-Dispatch*. I had a coveted seat, you might say, the Springfield, Illinois bureau which I had developed, was responsible for. It was a respected position and I was respected, but up until my last year with the *Post*, I never seriously thought I'd ever leave newspapering, and probably not the *Post-Dispatch*, because it had a reputation as one of the finest newspapers in the United States.

But, I changed. A lot of things went into it. As I grew older – maybe I said this – I was thirty-seven years old when I made the move, a move that I never in my earlier years thought I would ever make, because the *Post* was a premiere newspaper. With many individuals in American journalism, it was considered the apex of their career if they could get on with the St. Louis *Post-Dispatc*h, and it was still a fine newspaper in my sixteen years as part of the organization. But, I was starting to see littke signs of what older reporters at the Post in St. Louis had always told me: It's great being here as a younger guy, but it's not for old men. And I was starting to see that. A lot of things went into it. My role as Illinois political writer for the *Post-Dispatch* was a seven-day-a-week task. I had no objections with that for most of my years there. You now, it was like, I had gun and will travel.[6] I mean, any major controversial situation anywhere in Illinois from Chicago down to the tip of the state at Cairo was part of my bailiwick. It was a terrific beat, you know, and I felt privileged and even honored to have it. I was still twenty-four years old when I was moved from St. Louis to Springfield to revitalize what was then a *Post-Dispatch* bureau in the pressroom in the Illinois State House.

DePue: Were you married at that time?

Pensoneau: I had just gotten married. Everything happened at once, right. I had gotten married in September of 1965 and three weeks later, the start of October was my official starting date here, 1965. But older reporters at the *Post* that I dealt with, that I knew, that liked me, had always said, "Don't grow old in big city

[6] An allusion to a popular black and white Western weekly TV series, *Have Gun, Will Travel.*

journalism because as you grow older and you don't have the vigor and enthusiasm and energy that you maybe had as a younger reporter, you become less and less appreciated and some even get in situations where they lose their self-respect." Older reporters there, some of whom had been great reporters in their younger years, several had worked on Pulitzer Prize investigations and things like that, said, "You're just not appreciated in big city newspapering when you get past a certain age, when your energy level's no long what it was, you're creativity isn't what it was." The bottom line was, you're doing great now, but think twice about growing old in journalism. Of course, that was on my mind.

I was starting to see signs of it as I approached my mid-thirties, while I never thought I'd ever leave the *Post-Dispatch* because it was the dream of a lot of people in journalism to get on with the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*. It was a premiere newspaper. But I have a son. My son was getting to the age when he was trying to play Little League baseball and to spend time with him in my role with the *Post-Dispatch*, I was basically on call, constantly, and that was fine. I welcome that for most of my years, because it was self-fulfilling. It made me feel important and it was rewarding and it was all to the positive. But as I started to pay more attention – I had a daughter, also – to spending time – my life was not my own and that was understood.

With the *Post-Dispatch* back in 1973 and '74, I had spent both of those summers in Washington (DC) helping the Washington bureau cover all the Watergate stuff, the Watergate hearings in 1973, the Ervin Committee hearings. Then came back in the following summer of 1974 and I was covering the House Judiciary Committee hearings, Peter Rodino's committee, and that led to the voting of the impeachment article against Nixon. I was one of the two bylines on all those stories for the *Post-Dispatch.*

It was sort of funny, Mark, the so-called dream of every young reporter at the *Post-Dispatch* was to get to the Washington bureau. That was like the ultimate. And I share that. I shared that. I always thought when I first was given the opportunity to reopen a dormant bureau in the Illinois State House that it would be a stepping stone to Washington. That's what I thought originally. When I got to Washington, I found out after considerable time out there that I really didn't feel as important as I would have liked to have felt. Part of it was that I realized that back in Springfield, in my Illinois State House bureau, I was a medium-sized frog in a small puddle; what I wrote, people read and reacted to. I had a feeling, whether they liked it or not, at least they read it and I felt like I counted for something.

I grew to realize I didn't have that feeling in Washington, D. C. because. I like talking about it because I go through some of the baloney. When I was out there, it didn't take me long to figure out that out there, everybody only read two newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. I'll tell you what, you could write anything you wanted in

all the other papers, including *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times,* it didn't mean a damn thing. Nobody read it, nobody, you know. I actually reached a conclusion whereby I could write – not that I could get anything I wanted in the *Post-Dispatch* – but I could just concoct any story I wanted in Washington. Nobody cared. There was never any feedback on anything I wrote. It was a drastic difference for me from being in Springfield and my Illinois reporting whereby there was always reaction. My ego was always bolstered here by what I wrote. The reactions, not always positive, but I mean, there was no question what I wrote was read. I didn't get that feeling in Washington. I really didn't, and I was also low man on the totem pole in a bureau then of about seven or eight individuals. That was another thing.

DePue: The reaction you're talking about, was it from the readers, or from the politicians you're reporting on? That you weren't getting any reaction from the politicians?

Pensoneau: None. None.

DePue: Because I would certainly think the readers back in St. Louis would have a reaction and would be writing letters to the editor.

Pensoneau: Well, that may be true.

DePue: But when we talk about a reaction, we're talking about the people you write about.

Pensoneau: You write about. Yeah. Right. I mean, you know.

DePue: Some of this we did talk about in the last session as well.

Pensoneau: Yeah. So, number one, I made a decision on my own that – and this was hard to believe for someone who came up through the world of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* – that I really didn't want to be in Washington full time. Okay. At the end of 1974, at the end of that summer, Nixon had resigned. Ford was President. I had been part of the coverage of all of it leading up to the so-called final month. All this stuff you read about Watergate and all that, I was involved.

I was scheduled to come back here to my bureau in the Illinois State House at the end of the summer in 1974. I remember the Washington bureau chief said that he and St. Louis had decided that they would like to have me remain in Washington, and it was funny, because if that would have happened even two or three years earlier, I would have been like the happiest guy in the world, you know. I'd made it to the top of the *Post-Dispatch* world. I realized after a lot of time there, I really didn't want it. There was no family, it was even less family life there than there was here and it was very expensive. As I do recall, it was briefly discussed that there was not going to be any salary increase at the time, although it was much more expensive living out there

than here. That was a factor, too. I actually said I just didn't think so. They indicated that well, you know, nobody's ever turned down Washington before that they were aware of, the Washington bureau chief told me, which was true, I knew. It was the dream of all the young reporters in St. Louis to get to Washington. Originally when I came here I thought Springfield would be just a stepping stone to Washington. Okay. But I told him that I really thought I had a major responsibility in Springfield. We had a good readership in Illinois and it was an important part of the *Post-Dispatch* coverage of the news – Illinois government and so on. Of course, they didn't really think much of that. I mean, that wasn't important to them in Washington.

I just knew in my gut I didn't want to be in Washington full time. I knew in my gut I didn't have the burning desire that was necessary and I didn't have the fire inside of me that I knew I would have, even though I would be full time out there as part of the bureau, I'd have to reestablish my reputation and all that. And another thing, too. I would have to build myself a new reputation in a new format, a new scene, and, as I said at that time, there were like seven or eight people. As a temporary replacement, I was low man on the totem pole; I would still be low man on the totem pole even as a permanent member of the bureau. And, you know, I really realized the incredible freedom I had in my one-person Springfield bureau to pick and choose and pretty much do what I want. I had a whole world of wonderful stories at my disposal. It was my world. I had no competition. Nobody in St. Louis ever challenged me. I would get requests or suggestions, but I pretty much ran my own show.

It was fully different in Washington. I was coming under, there was a bureau chief – Richard Dudman was his name – then there would be six or seven reporters between him and myself, and, you know, it just all came together, it all coalesced in my mind to where I reached an incredible decision I really didn't want to be in Washington. In fact, where we left it was, I said, well I had to go back, I want to go back to Springfield. Well, that was fine, but then I was to think about it in Springfield and they didn't want to wait forever, but they assumed when I left Washington I was going back to Springfield for a certain amount of time to kind of wrap up my affairs and at some point say I'm ready now to move full time, the family and everything else, to Washington. I didn't want that. And I know it had been mentioned several times by some of the middle-level editors in St. Louis about, are you going to go to Washington or what, because I think they want an answer and so on. I indicated that I really didn't think so. And some of the middle level editors would say things like, We're glad to hear that because nobody ever turns down Washington, but, you know, we really want you here. Covering Illinois is just as important as Washington to the readership and circulation.They were saying that you might not take it? I said Yeah, I just don't know. Of course some of the other reporters would say, You're not going to Washington? like that was the holy grail.

Well, anyway, as I recall, a vacancy occurred in the Washington bureau in the spring of '75. What I did was, I told the metropolitan editor of St. Louis, who I dealt with more than anybody – and he was always kind of on my side – I really don't want to go to Washington. And he said, Well I can tell you now they've already got your ticket to go back out there and the way the top echelon's talking, you won't be coming back. And I said, I really don't want it. He said, well. So anyway, what I did, I took off with my – I was still with my first wife –and I took off. I always had a lot of time coming and I had time built up and under the old contract; I'd been there a good number of years and I had a good number of weeks and decided to take them all at once. As I recall, I took five weeks off and my wife and I went to Europe. but I also, that would forestall me from going to Washington as a summer replacement again.

When I came back from Europe, I will be honest, I never heard another word about Washington. That would have been the late summer of 1975. And I remember at that point, I think the word was out that I was stonewalling the thing and basically, the word in the home office, I know, was that Pensoneau has turned down Washington. Some said, Can't believe it, you know. I never went back to Washington again. I know they talked about going out there as a summer replacement again in 1976 and that didn't happen. The only other time I saw the Washington guys was at the two political conventions in 1976, the national conventions. The Republicans had theirs in Kansas City where Ford was nominated. The Democrats were in New York City and Carter was nominated. Of course, there I was always part of the team covering the national political conventions. But I remember the Washington folks were very cool to me, the Washington Bureau people, and I really didn't care.

DePue: Did it diminish miss your stature back in St. Louis?

Pensoneau: (sigh) I don't know if it diminished my stature. It was unusual, because nobody, to my knowledge, ever turned down Washington. That was like the holy grail. When you were a young reporter for the *Post-Dispatch*, getting into the Washington Bureau was like the ultimate. And it was the ultimate for me, too, even when I first came up here; in my early years here it was still like the ultimate, you know.

DePue: Well, take us from that decision to the next huge decision.

Pensoneau: Alright, which was huge. It started working on me in 1977. Older reporters at the *Post*, older reporters, some beat men, some rewrite guys, always worked on me, always said, Don't grow old in journalism.

DePue: These were the guys who had grown old in journalism.

Pensonseau: Yeah. They had grown old in journalism and said they regretted it. Itwas like, If you get get an opportunity to get out, do it. We know you're still young. You've still got enthusiasm and all that, but don't. These were guys in their fifties, late fifties, early sixties, just trying to tread water until they got some kind of retirement situation.

I definitely never regretted not going to Washington, but I also was starting to get a little tired of the Springfield scene from a newspapering viewpoint. The same issues and so on. I'll be honest, there was another thing, too. There were younger editors coming up and I was always used to taking requests or directives from older editors, men older than me, and there were younger editors coming up who were my age or else, in several cases, younger than me. They were like kind of like boy wonders at the *Post-Dispatch*. I had built up a very considerable reputation here in the press corps and was respected. Of course I was an established figure in political coverage in Illinois and all that. But I thought some of these younger guys coming into editor spots in St. Louis didn't respect me as much as the older guys. Sometimes there were demands that I thought were getting unreasonable. In other words, if you had a major disclosure story on one guy one month, some of the younger editors had the attitude, okay you did that, who are we going to put in jail next month and so on. And I was starting to sense the demands were getting unreasonable. I was successful here. Everyone would agree with that. But my success was starting to backfire a little bit in that things were becoming expected of me that I couldn't totally meet. I mean, you put this guy in jail last year, figuratively speaking; who are we going to put in jail this year?

DePue: Was there something going on about Woodward and Bernstein?

Pensoneau: There was some of that. That's a good point. There was some of that. And, you know, I was starting to feel, I was starting to sense what the older reporters had always warned me about. And all I can tell you is that inside I did a conversion that started early in 1977 when I, for the first time, started telling my wife I might consider something else. Okay. But I knew this. Oh, well, okay, I can talk about this as long as you want. I said, and even my wife couldn't believe it. She said, you actually would leave journalism?

DePue: What was her name?

Pensoneau: This was my first wife, her name was Judith, Jand the answer is yes, I actually might. I was starting to go a little stale. And I already knew, the only other thing that I could do that would propel me, I could either go to Washington or go back to St. Louis as an editorial writer. I knew I didn't want Washington; I didn't want to go back there again, ever. I didn't want to go back to the home office because I'd had all this freedom being my own boss up here and running my own show. It was like there was no place I wanted, there's nothing. And I was starting to grow tired of even here doing what I was doing,

you know. So I started considering other things. Now, I should point out, through the years I'd been offered a number of positions to work for the state – a PR [Public Relations] guy here, a press guy there, more of the stuff like that, you know – and I had always turned it down. I never thought about it. I never wanted to go to work for state government.

The coal industry approached me, I would say early in the fall of 1977, and it was going through a major era where it was trying to adjust to major new environmental challenges. Okay. I'd always covered the coal industry because (cough) coal mining was very important in the parts of Illinois where the *Post-Dispatch* sold a lot of papers. I'd always covered coal closely and I knew a number of the mine operators and company officials and so on. I knew the union guys and all that. The coal industry was beefing up what is called the Illinois Coal Association. That was the state level trade organization based in Springfield that represented the coal industry in government affairs and in public relations in dealing with all the regulatory agencies that rightfully regulate coal mining in Illinois – all the state and some federal. Late in 1977 I covered coal issues closely. I wrote a lot of stuff on environmental issues, a lot of stuff on the coal industry. They knew who I was. I didn't always write favorable stuff, which is surprising, with what is about to happen.

A guy who had run the coal association for a long time retired and was succeeded by a guy who was only a year older than me. His name was Joseph Spivey, and Joe was going to become the new President of the Coal Association in January of 1978. I got to know him through interviews and such like. He said, You know, there's a whole new world for people like me, for the Coal Association. I'd really like you to come in and be part of it with me. We've got a whole big industry here to represent and no two days are alike. I don't know if you'd ever leave journalism, but if you would, I wish you would consider coming and joining our world.

At first I said I just can't, I don't think I can do that, I just don't. This was early in the fall of '77 and he said, Well I know we're going to be enlarging the staff and I would like you to consider being part of this rejuvenated situation here representing Illinois coal and with Illinois government and also with Washington. So, at first I said I just don't think I can do that, but through the rest of that fall I was really, really getting dissatisfied. I was no longer totally comfortable with doing the things I was doing. It was getting repetitious. We had this new Governor, Thompson. It was his first year as Governor and I thought there was going to be an energy factor involved to adequately cover Thompson and his administration, because he was very energetic and so on. I'd been through these cycles before, starting with Otto Kerner, Sam Shapiro and Dan Walker.

I took off the Christmas holidays of 1977. We lived in a house where you had a third floor, third story and a TV up there; it was kind of like a little

rec room. I'll never forget the night I was sitting at home thinking, and I suddenly realized I thought I was getting burned out in active big city journalism, and I didn't know what else I could do. Younger editors were coming in. They wanted to make their mark. They always felt that I should do my part to make their careers, too, to make them look good, you know. All these things are coming together. I remember I called Joe Spivey at his home. I said, "Are you still interested?" And he said, "Yeah. Are you serious?" I said, "I am. I'm thinking about making, for me, an incredible move, leaving journalism and going to work for the coal industry."

I never wanted to work for state government because I didn't like the way people got pigeonholed and all the restrictions placed on them, which are all understandable. It was just too restrictive for me. I enjoyed dealing with state government, both as a reporter and later as a coal industry operative, but I didn't want to ever, myself, actually work for state government. Okay? But I figured out I could work for the coal industry, which was facing a lot of challenges, and yet I would still hopefully, just report to one guy, this Joseph Spivey that I mentioned. That was understood from the start. And I felt that it was a change.

I had turned thirty-seven years old and everything just kind of came together, Mark. I just felt during those Christmas holidays, my gut said leave, make the move. It shocked a lot of people who thought I was a lifer in terms of journalism. But I remember after Spivey said, "Yeah. The offer is still open. We've interviewed other people but no decision has been made. If you're interested, you'll get it." I said, "Well, I am interested and I want to talk. He and I talked and I was satisfied with the conversation. I had known him and I felt he and I would be a good fit, and we did turn out to be a hell of a good fit working together.

I remember the night I called Assistant Managing Editor Jim Millstone at home in St. Louis. I said, "This call probably is going to shock you." He said, "What is it?" And I said, "I'm going to leave." And he, of course, was like, "You're going to leave?" And to be fair, it was shocking news. You know, the *Post* had this reputation nationally that if you ever left the Post, you never got back on. But nobody ever left the *Post*; I should point that out. I mean I'm sure there were some that did, but the image was that once you got to the *Post-Dispatch*, you never left. Well, I thought that. He said, "Well, you certainly are not thinking straight. You've got to think this over and I'm not going to tell the managing editor. I'm going to give you a few days."" He said, "You're making the biggest mistake of your life here." And I said, "Jim, I just don't know if I've got the fire anymore that's necessary."

I remember he called me back, maybe he called me on New Year's Day, I don't know; he called me at home. He said, "You're sure you've thought this over?" I said, "Jim I have. Jim, I'm going to go." He said, "Well, if this is your decision, I've got to tell the managing editor that you've

made this phone call to me.It's going to be quite a shock, because we all consider you a lifer." I said well, whatever. So, anyway, now we're in January of 1978,

DePue: Were you offered a pay raise at the Post? Were there money discussions? Were you getting a pay raise with the Coal Association?

Pensoneau: Can I admit something to you? No. Hard to believe, isn't it? But I'm giving you an honest answer.

DePue: So there was no offer, though – we can raise your pay a little bit to keep you around?

Pensoneau: There was a little bit of an offer from the *Post*, but not from the coal industry. The *Post* did, yeah. What transpired… I said, "January of '78 will be my last month. I'm leaving the end of January. Well, during January, the managing editor himself called me and said, "We're all shocked by this. Is money the thing?" I said, "Not really." He said, "We're prepared to offer you a little more money. Maybe it's just in Springfield. Maybe you want to come back to the home office in St. Louis." And I didn't want to do that. I didn't want to do that. Then he said, "So and so's retiring on the editorial page and if you want, you can come down and be an editorial writer." I said, "I might have welcomed that a few years ago, but I'm just not interested." He said, "We all down here think you're making the biggest mistake of your life and we're going to give you a few weeks yet to think this over. We think you're still going to come to your senses." I said, "Well, I just don't think so." I just knew in my gut, I just wanted… I suddenly wanted out.

I just knew that. So all through January we dickered and I know someone came up here to meet with me. We had a very pleasant lunch and it was like, What do you want: You can come back to St. Louis or what. It was very flattering, actually, but I stuck to my guns. I just knew in my gut I wanted to leave and I've never looked back. I did not regret it. I started a whole new life with the coal mining industry and I'll tell you, I had a lot more free time. No two days were ever alike. There were so many challenges with coal mining. It's such a heavily regulated industry, as it should be. No two situations were ever alike and Spivey and I turned out to be a terrific team, became extremely close friends.

DePue: I want to make sure I understand what the nature of the new position was. The only term that comes up to me is that you were essentially a lobbyist for the coal industry.

Pensoneau: That was part of it. But I was also getting involved in the liaison between all the regulatory agencies, too, that regulate coal: the Illinois Department of Mines and Minerals, the Illinois Department of Conservation, the Illinois Department of Agriculture. Everybody had a piece of regulating coal mining.

DePue: Well, having said the word lobbyist, what was it?

Pensoneau: Yeah. Right.

DePue: But you said that was part of the job.

Pensoneau: Part of it, yeah.

DePue: Part of my flawed paradigm of a journalist being a lobbyist is kind of like the relationship between a journalist and a politician. There's supposed to be some tension and some antagonism there.

Pensoneau: Between?

DePue: Between journalists and politicians and also between journalists and lobbyists. Those are the people you're reporting on when you get into corruption. Lobbyists and politicians, and there's a lot of corruption there.

Pensoneau: Well, my answer there is, I could only be responsible for my own conduct and I know that I assiduously ran a clean slate in all my years with the Coal Association, and I insisted on it, on all the issues that we were involved in. There were people who like to cut corners, and there are a lot of schemers.

DePue: I didn't mean to cast any aspersions

Pensoneau: Oh no, oh no.

DePue: On the relationship with lobbyists, my question is, Wasn't this kind of like going to the enemy's tent?

Pensoneau: Well, okay. When I made the move and the move became public, several newspapers in southern Illinois did write that Pensoneau is changing his white hat for a black hat. So yeah, your point's well taken. I could say there that I made sure in my own mind that I would remain clean, and I would. I felt I needed new challenges. The coal industry certainly was facing challenges and it was woefully inadequate in knowing how to deal with increasing regulations from Illinois state government. They really needed a guy like me who knew how state government worked and all that.

Also, there was the feeling that the industry had a chance to grow if the industry could overcome all of the environmental concerns associated with the burning of high-sulfur Illinois coal, so those were all challenges that I took on in what I considered a positive way and the industry went through some very difficult times. I was riding herd over many disappointing situations: mine closings, thousands of miners losing their jobs. I was part of all that, but yet it was a very self-satisfying role. Part of it was, instead of being an observer as a reporter, I was now part of what was going on. The first couple years were a real education. Obviously I'd seen many things in either an all

white or all black context in my reporting days and I found out that there was a middle ground on a lot of things, that everything was not as extreme one way or the other as I had thought, and it was an education. But Spivey was a very shrewd guy. We were a really good team. The other situation was I had suddenly much more control over my life.

DePue: You mean your private life?

Pensoneau: Private life. Oh yeah. Well that's evident by the fact that later on I was able to write books. I wrote my book on Dan Walker, my book on Richard Ogilvie and my book on the Shelton gang while I was still in the saddle for the Illinois Coal Association. So doesn't that kind of speak for itself? I had much more control over my life. Spivey and I would backstop each other. We were the two top guys. He was President, I was Vice President of the Illinois Coal Association.If he wanted to take two or three days off to go boating down at Lake of the Ozarks, which he liked to do, I covered. We were covered. I was there. If I wanted to take off three or four days, go to the Rose Bowl game in California, no problem. I never had any problem. I didn't have to worry about that. He and I were terrific together. We became bosom buddies. Technically on paper he was my boss, but I will tell you that we were just like a team and it was a great relationship. And I really got involved in things.

I learned a lot, obviously, about coal mining. I got into more depth on environmental issues and I became much more technically oriented, and it was a whole different situation. It actually was very, very satisfying. The only sad part of it was that the scope of the industry diminished in those years because of the acid rain[7] thing along with some other issues, but acid rain really hit Illinois coal hard. I mean, we were almost defenseless. The whole environmental move across the country came down on coal in the Midwest. It was very difficult for the industry in the so-called Illinois coal basin – Illinois, Indiana and western Kentucky – to keep its head above water in those years because we bore the full brunt of the whole acid rain issue. That we can sure talk about another day as long as you would want to, but my point is, it was interesting that I got to be involved in these things, plus it allowed me much more time with my family. My son was starting to play Little League ball.

DePue: What was his name?

Pensoneau: His name was Terry, Terry Taylor and then ironically, his name was later changed to Taylor Terry and that's another story.

DePue: Your daughter's name?

Pensoneau: Daughter is Jennifer. There were two kids. I could start doing things like coaching Little League, all the things you read about spending time, you

[7] Coal from this area has a high sulfur content; when burned it creates sulfur dioxide which becomes sulfuric acid when dissolved in water.

know. I could take vacations without getting called back in the middle of vacation because of this political crisis in Springfield and all that kind of stuff. It was just an existence where I could in many ways broaden myself. I really made a decision I didn't want to go any further in journalism and so this was like a whole new education. I didn't know if I'd stay there forever. I didn't know perhaps if I wanted to maybe go to work for another special interest or major interest. There were offers.

It was really interesting to me, I'd always wondered how lobbyists really operated and I found out. I always questioned whether I could do those things and I will tell you here – I'm saying this for the record – I could do them damn well. I really could. I mean, it turned out I was pretty well suited for it, and I just, I really enjoyed my role. I was for many years Vice President of the Illinois Coal Association, Joe was President, and we were a heck of a team and I really found it to be a very fulfilling role; it gained me respect and recognition in a whole new area that I hadn't had in journalism.

Of course, I lost some respect from the old line audiences that I had in the old days in my *Post-Dispatch* political writing days. There was always still a disappointment, even resentment in some circles, that I made what was considered a major move at the time. Others have made that kind of move since, but I was one of the pioneers in making this kind of move. You should know that. And, especially, because I was a major figure in the Illinois pressroom for a lot of reasons; I wasn't some second stringer making this kind of move. And there were others then that would follow me. Others would leave journalism to get into, call it lobbying or PR or government regulatory activities. A lot of them just went to work for state government. But I had freedom and I felt I was representing this major industry that was a major employer in a number of downstate Illinois counties.

I had quite a constituency because suddenly my constituents were mayors and county board chairs and people like that whose vitality depended on keeping one or more coal mines open in their areas. Of course our tonnage decreased markedly in my years with the association. It couldn't be helped because it was just the whole world came in against us in terms of the whole environmental picture, spearheaded by acid rain, but other things, also. But I was involved in positive efforts. We tried to address these issues.

In my time there we made great progress in dealing with land reclamation issues, and then with land subsidence issues. I always said there were three big challenges I faced in terms of getting the companies to come into more compliance with major public concerns. The three big issues I faced were land reclamation, mine subsidence and air pollution. Spivey and I played major roles in pretty much eliminating concerns over two of those three: land reclamation and mine subsidence issues. We dealt with those effectively, and I'm sure there will always be those who will disagree with what I'm telling you here, but we really did. We worked those things out

whereby a broad range of people were surprisingly happy. The industry could survive. We dealt with how to deal with mine subsidence. We dealt with land reclamation. I was proud to be part of all this. I used to write about it as a reporter, and now I was actually involved in trying to deal with it. Acid rain was another issue, of course.

The governing factors there were out in Washington, and I should point out that Spivey and I spent a lot of time in Washington representing Illinois coal, because the coal industry was divided. There were three segments of it. There was the old line industry in the East: Pennsylvania, Virginia, eastern Ohio, West Virginia; that was one part of the coal industry. Then there was the Midwest: Illinois, Indiana, western Kentucky, western Ohio. And then you had the rapidly growing, vastly spreading surface mining coal industry in the West in Wyoming, Colorado, Utah and Montana. That was a whole new world and the production out there rapidly was outstripping what we were producing in Midwestern mines, and even in –

DePue: Lower sulfur coal.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Much lower sulfur. Correct. Good point. So these three worlds competed. These are competing worlds in coal, and we were on the short end of the stick in most of the debates in Washington because of so-called acid rain. The Western coal industry was growing by leaps and bounds and had a terrific constituency in Washington and, of course, the old – line industry in Appalachia was entrenched. The Midwest coal industry was kind of the step-child, and the problems we ran into were in Washington. We never had any problem holding our own with Illinois government, starting with the Governor and going on down yo the General Assembly. That was our strong point, and that was Spivey and myself. But we had a lot of problems in Washington and so the size of the Illinois coal industry diminished in my quarter of a century with the Illinois Coal Association. At least we preserved an industry when the forces that came to crush against us – not in the state – national environmentalists, and the competitive industries in the West and the East wanted to eliminate Midwest coal. It was a common goal, in effect, and we managed to survive. Tonnage went down greatly in my years with the industry, but we managed to survive; the mines that did come on during my years were all high tech and they're all doing well and surviving. There's a good future, I think, for Illinois coal. Right now I'm reading mixed signals from Obama. That's another situation which could be of a little interest to you or those who read this.

DePue: I'm certainly interested, but it's beyond the scope of this interview.

Pensoneau: ButThe thing I want to point out is – which I said many times in interviews because I've been asked this a thousand times – didn't you miss the *Post-Dispatch*. I thought I couldn't get along without my by-line (laugh). Okay? Whether a lot of reporters admit it or not, that's a big factor in being a

newspaper reporter. You know, it was surprising how quickly I got over not having that by-line in the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*. I had some sort of an orderly life. The other thing is, the companies and the individuals that ran coal companies really were good at running coal mines, but they had been very, if not derelict, deficient in dealing with the increasing world of government regulation. They were so appreciative of the things that Joe Spivey and I did, in terms of negotiating issues, working things out whereby a mine didn't have to close. Maybe had to work under some new restrictions, maybe employment had to be decreased, but the mine stayed open and the market remained. These are things that we could do and it was so much appreciated. My role with the coal industry was one where I was, in the end, much more appreciated than I was in my last few years in big city journalism.

DePue: I have two quick questions here and then we'll take a short break. The first question is whether or not you were representing the corporate interests in the coal industry or the layman?

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: Or the <u>average working man.</u>

Pensoneau: Okay. That's a good question. Should I answer it right now?

DePue: Yeah.

Pensoneau: Okay. The Illinois Coal Association was comprised of the coal companies that operated coal mines in Illinois. Those are corporations, many of them multi-state, even a few multi-national corporations. The Illinois Coal Association was comprised of those corporations. There had been a general feeling, as you know, that labor relations in the coal industry in the United States was, to put it mildly, not always the best. Okay?

DePue: There's a wonderful history in just that.

Pensoneau: Alright. Then we can talk about, we can make that a whole separate project. We had two unions then in Illinois. All the mines were union; most were represented by the United Mine Workers of America, but a couple down in southeastern Illinois were still represented by the old Progressive Mine Workers, which was a separate union. There was very little contact between the Illinois Coal Association and the union leaders. When I was covering coal issues and environmental issues I figured out that if I interview coal operators, that was one thing, but then if I talked to the UMW union leaders, you'd get sometimes another story. Well, one of the things that I did irritated some of the old line company patriarchs in the Illinois coal industry. I insisted we had to work more closely with the union because I figured out early on these major issues – the old Ben Franklin saying – if we don't start hanging together, we sure in hell were going to hang separately, which was true. Okay.

So, Joe and I together – but I was very instrumental in it – fostered a situation whereby we started cooperating with union leaders and they started to cooperate with us. At local mines there still would be differences and there might be strikes, the local union local at XYZ mine would walk out. But at the state level I am very proud of the fact that I was very instrumental in bringing the operators who paid my salary, the Illinois Coal Association, into a cooperative arrangement with the hierarchy of the United Mine Workers. After a few years I figured out that when we walked around the Illinois State House hand-in-hand, and went out to regulatory agencies hand-in-hand, it greatly increased our presence as opposed when I had to go it alone or they tried to go it alone. This old line attitude of some of the old mine operators was, We don't talk to the union and we don't want them to talk to us. It went out the window at the state level. Now I took some criticism from it, but I weathered the criticism. And I'm proud to say that by my later years with the Illinois Coal Association, especially when I was running the show, which was pretty much the case from 1990 on. There was a reason for that, even though I wasn't officially president until, I think, 1998. But in my last twelve or thirteen years, I was really running the show. There was a medical problem with Joe Spivey.

We were hand-in-hand at the state level, the union leaders and myself. I mean, we actually became close friends. They became just buddies of mine. All this antagonism you hear about all the timestill existed at some mines, but not at the state level. And we had an agreement. The agreement was the state president of the UMW and his lieutenants kept their hotheads – some were hotheads at the local levels – under control. They didn't screw around with the things we were doing at the state level. I took care of the mine operators, but that wasn't getting difficult because these older patriarchs of Illinois coal were retiring or dying off and young engineers were taking over all the mines; they worked for all the national corporations and they were not into all the old antagonisms and all the old problems that we read about which are all true.I In terms of the whole governmental scene, they pretty much did what Joe and I said. If we got ahead by working with the union, then that was fine with them. In fact, they did whatever we said. We were factors. I was very proud in fostering a whole area of cooperationbetween the union and the coal operators.

You can't imagine, or maybe you can, how this strengthened our hand in dealing with government, both state and federal. I mean, it just knocked the blocks out from those who wanted to undo coal, because they were always used to having a split; they could always work one against the other.I hope I did a lot of things positive; one of the things I did that was positive, really, I eliminated that. I mean, we became united. The younger leadership was taking over the union, the United Mine Workers, and they were in full accord. Like I said, we were actually becoming good friends. When we walked around that Illinois State House together to legislative hearings and so on, we'd come

into the room hand-in-hand. Our antagonists knew it was over when we did that. There was no way.

Politically speaking, on a committee or an issue, I could bring in the Republican votes and they could bring in the Democrats, outside of maybe some liberal Democrats from the north shore of Chicago or Hyde Park. I could bring in three-fourths of the Republicans. I probably couldn't in terms of some Cook County suburban Republicans who very understandably, couldn't care less about downstate Illinois coal. But I mean, there wasn't a legislator, Republican or Democrat in Illinois, say south of Peoria, who did not notice us walking hand-in-hand.

DePue: Well that's what becomes so obvious when you're able to combine those two forces.

Pensoneau: Absolutely. And the only sad thing, which I couldn't control, and they couldn't either, is that every time a new mine was opening in Illinois, it was non-union; I couldn't control that, and, actually, they couldn't either. When I started working for the coal industry, all Illinois mines were solidly union. When I retired at the end of 2003, less than forty percent of the coal being mined was being mined by union miners; in the five or six years since I retired, that percentage has gone even lower. Of all new mines opened in Illinois there are probably none, thardly any that are union – probably none.

DePue: Let's get to my last question here before we take a lunch break.

Pensoneau: Sure. DePue: And this is a different kind of question, but what surprised you about the changing role that you had as a journalist compared to becoming a lobbyist or a representative of a major…

Pensoneau: Special interest. Yeah. What surprised me?

DePue: What you didn't expect when you made the change?

Pensoneau: Some of my fears were that, because of my investigative reporting through the years, I had left a number of people unhappy in both parties. I worried whether that would become a problem in my new role, that they would now figure they had more or a legitimate shot at me, and whether they would take my past investigative reporting coups out on me now that I was no longer in the sanctity of the State House pressroom. With only a couple of exceptions, that didn't happen. It just didn't, and I was surprised at that. People who I had hurt in my newspaper days, a number of them downstate, gave me no problems at all. I was surprised at that. I anticipated that they would. But if I went to them, I'd say this is an issue and I want you to consider your vote. At times a conversation might be, Well, I didn't appreciate what you wrote about me five years ago when you did that story on XYZ corporation in my district; I really wasn't involved like you said, but, yeah, you've got my vote.

I mean, I heard that umpteen times, and I was surprised. I thought there'd be more retribution against me for all my *Post-Dispatch* years and things I had written, and there wasn't. I'm a little surprised of that to this day. I thought there would be. Really, a lot of things surprised me, and that was one of them. The other thing, which was interesting, too, you hear all these things about lobbyists and under-the-table dealings and all that stuff, and that is all true. However, I was never subjected to any of it. I told Spivey when I joined up – he was clean – I said, I'm playing clean. He said, We can represent t this major industry and we don't have to get dirty.We didn't, we didn't. It was never even suggested that I do anything underhanded, and we didn't have to. We didn't have to.

The leverage we had that was the positive was that, on the economic front our coal mines were major factors in the economy in the areas where they operated. They affected more than just the payrolls of the coal mine. They affected commerce and business establishments and tax money for school districts and all the stuff you can imagine. So we had a lot of sway automatically, just by the fact that when we walked in we were the top two operatives for the coal mining industry. And that was recognized. And, you know, on a given issue – and we're always having legislative issues – that was part of the game, of course. With the press of a button, Mark, I could have twenty-five downstate chamber of commerce directors here, I could have mayors, I could have county board chairs in coal-producing counties. If the mine union leadership said, Do you want some of our guys in the back of the room? Do want us to do any picketing? I said, no, not right away; let's try to handle it. They'd say, well, I tell you what, how many miners do you want here to show support? How about twenty-five? They were here. They were bussed in just like that. I could flood a committee room. I could dominate a hearing. I'm sure people were intimidated by what we could marshal to try to keep our head above water on legislative issues. Of course, I always had the support of both Republican and Democratic downstate legislators, especially starting about here and going south, with few exceptions, they were automatic. You weren't a Democrat or Republican, you were pro-coal, and their only objective was they didn't want to lose the jobs that we provided in their counties and in their districts.

It wasn't very complicated, and how come my predecessors couldn't have figured that out, I don't know, but it wasn't. You didn't have to be a so-called rocket scientist to figure out the tactics that I was instrumental in fomenting about this unity with the United Mine Workers and bringing these different constituency groups on issues that were affected by the closing or threatened closing of a coal mine. But at the same time, some downstate columnist wrote – which I appreciated – that I was an environmentally conscious representative of the Illinois coal industry. I was, and I couldn't turn my back on the fact that I'd written a number of stories about addressing the land abuse issues and the air pollution issues involved with both the mining and burning of Illinois coal. We set up a whole structure of committees and

everything else to try to deal with those issues. The old-line operators before my time had just ignored those issues. They tried to act like they didn't exist, and they were going to get killed.

I set up a whole structure of committees on every issue of ours. All the companies had engineers and scientists, and we could draw on all those people to bring them in any given time for our committees. It was a whole new cooperative arrangement between Illinois state government and the coal industry. Coal had never gotten any money from the state, no development grants, nothing. It's a whole other area. I fomented all that stuff in my time. Millions of dollars in taxpayers' funds were funneled to Illinois coal in order the keep mines open one way or another.d Frankly, I was the godfather of all of that and I'm bragging here.

DePue: Well, that might be a good place to close. You made the comment then, when we get back this afternoon, I hope we can talk a little bit more about Thompson's administration. Of course one of Thompson's huge challenges was how to keep your industry's businesses from closing up and moving out of the state, because the country was going through severe economic strains.

Pensoneau: Sure. I'd love to talk about that.

DePue: Okay, great.

(end of interview #7 #8 continues)

Interview with Taylor Pensoneau

ISG-A-L-2009-07

Interview # 8: April 17, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: It is the afternoon of April 17, 2009. This is Mark DePue; I'm a volunteer with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. This is the second session that Taylor Pensoneau and I have had today. Today, we've been talking about Jim Thompson. Where we left off, we had spent quite a bit of time talking about that important transition you made in your life between being a journalist with the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* to then moving on to the Illinois Coal Association…

Pensoneau: Yes.

DePue: …getting on to the world of being an advocate and a lobbyist. I want to come back to Governor Thompson's administration. And I believe it was during the tail-end of your time as a journalist and the beginning of your time as a lobbyist with the Coal Association that the Equal Rights Amendment [ERA] fight was going on in Illinois.

Pensoneau: Right. Correct.

DePue: Can you talk about just some of your general memories that you have about that very, very contentious issue in Illinois?

Pensoneau: Yeah, very contentious. As I recall, it, the Illinois phase, or show-down part of the national ERA situation started before I left the press room. Of course, I paid a lot of attention to it back at that point for several reasons. One, it was the kind of issue that the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch*, my newspaper, was interested in. It was called a civil rights issue. The leader of the opposition to its passage in Illinois was Phyllis Schlafly from Alton, a person very familiar to *Post-Dispatch* readers.[8]

DePue: Yes.

[8] Schafley lived in Illinois just across the Mississippi River from St. Louis.

Pensoneau: At that time I did a lot of coverage of the issue. There were umpteen demonstrations, many of them in the first level floor in the center of the Illinois State House, and some of them got rather raucous, shall we say. As I recall, I think Secretary of State gendarmes or cops had to keep order, because sometimes pro-ERA advocates would try to counter-demonstrate at the time Phyllis Schlafly was addressing rallies there in the rotunda of the Illinois State House. She was probably the most visible, best-known figure in that matter in terms of discussing it, and she was always news to us because she lived in Godfrey right on the edge of Alton, Illinois. Her husband was from a fairly well-known family in St. Louis, the Schlafly family. So I often found it interesting to interview Phyllis Schlafly. I found her kind of intriguing. I actually really got to know her a little bit when she ran unsuccessfully for Congress from the Central Illinois District in, I believe, 1974. She challenged a Democratic incumbent, George Shipley, at the time and she lost the election. But I got to know her then; I got to spend some time alone with her in covering a part of that campaign and I found her personable and interesting to be with. I actually was among the few reporters who, in a way, thought she was kind of pretty, and that was an added dimension. Although she had no use for the *Post-Dispatch* because its editorial page was very liberal and very counter to her unabashed conservative views of life, I think she took a bit of a liking to me. I was not one of the *Post-Dispatch* reporters who had continually criticized her through the years, so I actually kind of enjoyed spending time with her. The Congressional campaign stretched across south central Illinois and I spent one whole day with her; she was campaigning. It was rather low-key and I was the only reporter with her; I actually enjoyed the day talking to her and probing her a little bit about the past and, of course, her famous organization the Eagle Forum and all that stuff.

DePue: Was this before the Eagle Forum was formed?

Pensoneau: No, I think Eagle Forum came first, I'm pretty sure.

DePue: But this was before the big fight over ERA.

Pensoneau: I don't remember. I'm pretty sure it was. It was not too long after that that she started surfacing at these periodic rallies in the Illinois State House and on the State House grounds in opposition to Illinois' ratification of the proposed ERA. I could talk to her. She always made it clear she certainly had no use for the editorial page of the *Post-Dispatch* and for some of the reporters that she had encountered. But I think she said she considered me half-way fair, especially considering I was a *Post-Dispatch* reporter, and that if there was some new development from her point-of-view, she would seek me out if she saw me in the crowd or wherever, and kind of half-way keep me informed of what she had in mind in her next step, for opposing ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

DePue: Do you recall why Illinois ended up being such a crucial battleground state for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment?

Pensoneau: I don't specifically know. Correct me if I'm wrong, didn't a certain number of states have to ratify it?

DePue: Yeah.

Pensoneau: It wasn't every.

DePue: It was, it was very close.

Pensoneau: It was close, but it never happened.

DePue: Illinois was the state where things kind of turned in the opposite direction. There was a flurry of states that ratified it. It got to Illinois and I think most people thought, Okay, this should be easy for Illinois to ratify and we'll eventually have adoption of the amendment. Pensoneau: Okay.

Pensoneau: Well we know it didn't happen.

DePue: Was that because Phyllis Schlafly is from Illinois and she took up the fight here?

Pensoneau: Oh, I would definitely say yes to that. Sure.

DePue: She was the difference on the passage or failure of the bill.

Pensoneau: I mean, she was a national figure in opposition to ERA. If Illinois was, indeed, that crucial, and it probably was, then she certainly gets the credit for preventing its passage in Illinois.

DePue: Was her national notoriety an outgrowth of her fight against the ERA here in the state?

Pensoneau: Oh, no. No, no. She had come to national attention, actually, a number of years before that. I had been aware of her somehow in connection with the Republican nomination of Barry Goldwater for President back in 1964. She became visible, if not earlier, certainly then. I can't recall, in my younger years I did know some of the details of how she came into the public spotlight, but she did then, and she was quite a well-known. By the time she assumed orchestration of the effort to stop approval of the ERA, she had a national reputation because she spent a lot of her time maybe beyond Illinois, but certainly her efforts in that were focused a lot of the time in Illinois and specifically in the State House. National reporters would come in on a given day just to observe part of it and write a story because she was so well-known as a leader of American conservative women.

DePue: What were her arguments against the passage of the ERA?

Pensoneau: It's like I must have written it twenty-five times and I'll be darned if I can specifically remember.

DePue: Did the issue of being drafted factor into it?

Pensoneau: It might have. I remember that was hashed back and forth. It was just like ERA did not serve the traditional, or maybe the proper role of women in American society. As you already said, maybe it was the objection to the draft. It might subject them to certain other stipulations and encumbrances that men face as a routine matter in life in Illinois and other states that really women shouldn't be subjected to. I think they might have mentioned draft, but there were other things they talked about, too. The way she would phrase it, and the way they would shape it, ERA was actually a step backwards for women in posing a threat to undermining the traditional role of women in American life.

DePue: Did the fight draw a lot of national figures on the opposite side, national organizations?

Pensoneau: There were attempts, not every time, but there were attempts to have counter-demonstrations. Well, first of all, there were, on their own, pro-ERA demonstrations, and they became as noisy as her anti-ERA demonstrations in the Illinois State House, on the Capitol grounds. There were a few times when both sides showed up simultaneously and that made for a better story and a more lively situation for reporters like myself to cover.

DePue: Yes.

Pensoneau: Yeah. As I recall, some of the younger supporters of ERA got pretty active physically on those days of joint appearances, as we should call them. I don't recall any outright violence or fist fights, but there was some jostling and it got pretty tense. But, of course, in those years, to a reporter like myself, that was good, because it made for a better story. That's what you always wanted.

DePue: Well, I've heard the stories about some of the pro-ERA supporters who would do things like chain and lock themselves to the railing.

Pensoneau: That's true. I remember some of that. The answer is yes. I'm not sure they did those things on the same days that Phyllis Schlafly and her supporters were in the State House. I'm not sure about that, but I do remember some of that. Some of them chained themselves to railings and so on.

DePue: Okay. Very good. That's all fascinating to me. One of the things we haven't talked about much – but always a factor in Illinois politics – was Thompson, the nature of his relationship with the Chicago mayors at the time. We have to

use the plural on that case because there was quite a succession after Richard J. Daly died, in '76, I believe.

Pensoneau: Thompson had a marvelous talent, a proclivity for rising above partisanship in politics. First of all, he was, at best, a moderate Republican. I felt with his positions and outlook on issues, he very easily could have been a Democrat. But having said that, he worked easily with Democrats. In fact, I know during part of the time when he was Governor, I remember Senator Phil Rock from Chicago, Democrat, became leader of the Democratic majority in the Illinois Senate.

DePue: So President of the Senate.

Pensoneau: Right, by then it was president. Correct. I distinctly remember that Rock and Thompson got along very well. If my memory serves me right, there was no acrimony hardly at all between Rock and Thompson. Rock was subjected to some criticism from some fellow Democratic operatives for being much too cozy with Governor Thompson, I think there was some truth to it, not necessarily to be criticized. I remember Rock had a very close relationship with Thompson; I don't think they were too far apart politically. As I said, Thompson was a very moderate Republican and Rock was kind of a middle-of-the-road Democrat, and they weren't too far apart on a lot of things. If my memory serves me right, sometimes on high level summit situations Thompson and Rock were actually allied against the Speaker of the House; that had to have been Madigan, Democrat Madigan. I just remember the tone, the atmosphere of those years when Rock was often in league with Governor Thompson.

DePue: Uh huh. I believe Mike Madigan became the Speaker of the House in 1983. Does that sound about right?

Pensoneau: That would add up, yeah. I mean, that does sound right.

DePue: He took over from George Ryan that one period that you said George Ryan was the Speaker.

Pensoneau: Two years Ryan was Speaker.

DePue: And then for the rest of Thompson's years it was Madigan who was in it.

Pensoneau: Uh huh.

DePue: What was the friction between Madigan and Thompson then, just the natural opposite political parties?

Pensoneau: Yeah. Madigan considered himself more of a true-blue Democrat. Well Rock did, too. But I think Madigan felt in that vein – in what we're talking about vis-à-vis Governor Thompson – that the role of a traditional Democratic

leader was probably not to be overly cooperative with a Republican Governor. I think Madigan tried to invoke that normalcy that normally would be there in a relationship between a Republican Governor and a House Speaker, that when different parties were concerned, it would be one of, not antagonism, but political counterpoints.

DePue: From my limited reading here, in some of the fights they of kind played opposite the stereotypes, if you will, that Thompson in dire economic times who was trying to balance the budget would propose tax increases.

Pensoneau: That's true.

DePue: And Madigan, of all people, would be one of those opposing?

Pensoneau: Opposing. I remember several of those situations. The answer is yes.

DePue: And that didn't alienate Madigan from the rest of the Democratic party?

Pensoneau: I don't remember. Well, let me say this: It certainly didn't alienate Madigan from the bulk of the House Democrats, the group that he has effectively controlled, almost totally, and which had supported him faithfully, seemingly forever in his role at House Speaker. That would have been of foremost importance to Madigan. That was his base. I just don't recall in those years any serious challenges to Madigan's leadership.

The Senate would be another matter. We saw in more recent years – just briefly getting far afield here - where Madigan and Emil Jones pretty much went different ways, when all was said and done with Jones siding on gut issues with Governor Blagojevich in the few years of Blagojevich's term, and Madigan being the odd man out. So, I guess what I'm saying is, there may have been Democrats in the Senate not in accord with Madigan's policies and staunch Democratic positions, but Madigan really couldn't control those people, anyway.

DePue: I think this is probably a good time as any to flesh out Mike Madigan a little bit more. Can you talk about his political roots, how he ended up moving up through ranks to be Speaker?

Pensoneau: I think he came from a well-known, established political family background in Chicago. I know early on, like many young Chicago Democrats, he was to some extent, a protégé, or brought along by the late Mayor Daley – that's Richard J. Daley – and Madigan was in the cadre or circle of young, bright Democrats who were operating as very young men within the immediate Daley sphere in Chicago. The story always went that back in those years, Neil Hartigan who was also in that circle, did something to offend Madigan, and that something came out that when they were both young people in Daley's circle of immediate followers close around him that Hartigan did something that was a real affront to Madigan and Madigan never forgave him for it. That

was one reason that years later in Springfield when both were in positions of power, Madigan oftentimes was a problem for Hartigan. Those who knew more than I did said, Well, that goes back to when they were both young men up in city hall in Chicago under the first Mayor Daley and that Madigan considered Hartigan to have undercut him, or there was some affront that Madigan never forgot.

DePue: Was Madigan one of those people who cut his political teeth, so to speak, at the state level at the Con-Con?[9]

Pensoneau: That's when he first appeared to my knowledge. The first time I saw Madigan, was at Con-Con. That was also the first time I saw Richard M. Daley. The first time I saw, I think, was the day Con-Con convened or the delegates assembled in the Illinois House. I was of course in the press box in my St. Louis Post-Dispatch role; people immediately pointed out to me young Daley and young Madigan, saying, Those are two young up-and-comers in the Chicago political organization. Of course, young Daley's father was Mayor of Chicago.

DePue: Uh huh.

Pensoneau: That didn't hurt. As I recall, it looked like they were together shaking hands with people, two bright, cheery faces, smiling, young Irish lads.

DePue: Uh huh.

Pensoneau: This would have been around December, I guess. I think Con-Con actually convened originally in December of '69 and then played out basically in 1970. So this would have been about the first time the newly elected delegates were all together on the House floor. At virtually the same time, I had pointed out to me young Michael Madigan from Chicago, and young – they called him Richie then – Richie Daley from Chicago, who was the mayor's son.

DePue: They didn't get it too far wrong because Richard M. Daley now has served longer than his father did…

Pensoneau: Wow. I guess that's right.

DePue: …as Mayor of Chicago. And Mike Madigan has had an incredible run as Speaker of the House.

Pensoneau: Unbelievable.

DePue: He's still Speaker of the House.

Pensoneau: Unbelievable. Yeah. As we talk today.

[9] Con Con: The Illinois Constitutional Convention of 1968

DePue: What's the source of Madigan's clout then as Speaker of the House? Last time I know we went through quite a bit of detail about the cut-back amendment, because that's often where the story starts. We don't need to recover that territory.

Pensoneau: First of all, Madigan is very smart. He's very astute politically. He does his homework. He spends a great amount of time and diligence at being Speaker, as being leader of the Democratic majority in the House. He finds out a lot about individuals, Republicans as well as Democrats, as to what their needs are in regard to their district – what's important to them. He maintains in his head kind of a personal dossier on every House member. He is very successful at raising great amounts of campaign cash – political contributions – and he doles out, he doesn't, I don't think he needs hardly anything to get reelected in his own district, where he's invincible. He then dishes out campaign dough to Democrats running for House seats who need help, including financial help. There's no surer way to ensure loyalty in politics, if there is such a thing, as helping out someone else financially. You might say you're buying their allegiance, and so be it. Madigan has controlled prodigious amounts of campaign money through the years which he doles out. He's just a very smart guy.

He's all business. You'll see nothing frivolous about Madigan. He has a very keen insight into the working of all the legislative machinery. I say this because some of them who are there don't. They're just there, waiting for instructions one way or the other as to what button to push. Madigan has also made himself very much of a potentate in the Democratic Party itself. He's been state Democratic chair, and before he was, he controlled the person who was. So he's doing something at the state level that Daley, as I recall, did in Chicago. Daley was not only Mayor, but he was leader of the Democratic Party up there in that neck of the woods.

DePue: Chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party.

Pensoneau: Yeah. I guess. Whatever the title was, he held it. Some pure political scientists say that that's wrong; there should be a separation. The head of the party, even if you've got a mayor and a political leader of the same party, that individual shouldn't be one and the same. But Daley certainly flaunted that rule or abrogated it, whatever you want to say. And Madigan has too, you know. So that adds to his strength. I mean, it really increases his clout in terms of controlling the members of his own party, his own caucus. Yet I should also point out, when Madigan has been as successful as could be expected in encouraging mainly young Democrats, oftentimes bright individuals, to run for House seats in areas where you've got a bipartisan situation or Republicans may have had a traditional advantage, he's been successful in both recruiting and financing campaigns of those individuals to get elected in what once were Republican House districts. Obviously, once they're there who do they owe their loyalty to – Speaker Michael Madigan.

So, if you start putting all these things together, he's very smart. He has a, I would say, a brilliant political mind; he understands how power is derived and how power is utilized, and he does a pretty good job of keeping most of the other House Democrats individually satisfied with their roles, with their assignments, with their committees, things like that. When you add all these things together, he's just tough to counter. He's an expert politician in the truest sense of the word. He can be very fair and magnanimous in what he allows to be considered in the House. He's political, of course, but he will take positions on major issues when the chips are down on really what is best for the state.

DePue: Is he one of those who prefers to keep in the background in terms of what the public **perceives**?

Pensoneau: Well, he doesn't display much of a social bent, I've got to say. I certainly don't view him as a, as a back-slapper or a gregarious figure.

DePue: Is he friendly with the press?

Pensoneau: Yes and no. He doesn't show any outward love for the press. I should point out most major political figures in Illinois don't show that. The ones who do are exceptions: like Governor Thompson who we've talked about, like Paul Simon who we've talked about. Those individuals are in a minority who really have a close interrelationship with the press. No, Madigan certainly doesn't have that. He's always shied away to a great extent from exclusive interviews. He doesn't like to be trapped in those sorts of things. He has employed for many years an individual, Steve Brown, who was a reporter. Steve is a very topnotch emissary to the press for Madigan because Brown has Madigan's confidence, Brown knows what's going on, and Brown is able to effectively represent Madigan with the press. I would have to say that. One's emissary to the press corps often goes a long way in determining the success of one's political career. Madigan has a good "press guy" in Steve Brown, and he's had him for years; Steve knows what's going on. Obviously, Steve has the access to Madigan's game plans and all that kind of stuff and that helps, and Brown's very shrewd. So, I can't say that Madigan's close to the press. I think he's like a lot of traditional Chicago Democrats, in that they grow up being skeptical of the Chicago press. I think it's almost inbred in a lot of old line Chicago political figures, especially ones that come from established political families, like Madigan. I think that would obviously carry over when they achieve a position of prominence in Illinois state government in Springfield.

If you would corner Madigan in a hallway and ask him a question, you'd probably get a brief answer. He didn't like to be cornered by reporters and he wouldn't sit still very long if he was. I don't recall him going overboard on press conferences. There would be some Speakers in the past before him who'd hold press conferences every other day, every other night,

but I don't think that was Madigan's case. So, I think he tolerated the press, but certainly wasn't as much at ease with the press as he was in one of his own ward meetings in Chicago or whatever.

DePue: We are talking about Illinois politics, so I guess this question is fair. Has Madigan ever been associated with any kind of corruption?

Pensoneau: Not much. Attempts have been made to link him to perhaps this little shady situation or that, but I would say – what's the phrase? – he has a Teflon coating or something like that? Nothing had stuck. No, I can't say that I'm aware of where he's ever been tied to any significant corrupt situation.

DePue: Which would account for his remarkable longevity, then, in part at least.

Pensoneau: Would certainly count for part of it.

DePue: And now part of the Madigan story is not just himself, but Lisa, his daughter, who's very much an up-and-comer.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Rather incredible. Right.

DePue: Would you be surprised if she runs for Governor this next time around? The Attorney General?

Pensoneau; I would not be surprised at all, myself. I mean, the assumption is that she's going to make a move at some point for either Governor or the United States Senate seat.

DePue: Okay. Let's get back to Jim Thompson. You can't talk about these important personalities like Governor Thompson unless you talk about the cast of characters that surround him and certainly Phil Rock and Mike Madigan, George Ryan.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: Let's pick it up with the 1978 election. As we've talked before, when he ran for office in '76, he knew he had this anomaly that he'd have to run again in two years.

Pensoneau: Correct.

DePue: Anything stand out in your mind in terms of that '78 election?

Pensoneau: No. It was like a foregone conclusion among everybody, starting off with Democrats, that Thompson was an absolute cinch for reelection in that election. I mean, the Democrats nominated what?

DePue: Michael Bakalis.

Pensoneau: Michael Bakalis. Bakalis was a decent guy with a good pedigree, but he couldn't raise any money to speak of. Many political figures really just felt that he was, in effect, a sacrificial lamb in the election. I don't recall the margin. I know that in 1976 Thompson murdered Howlett at the ballot box.

DePue: Fifty-nine percent was the spread with Bakalis.

Pensoneau; Okay, I think it was greater in 1976 with Thompson and Howlett.

DePue: Yeah, we mentioned sixty-four, close to sixty-five percent.

Pensoneau: Did I say, '76 was his first election, wasn't it.

DePue: Yeah.

Pensoneau: When he murdered Howlett. [not literally]

DePue: The curious thing to me is Bakalis is not coming from the traditional source of political clout. He was the State Superintendent of Education. I don't know if that was the specific title, but …

Pensoneau: That's what it was. He was the last elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction. He was elected in 1970 in a major political upset. The incumbent Republican, Ray Page, had been elected State Superintendent originally in 1962, reelected in 1966, and was running for a third term in 1970; he was upset by a then- unknown, young Democrat, an academic named Michael Bakalis from Chicago. And Bakalis beat him. That was a big political upset at the time and Bakalis looked at that point like someone who really couldn't be stopped. He was young, handsome, personable, and overnight looked like a Democratic star had been born by his improbable victory over Republican Ray Page in the 1970 contest for election as State Superintendent of Public Instruction. That was the last elected contest for that office. Within a few years it would become appointive.

DePue: That was a result of the Constitutional Convention, the new constitution then?

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: Okay. Anything else that you recall about Bakalis? How do you pronounce his name?

Pensoneau: Michael Ba-**ka**-lis.

DePue: Did he run on a platform of education?

Pensoneau: I'm sure he did. I cannot even remember what positions he tried to espouse to upset Thompson. I mean Thompson was extremely popular in his first years as Governor – popular with about everybody, starting off with some of the

State House press corps. Starting out with newspapers in Chicago, there was just a whole bipartisan fan club for Thompson who, at that point, many considered almost too good to be true in the governorship. Thompson was just a master at public relations and at portraying himself in a most impressive, sometimes even lovable way. The guy was just very good. (DePue chuckles) Michael Bakalis really – nobody gave him a prayer to defeat Thompson in the 1978 election and he didn't.

DePue: At fifty-nine percent, most people, most political scientists and people from your business, would call that a landslide as well.

Pensoneau: Yeah. I agree.

DePue: So, in his second administration'78 through late '82, a different kind of experience for Thompson. By late 1978, the American economy was already really struggling.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: But I've got to believe that was the overwhelming concern for Thompson's second administration.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: The struggling economy.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: Because the economy was worse then in terms of unemployment and inflation and things like that, much worse than it is even today.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Right. As an aside, I do find it interesting that we're involved in this crisis situation, which is certainly an economic meltdown, if that's the right word. But if you look at statistics there were several instances back what, twenty-five years, where its been worse without nearly the crisis atmosphere now portrayed. But you've just reminded me of that fact with what you said.

DePue: Well, 11.2 percent unemployment in '84.

Pensoneau: Right. I knew it was well over 10 percent

DePue: And a lot of that was industry jobs moving out of the state. I read someplace that something like 25 percent of industry jobs left the state during that time period, that six or eight year time period.

Pensoneau: Yeah. I guess. I don't remember that statistic.

DePue: Wasn't the same thing going on with coal?

Pensoneau: It was. The answer is yes. When you talk about coal, we always knew big problems were ahead, but we managed to keep production at a relatively stable high level throughout the 1980s, The real downfall, the plummeting in both production and employment and in the number of mines, didn't really start until the early 1990s. But once it started it was a real freefall tailspin for a while. But, yeah, the economic doldrums in some parts of Illinois, especially in the so-called manufacturing areas and so on, really became very aggravated, in the 1980s when Thompson was Governor. So, yeah, he did have to deal with some big-time economic downturns. The answer is yes. As I recall, he resorted several times to proposed tax hikes. One time it was in, my guess was '83, didn't we get a temporary income tax hike?

DePue: Yes.

Pensoneau: Then that went by the boards. In the later part of the governorship, I think he came back for another income tax hike – didn't he – as I recall? That one, I think, stuck.

DePue: Well that was the one, as I recall and read, Madigan was adamantly opposed to the end.

Pensoneau: Until the end or something like that?

DePue: Until the very end and then he reversed himself.[10]

Pensoneau: Yeah. You're ringing a bell there.

DePue: So one of the huge problems he had is, by the Constitution you're expected in Illinois to balance the budget. Is that correct?

Pensoneau: Supposedly. (both chuckle)

DePue: It's been a nice theory, at least, for the last two decades, right?

Pensoneau: Right. Sure.

DePue: So that's one huge challenge. Is that what caused him to recommend the tax increase?

Pensoneau: Oh, I'm sure it was. Yeah.

DePue: What were some of the measures, do you recall? This is a bit unfair because you're not out reporting on that picture.

Pensoneau: Right.

[10] In 1989 the state legislature passed a temporary income tax surcharge (increase), increasing personal taxes from 2.5% to 3% and corporate taxes from 4% to 4.8%. Speaker Mike Madigan had previously been opposed to the increase, but reversed his position that year.

DePue: But was he also advocating budget cuts?

Pensoneau: I can't honestly answer that. I frankly don't remember. I don't recall Thompson doing a lot of governmental reorganization. I don't recall if there were any serious budget cuts. I just don't remember. The Thompson governorship was more of a personal show, when attention focused more on the man himself than on state government. By his magnetic personality that even sometimes touched a bit on showmanship he was able to deflect attention from some of the more serious problems or areas that should have been of interest in Illinois government. The spotlight was on Thompson as an individual, as a charismatic individual who really – I've written in some of my books and others have written – became in some ways bigger than life.

DePue: Charlie Wheeler cited an incident that I could hardly believe, but I bet if it happened you would remember. He rode a horse into the Capitol Rotunda?

Pensoneau: He did. He did. I can't remember the details. I can't remember what the occasion was, but the answer is yeah, I know he did.

DePue: Well, that's definitely showmanship.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Oh yeah, I agree. Like his first year in office, I remember he threw a number of parties for the press. He really courted the press and the press really responded, okay? If I remember, one of his early parties was…

DePue: What happened to that professional objectivity the press is supposed to maintain?

Pensoneau: Hey, we could start talking about this now or later (DePue chuckles) because don't you ever believe this old saying that a reporter can go out with a political figure at night, share drinks with him at a bar, **have their arms around each other** and have that reporter come back the next morning and write something critical of that individual. Unh uh. A lot of reporters like to say that's the case; it ain't true. So we can get into that discussion if and whenever you want to.

Having said that, I remember this one night Thompson wasn't there. We're all at the Governor's Mansion. Of course, you all wore suits and you had the wives and girlfriends with you and it was a big crowd, but where was Thompson? Well, Thompson was out on the yard of the mansion playing. He had one or two of these dogs that were getting a lot of publicity, and he's out there in jeans and a golf shirt romping around on the mansion lawn with at least one, maybe more of these dogs. I mean, that was typical of Thompson. He was just very uncharacteristic. He was very tough to describe. (chuckle) I chuckle at some of the memories of Thompson. I don't think I mentioned this at all. Have we talked about when I was doing one story that was not going to be flattering in the summer of '78 on Thompson, in that he was continuing a practice of certain highway contractors getting road building bids.

DePue: Was this when he popped into your cubicle?

Pensoneau: Did I talk about that already?

DePue: Yes, you did. Okay.

DePue: I know one of his huge concerns had to be the economy.

Pensoneau: Yeah.

DePue: Any Governor's going to know, as any President knows, that – whether it's fair or not – their reputation and their political future depends on what the economy's like when they're in office.

Pensoneau: Sure.

DePue: What was Thompson trying to do in terms of building back the industrial base in Illinois?

Pensoneau: I remember some things that were done. He was trying to both attract new industry and preserve as much as he could existing industry. I think it was under Thompson, when, if I'm right, either Sears or Motorola or both of them, were given massive aid packages by the state.

DePue: I know Sears was toying with the notion of moving out of state.

Pensoneau: Okay, definitely. Thompson put together massive aid packages centered around money to keep one or both of them in the state. I remember that. He was very active in travelling abroad to try to solicit investment in Illinois, and he did succeed. Of course, probably one of the most notable accomplishments was the building of the big Diamond Star automobile manufacturing plant outside Normal. You can see it when you drive around Normal; it's a huge complex. That was Thompson. He utilized the resources of the governorship, his personal magnetism and the other things necessary to get that major plant built up there. I think there were some other instances like that; it's just that was a major one, one that I was familiar with. He did things like that. This maybe helped the economy – well it did. Thompson, I think, was more or less responsible for keeping the White Sox on the south side of Chicago. He engineered and did what was necessary to get them a brand new stadium.

DePue: Did that mean that you've got to bend a few Republican arms in the legislature?

Pensoneau: And Democrat. I mean (laughs) he needed some Democratic votes and he got them. And, of course, now the joke is… Jimmy Rea [pronounce ray] was a State Senator at the time from Christopher in deep southern Illinois. I'll say this and put it in there.

DePue: Jimmy Rea?

Pensoneau: Jim Rea, a Democrat from Christopher. If I recall (chuckles) – Jim, forgive me if I'm off base – he needed a few Democratic votes and there were some prominent Democrats that didn't want to give in, figuring that Thompson just was getting too much of everything he wanted. He got Jim Rea's vote and I always wondered how he got the vote. As Jim later explained to me, if you go down to Rend Lake there's this very nice, fancy arts and crafts center[11] down there. Have you seen it?

DePue: Haven't seen it.

Pensoneau: Well, the money came out of somewhere to get that built at Jim Rea's insistence. I understand that was Jim's reward for going to the White Sox bailout, okay. Getting to the nub of it here, okay. , I don't think Jim will deny that, all right?

DePue: Well, that's the nature of politics wherever it's played.

Pensoneau: Of course. Absolutely. Of course. Of course. Thompson several times picked off State Senator Rea from southern Illinois.

DePue: One of the engines of Illinois economics has always been agriculturally based, but I believe these were some pretty tough years for agriculture in Illinois, just based on the price of corn and soybeans and some other commodities as well. When he was going overseas was that one of the things he was trying to push for markets overseas?

Pensoneau: I'm sure he was. I was hoping you weren't going to ask me about any insights on agricultural policies, because I'm really shallow there. (laughs) We could talk about coal mining, but I'm not very good on agriculture. But, having said that, in answer to your question, it's almost perfunctory that on every so-called trade mission by an Illinois Governor abroad, Illinois agriculture is one of the products they try to market.

DePue: Well, the Soviet market would have been open by that time. That's probably a little bit early for some of the Asian markets, though.

Pensoneau: I don't know. I just know that, in trying to market Illinois products abroad – always the stated intentions of the trade mission in terms of Illinois – agriculture is always part of the equation.

DePue: Well, let's get you on more familiar turf, and fascinating turf, too – the 1982 election. This would be his third election campaign against another political family, if you will; not to be too coy here, I'm talking about Adlai Stevenson

[11] He refers to the Illinois Artisans' Gallery, under the aegis of the Illinois State Museum.

III. Tell me a little bit about your impressions of Adlai Stevenson III. Was he his father's son?

Pensoneau: That's a good question. I actually saw his father once when I was still in St. Louis as a young reporter. I went out one night. This was only a short time before Adlai Stevenson died. He spoke to a large group in St. Louis. I was then the night reporter at the *Post-Dispatch* and I covered his speech. Actually, I met him backstage for a few minutes. That was the only time I saw Adlai, the former Governor and Ambassador, alive. There were three boys, and of the three, Adlai the Third was the one that tried to carry on his father's public legacy. That's fine. I can't say personality-wise if he was like his father because I don't know. I didn't know that. Adlai III appeared at some times to be rather shy, even reticent. There were those that felt if you want to go to sleep and you didn't have a sleeping pill handy, you would turn on a recording (DePue laughs) of one of Adlai III's speeches (both laugh). He'd get mad if he heard me say that. I knew Adlai III. I got to meet him early on because I'd been in Springfield about a year when he got elected State Treasurer and I got to know him. I got to spend time with him because his administrative assistant, the aid closest to him, was a young man named Tom Wagner; Tom and I became very close friends. Of course, Tom went on when Stevenson got elected to the U. S. Senate; Tom was his AA in Washington, administrative assistant. So I had access to Stevenson about any time I wanted when he was State Treasurer and I was among those doing early reporting when Stevenson led in the wake of the tumultuous 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago; out of that came a bit of a rebellion against what was decreed as Mayor Daley's autocratic rule. Adlai III, who was the State Treasurer, was part of that movement. So I knew Stevenson.

This I know: Stevenson came back. What Adlai Stevenson wanted was to be elected President. Okay. He made a calculated decision, that frankly, I think is understandable. At that time it was – maybe not now in view of Obama – but his decision was that it would be easier to make a serious bid for the White House from the governorship of Illinois than from the United States Senate. That was a view held by many major political figures at that time.

DePue: Carter would have been proof of that.

Pensoneau: Carter would have been proof of it. Obviously Ronald Reagan would be proof of it, too.

DePue: Absolutely.

Pensoneau: Okay. Obviously, to be fair to President Obama, he has, for the time being dispelled that myth. But having said that, Stevenson wanted to be President, and felt that being Governor of Illinois was the best springboard to get there, more so than being a United States Senator. Stevenson came back and ran

and was really, at first, considered to be a formidable opponent. And then, as the campaign developed, and we're talking about the 1982 gubernatorial campaign…

DePue: Right.

Pensoneau; …as that campaign developed, Stevenson didn't have the outgoing personality of Thompson, and this became a factor. It was evident that Thompson was just much more of a likeable, approachable, **doable** individual than Stevenson, who was more rigid and not a backslapper and certainly not gregarious – we cannot accuse him of that. And Thompson could be all of those things. Thompson just ingratiated himself – if that's the right word – with people everywhere, and Stevenson just couldn't do that. The early polling in the '82 gubernatorial race, showed, as we were getting near the election, Thompson had a fantastic lead in the polls. The *Chicago Sun-Times* always did polling; so did other organizations. Surprisingly, even though he was well-known and had been State Treasurer and then was elected United States Senator, Stevenson was really trailing very badly. Now, I happen to know that in that campaign – I can't remember exactly what – but Stevenson had done something to tick off some of the old line Democrats who controlled the party out in St. Clair and Madison Counties, two counties that normally were big delivery areas for Democrats in elections. Stevenson had done something. I don't recall what it was, and I'm sorry Mark. I always had contacts down there. That's my home area, and they weren't crazy about him down there. And they kind of liked Thompson. It was like, how could you not like Thompson, you know, and this kind of stuff. I sensed that Stevenson wasn't going to get the normal big delivery vote out of that area down there that a Democrat normally would in a statewide election. At least I was told that. Well, the reason I bring this up is that some polls, if I recall, had Thompson up by twenty points, which was hard to believe. But I think some did. Well, as you know, or as you've come to know, the '82 election for Governor turned out to be a cliffhanger.

DePue: Uh huh.

Pensoneau: Ironically, I remember on election night my Coal Association compatriot Joe Spivey and myself were up there actually in the pressroom hanging out with Mike Lawrence; Mike was then still in the pressroom, and we were back there in his space. I think he was then head of the Lee Newspaper Bureau. I remember Mike was getting some results, more than Joe and I had access to, and it was too close to call. I remember we were all astounded because of these polls and public soundings that indicated Thompson was going to win and it was going to be a another runaway victory by Thompson. So, it was interesting. I think the Illinois Supreme Court had to get involved in some sort of an adjudicatory role. In the final analysis, Thompson's victory margin was only a little more than five thousand votes, which was like unbelievable in view of the millions of votes cast.

DePue: Well it is somewhat surprising. Though, if ever there was a time that Thompson you think would be vulnerable…

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: …it would be right on the cusp of this very, very tough economic period.

Pensoneau: Maybe that was part of it. I just don't recall that. I just knew that everybody was shocked as we went through election night. As I said, Joe and I went over and we were sitting with Mike in Mike's space in the pressroom. It was just shocking because everybody was getting ready to celebrate another easy Thompson victory based on the polls. Now, I'm going to add one thing to this, and that is that Stevenson did not get, out of Madison and St. Clair Counties – I think I'm right – did not get near the plurality as the Democratic candidate for Governor normally would get out of those two Democratic counties. As I point out earlier here, there was a problem down there; I don't recall what the details were. It was a problem that they thought he instigated. It ticked off some of the old line Democrats down there and he did not get the plurality that the Democratic candidate for Governor normally could have expected from those two counties. If he had, he'd have been easily elected Governor of Illinois. But it didn't happen. This is where my memory is failing me. I did know at one time what happened down there. I knew very well the old line party bosses, especially in St. Clair County, and they were not pleased with Stevenson and made it known to me. By then I was no longer the *Post-Dispatch* political writer. One of these guys on Sunday afternoons would eat at my mom's and dad's house in Belleville; it was like a ritual. I remember them telling me that they weren't crazy about what they called young Adlai.

DePue: Was it anything to do with Stevenson getting crosswise a little bit with former Governor Walker? Because I know there was not much love lost between **them**.

Pensoneau: No, they didn't like Walker, so that wouldn't have been a problem.

DePue: Okay. Peggy Boyer Long, when she updated the chapter on Thompson in *Mostly Good and Competent Men*, the classic book on Illinois Governors, she credited a lot of Stevenson's surprising strength in that election to a huge turnout among blacks in Chicago because they had turned out to vote for Harold Washington.

Pensoneau: Could be a good point. I would give way to Peggy if she said that. For some reason my memory doesn't record that, but I'm sure… I'm sure that's true.

DePue: Okay. Let's move on. I mean, we're at the time now of his third administration, '82.

Pensoneau: I might interject – there's been an update to that book since, and Peggy and I did it. Have you got that?

DePue: The one that you've got over here on the counter? I do not have that one.

Pensoneau: I'd give it to you, but I only have a couple copies myself, but that's the latest version, that's the latest one right there. Yeah.

DePue: It's my bible. I go through this stuff. It's the first place I refer to.

Pensoneau: You can get it out at the university; they've got some out at the Illinois Issues office.

DePue: Okay. Great. It's about this timeframe, '82 to '86, the continuation of his administration, pretty much the same kind of themes. I'm sure he still struggled somewhat with the economic issues.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: Brought Diamond Star in during that timeframe, I think.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: He was doing a lot of overseas trade missions.

Pensoneau: Right. Yeah. Uh huh.

DePue: But we're talking about a guy who, from a very young age had national ambitions, as well.

Pensoneau: That's right.

DePue: How much do you think he was truly focused on looking at the Presidency as an option for him? How much was that part of the dialogue in Illinois at the time?

Pensoneau: I would start off with one qualifying statement. With limited exceptions, in my adult lifetime just about every man – and we've only had men elected Governor – so about every man elected Governor at first considers himself a logical candidate later on for President of his party. Okay, starting off with that. I know that when Ogilvie got elected Governor, right away there was speculation that he'd be in line for the Republican nomination for President. I know it was true of Dan Walker, and Walker actually did entertain dreams of running for President. And there were others. So, given that, it was not unusual that a Governor of Illinois would consider himself timber for the Presidency and people would write such. Thompson, I think, was in that mode. Things were written that Illinois had this dynamic, charismatic Governor known as a moderate Republican. His name had to be tossed around

in speculation about who might run for the White House in some future election. I'm sure in the early going, Thompson didn't discourage such speculation. It was obviously flattering. I'm trying to resurrect when… It seems to me that these aspirations, if true, came to a head in 1988.

DePue: When Reagan was ready to step down.

Pensoneau: When Reagan was stepping down. I don't think Thompson was considered a likely candidate for the Presidential nomination, but he was among names frequently bandied about as the running mate of the individual.

DePue: Uh huh.

Pensoneau: It turned out to be George Bush who was to be nominated. As I recall, Thompson went out to Washington for some sort of a meeting or session or whatever that would determine the legitimacy or the interest in him as a running mate for Bush. This is all according to my memory – when he came back, it was pretty much like, either my interest wasn't there or it was an interesting trip, but I realize I relish being Governor of Illinois – or something to that effect.

DePue: You didn't hear much about any national aspirations beyond that point? Okay. Okay. You're shaking your head no.

Pensoneau: I'm shaking my head no.

DePue: Let's go back just two years, because the 1986 gubernatorial election was another fascinating campaign.

Pensoneau: That was a dandy. (laughter) That was unbelievable.

DePue: Well, I guess I don't need to prompt you too much more beyond that.

Pensoneau: You want to talk about it?

DePue: Absolutely.

Pensoneau: It was incredible. Everyone said that Thompson, along with being charismatic and smart and competent, also was extremely lucky politically. If there was truth to that last word, being lucky, 1986 certainly proved it to be true, (laughing) because that's the weirdest darn situation I've ever seen in a statewide nominating process. The Democratic Party nominated what several individuals on their ticket with the party associated with an extremist named what, Lyndon Larouche?

DePue: Right.

Pensoneau: And (laughing) I'm sitting here laughing. Of course, it's not funny to Democratic historians, but it was like Stevenson was again to be the Democratic nominee for Governor.

DePue: He certainly was on the primary ticket.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Yeah. And that was like a given. And either the state hadn't completely figured out how these guys had gotten in there and got nominated for several offices on the Democratic ticket.

DePue: Secretary of State and Lieutenant Governor.

Pensoneau: I know one was Lieutenant Governor (laughing). So anyway, Stevenson right away, almost overnight or shortly, says there's no way he's going to run with these guys. So he bolts the Democratic Party and sets up the Solidarity Party. Of course, he's automatically gubernatorial nominee for that party. Well, I mean, it was maybe, from his point of view, a noble gesture to try to do this, but it was politically hopeless, especially in a state like Illinois where third party candidates seems to have traditionally not always done real well.

DePue: What was so objectionable about Lyndon Larouche acolytes?

Pensoneau: I can't remember the details. He represented some fringe element of American politics that, beyond being unconventional, struck some people as downright weird, and most establishment politicians in both parties steered clear of both Larouche and his people. They viewed it – using words loosely – as an extremist organization, or whatever Larouche headed, and it was just like something you normally would just try to ignore. Even political reporters probably wouldn't give him much ink a day. I mean, when you would do political guides, as I would before every election with the *Post-Dispatch*, you gave great play to the Democratic candidates and their platforms and the Republican candidates and their platforms. But there were other parties on the ballot sometimes. You had the Socialist Workers. Oftentimes there'd be two or three other parties. What you would simply do in your voter's guide, you would just list them and then list their names. You wouldn't say anything about them. It's just very brief, you know.

DePue: Uh huh.

Pensoneau: And, I mean, Larouche was kind of… What was the name of his party again?

DePue: Well, I'm not sure. Well, his candidates were running on the Democratic platform.

Pensoneau: I was just going to say, in that election, they were the Democrats, right. Anyway, Larouche normally wouldn't have gotten anything more than just name of the party and then just nominee for Governor, Lyndon Larouche, and that would be it – no explanation, no questioning of his platform, what he

stood for and all this kind of stuff. He would generally be ignored as just an irrelevant third party or fourth party candidate. That's one reason I can't remember much about what they really espoused. I know they were active in states other than Illinois. I definitely remember that.

DePue: Who would have been Adlai's preferred Lieutenant Governor?

Pensoneau: Gosh. Boy.

DePue: Now I'm really putting you on the spot.

Pensoneau: You are. Here's just a guess. Was it then-State Senator George Sangmeister from Joliet or Will County?

DePue: I'll tell you what.

Pensoneau: Don't hold, don't hold me to that. We can easily check that.

DePue: When we do the editing of this, we'll make sure we get that right.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Put a question mark by that. That's my best guess.

DePue: Okay. I would think that's ultimately Stevenson's problem is that he's going to be running on the same ticket with the Lieutenant Governor because that's constitutional now; you can't have a Governor from a one party and a Lieutenant Governor from another.

Pensoneau: Right. If Stevenson would have won, the Larouche guy would have been Lieutenant Governor. Was it Larouche himself or one of his agents?

DePue: One of his…

Pensoneau: Agents. Okay.

DePue: …party members…

Pensoneau: Party members. Okay.

DePue: …or affiliates or whatever you want to call them.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: Fifty-seven percent is the margin that Thompson won that time around.

Pensoneau: Sure.

DePue: And we're talking about splitting votes between Stevenson and the Democratic candidate…

Pensoneau: Yeah.

DePue: Do you recall the Democratic candidate?

Pensoneau: I don't. I don't believe I can.

DePue: I'm thinking of, for some vague recollection, that the reason for the Larouchie people winning the Secretary of State and Lieutenant Governor's nominations was because they were on the top of the ballot.[12]

Pensoneau: That may have been. I just know to traditionalists and those who had tried to cover politics like myself in various directions in Illinois, it was just like unthinkable, I mean, unbelievable that this happened. You know, at that point, the mighty Democratic party would allow in its own primary something like this to happen? (laughs)

DePue: But it's why Illinois politics is so colorful and interesting.

Pensoneau: Absolutely. It was wonderful. If you're a journalist, there was nothing more wonderful to get to cover than Illinois politics.

DePue: (chuckles) From the northern parts of the state all the way to the south, huh?

Pensoneau: All the way to Cairo.

DePue: Okay. The last four years of Thompson's administration, I mean, the guy was there for fourteen years.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: In the last four, I would think, one of the highlights was his project, Build Illinois.

Pensoneau: Yeah. I remember that. Massive infrastructure program?

DePue: Uh huh.

Pensoneau: I remember it. It got a lot of play and, of course, put some people to work on projects, if only temporarily. Yeah. I remember it. It was significant.

DePue: Well, it's now touted to be the largest, most ambitious public works series of projects that the state has had, larger than George Ryan's even.

Pensoneau: His was Illinois First?

[12] Most political analysts contributed the surprising victory for the two LaRouche candidates to their names. In the Lt. Governor race, Mark Fairchild, the LaRouche candidate, defeated Democrat George Sangmeister of Mokena. In the Secretary of State race, LaRouchie Janice Hart defeated Aurelia Puchinski (Metro Sanitary District Commissioner).

DePue: Yeah. I think so.

Pensoneau: I remember Ryan's. I hadn't known that on my own, but I mean I certainly wouldn't argue with it.

DePue: Okay. Let's finish off with this, another piece of juicy news for an old journalist, I would think. You mentioned already Thompson got through his administration, fourteen years, with a remarkably clean record.

Pensoneau: Oh yeah. He did. Absolutely.

DePue: But there was one area where he came under heavy criticism, and that was what people labeled as "pinstripe patronage."

Pensoneau: Well, I'm trying to remember.

DePue: One of the results of that was the Rutan decision which came out in 1990.

Pensoneau: I remember the Rutan decision. I actually met her one night at a party in Springfield. In terms of patronage, Thompson, going back to his days in Chicago as United States Attorney and in his other pursuits, had quite a following of bright, young men and a few women. He would maneuver them in and out of Illinois governmental positions. Then a number of them went on, with his help, to achieve major positions on their own that they've held to this day, like judgeships, top spots in the federal government and so on, especially judgeships. Maybe the phrase applies to the fact that Thompson engineered into patronage spots a lot of people who weren't necessarily Republicans, but were bright young stars who could have moved from one party to the other. But they were outstanding individuals. They were tops in their academic fields, they were young intellectuals and so on. I remember the phrase pinstripe patronage. Most Democrats, not all, but most Democrats in the governorship, honor traditional patronage roles as far as they can; precinct committeemen, party workers get jobs wherever possible, and so on. I would call that traditional patronage. Thompson wasn't necessarily like that, only because many people felt that sure he got elected as a Republican, but he also got elected on his personal magnetism. With Thompson, as opposed to most other political figures in my adult lifetime, the partisan label was almost secondary in the end, to the fact that he was personally popular and had a lot of political magnetism. Therefore, I think some of his appointments reflected that where Thompson didn't feel compelled to appoint every Republican functionary that needed or wanted a job, sometimes he appointed a lot of these bright, young, probably pinstripe-suit-wearing guys to key positions with the knowledge that it would only be a stepping stone for them to bigger things in government elsewhere. That turned out to be the case of a lot of them. I think with a lot of the judges in Chicago with the federal judiciary and with a lot of federal positions in the Midwest, Thompson fostered a lot of those individuals along and helped them along at key points. He was very good about that. If

pinstripe patronage was a derogatory term, I may be off-base on this, it may have been derogatory maybe from some traditional Republican's view, too, that he didn't give jobs to a lot of the traditional Republicans that he would have automatically, under traditional old-style politics in Illinois, had given jobs to.

DePue: That's the perfect segue to one of my next questions here. His relationship with the conservative base of the Republican party.

Pensoneau: I don't remember. Thompson was certainly a moderate Republican. Perhaps in some ways, even a liberal Republican. I guess he was kind of what, a Rockefeller Republican? The conservatives used to deride moderate Republicans. They would call them Rockefeller Republicans, which was not meant as a compliment.

DePue: More of an economic conservative but a social liberal, perhaps?

Pensoneau: Oh, I think he was fairly liberal socially. I'm sure he was. He was kind of a middle-of-the-roader. As I said, in terms of his basic political performance, he was more pragmatic than ideological. Definitely so. No question about it. He didn't wear his ideology out on his sleeve. Like his first Lieutenant Governor, David O'Neal from Belleville did, and certainly others have done so through the years, but not Thompson. I mean, you know, he could have easily passed as a conservative Democrat or maybe even a regular Democrat, except he was in no way in league with the Chicago machine; I don't want to go that far. Thompson was in the end not an ideologue. He was a pragmatist and he had a sort of notion of the way he wanted to govern the state. He wanted to set a certain tone and that tone didn't allow for strict doctrinaire Republicanism.

DePue: The reason this is a relevant conversation, I think, though, is because at the national level, you've got Ronald Reagan whose fundamentally transforming the nature of the Republican party.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: So, from what you've said, Thompson is kind of swimming against that.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Off the top of my head, I don't recall his relationship with Reagan. I just don't.

DePue: Well, I've certainly not read anything where there was much of a strong relationship. I'm sure they had plenty of interaction, but only on a professional level, perhaps.

Pensoneau: Possibly so. It's just that I don't remember.

DePue: Let's go back to this – not to dwell on it too much – but the Pinstripe patronage; maybe that's the wrong term to apply. But there's also been criticism that Thompson, especially in things like Build Illinois, would favor no-bid contracts being given to different corporations or individuals or interests.

Pensoneau: Okay.

DePue: I'm sure he would defend that by saying, "But they did good work for the State of Illinois."

Pensoneau: You probably answered both your own questions. I was going to inject a moment of lightheartedness in the conversation by saying, "Gee, how novel." (DePue laughs.) Okay, I mean, with my rare weak attempt at a joke.

DePue: I like it.

Pensoneau: (laughing) I'll repeat in a more mundane way, "What's new?" (laughing) Political favoritism is endemic in the higher levels of Illinois politics in the awarding of contracts. I mean, it doesn't seem to matter who's governor.

DePue: At that time, was that considered to be illegal? Was there a law specifically against it?

Pensoneau: I don't think so. I don't believe so. You always had so-called reformers who wanted more of an antiseptic approach to it, more of a sterile approach. Even though some governors might have given more lip service to fairness in awarding of state contracts than others, basically the performance level is pretty equal with all of them, whether Republican or Democrat. That certainly didn't change up to the recent precedent of Governor Blagojevich. (DePue laughs). Hey, I mean, I think you can make that case with most major state contracts. There's a political, what is it, quid pro quo involved, and its there somewhere. It may be more obvious in some situations than others. This takes me back to my investigative reporter days: If you dig deep enough, it's there. Mark, it's always there. Okay?

DePue: Is that the nature of us as human beings?

Pensoneau: Part of it. Right. Remember, Paul Powell said, "You dance with the one that brung you." Let's not forget that.

DePue: And he was as good a dancer as Illinois had, right?

Pensoneau: (chuckles) Yeah. He was light on his feet. (both laugh)

DePue: Well, that brings up to closing the Thompson era. I assume that this was 1989, maybe 1990, that he made the decision, and he made the announcement, that he wasn't going to run for reelection.

Pensoneau: Uh huh.

DePue: What was the buzz among some of your old journalist friends when they heard that? Was that a surprise?

Pensoneau: It was a bit of a surprise. This is not meant as a joke, a number of individuals, followers of, involved with, aware of Illinois government really were starting to view Thompson as Governor for Life. After Stevenson couldn't pull it off back in 1982, many thought that Thompson was really unbeatable because everyone thought if anyone could have beaten him, it would have been Stevenson. When that didn't happen, as I recall, there was really no Democrat on the scene given even much of a chance of defeating Thompson. I mean, the odds were strong that if he had run in 1990, he would have won, and probably handily. So back on your asking what the reaction was, I think it was just… With my reporting days being over, I never had access to his disclosure statements, about his personal income, that kind of stuff, because I was no longer in that ballgame. But, I remember there was a feeling that Thompson had helped so many other people get ahead with lucrative judgeships – and we've talked about some of that – and with other plush positions in life in general, so many people Thompson had brought along, had nurtured, were in his ever-shifting entourage at one stage or another, had gone on to really do well, moneywise and in terms of their positions and their status. There was a bit of a feeling at some point as, what's Thompson going to do for himself? Now I don't know if Thompson himself would agree with that assessment, but there were those out there that were raising that question. I think it finally came down to the point that some felt that he had to surrender the governorship to get out there and "make some real money." I'm confident in my own mind he did that once he relinquished the governorship. I guess he went back to Winston and Strawn.

DePue: He went to Winston and Strawn, ended up chairing it.

Pensoneau: Ended up chairing it. I know this, and he became, among other things, a lobbyist, and I was still active. I remember my last year or so with the Coal Association, I ran into him a few times in the State House. He was there and it was kind of ironic, because at certain times all the lobbyists and the hangers-on and the spectators all congregate at that third floor rail. No one's privy to what the high and mighty are doing behind closed doors during **the end of sessions** making major decisions. And it was kind of interesting. Here was Thompson himself standing out there with us all at one point and we'd laugh.

I remember, I would see him and he always had this same remark. When he was Governor, or when I first met him, I had grown a moustache and he never forgot that; when I'd see him walking in and out of the State House, he'd always say, "When did you shave off the moustache?" I remember he used to say that a lot. What I want to get to saying, though, is that the word was, the amount of money you had to put down or commit to, to get through

the door to talk to Thompson about lobbying on an issue was substantial. He didn't come cheap. And they figured with his contacts and for the amount of money that reportedly it cost to get him to front for you on an issue, he had to be doing real well. I would tend to believe that.

DePue: You're talking though in his position in his law firm.

Pensoneau: He was lobbying, yeah, when he was with Winston and Strawn. Yeah, he was lobbying. He was down there, for a while, right there with the rest of us, calling legislators out and talking to them.

DePue: For most of his term in office, you were a lobbyist.

Pensoneau: Except for his first year.

DePue: You talked about the ease of journalists getting to see him and the difficulty that some other constituencies had in getting to him. How easy or difficult was it for you as a lobbyist to see him?

Pensoneau: Okay. All right. We had to see him because those were years when we were trying to reorient the coal industry and trying to revive some things to make us relevant and to give us a chance of surviving in the increasingly tough environmental atmosphere. Thompson was sympathetic, he was helpful and he knew Joe Spivey, the President of the Illinois Coal Association, and he knew me. When we wanted to see him, we were reasonably satisfied; we could see him. Also, his Deputy Governor in the first few years was a guy named Jim Fletcher and Joe Spivey was actually a good friend of Jim Fletcher and I got to know Jim and it was kind of interesting. If we wanted to discuss something, we would make an appointment to go see Jim Fletcher. Fletcher had one of the offices in the governor's complex. And it was kind of funny. Several times we'd be in there to see Fletcher to see if he could perhaps get across or convey to Governor Thompson our viewpoint on an issue that was pending affecting the downstate coal industry and Fletcher was always amenable to us on that.

I remember several times (chuckles) the door would open while we were in there with Fletcher, and it would be Thompson. He'd come in and "I'm sorry (laughing, I'm sorry," Thompson would say. "Oh, Jim, oh, I'm sorry guys, I didn't know he was in here with you." He's Governor then, you know. And Fletcher would say, "You got just a second Governor? Can you come in, Joe and Taylor are here. They're interested in this one issue that's pending." And Thompson, I remember this, he was this kind of guy, he'd say, "What's the problem?" Fletcher'd say something about it and then Thompson would look at us, he'd say, "Ahh, don't worry about it." (DePue laughs) It was great, that was the end of it, and he'd duck out. I remember that he'd duck out, then Fletcher would look at us and laugh and say, "I think your day's work is done." (both laugh) I remember another time we were in there with

Fletcher again. Thompson came in to see – he would just open the door and there we're sitting with Fletcher, and I remember, Thompson, "What's the problem? What are you guys in here for?" We would tell him, Well, we've got this situation and it is just going to be bad if so and so goes through with this and your department's got a deal. Thompson would say something like, "Well who's your problem?" or something like that like. We'd say, Well not as a problem, but there's this moving over here and we wish this wouldn't happen because we're moving ahead in getting this new mine developed and there's an obstacle here. It shouldn't be, but there is and they're saying that they got to get clearance from the Governor's office or something like that – I'm making this up, I remember well there was a situation like this, and Thompson would just say (laughing) to Fletcher something like, "Do you know what they're talking about?" Jim says, "Yeah, I'll tell you about it later." And Thompson says, "Ahh, don't worry about it." Jim says he'd say, Take care of it, we don't want any obstacles – or something like that, and that'd be it. Okay? Its great when you can operate like that, you know?

DePue: And you trusted him when he says things like that?

Pensoneau: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

DePue: Because he could deliver.

Pensoneau: I guess I should add that in all fairness, I remember one time Fletcher actually came over to see us. We had our own building, and I remember Fletcher came up and he wanted to discuss something. He said, "Oh, by the say, that problem you guys were in to see me on. I don't think you have a problem." We said, "Oh, no, not at all. It's gone away." Fletcher said, "Well, There was a conversation, and if that problem continued, I would have wanted you to pick up the phone real quick, because it wouldn't have continued beyond that night." And it didn't continue. Okay? So that was on the plus side of dealing with those guys.

Coal was trying to make a comeback. Several times we wanted to impress the presidents of all the coal companies that Thompson was of the right mindset to try to help us deal with our problems in adjusting to new environmental issues and so on. He went along when we called several, I guess you'd call them coal summits, in his office and he was great. You know, he went along with it. And I'll tell you, we were very fortunate. Of course he knew me from being the *Post-Dispatch* political guy, and Fletcher really liked Joe Spivey, so that was a combination that served us well.

I will say this, when we needed to talk to Thompson, we got to do it which was better than a lot of interest groups could say. I know some had to wait several months. Remember, I told you earlier in this conversation, if a reporter from the *Shawneetown Bugle* was in the State House and wanted to meet the Governor he was rushed in right away. Thompson was also very

frank with us. I remember one conversation… I hope this isn't boring you too much.

DePue: No, no.

Pensoneau: George Bush had been elected President, what, in '88, and this is near the end of Thompson's governorship. Thompson had really been helpful to us on fighting the acid rain issue in Washington, which was to be devastating for Illinois coal, and it was. And I'll never forget, we were astounded when George Bush, the first President Bush, caved in to national environmental lobbyists on acid rain. He caved in and said, Well, we've got to control it and I'm going to authorize these steps, this, this and this and ordered the federal EPA to this and so on, and it was devastating for us. I remember when Thompson called Joe and I up to his office in Chicago, and called us in. I remember we were alone; Thompson put his feet up on the desk –this was in the later stage of his governorship – and he said, "We're done on this issue." I remember he said, "You know, the President has caved. That's just too bad, because it undercuts everything else **we're doing** in various states, including right here." Federal EPA now has a green light to **pre-empt the situation** completely, and that's not going to be good for Illinois coal. I've just got to be honest with you," I remember he said, "I tried to do my best, as you guys know, but I just have to tell you, this is not good." And I remember that like yesterday. That was one of the last conversations we had with him when he was still Governor.

DePue: Well, that's probably a pretty good way to finish up. I did want to give you the opportunity of having any final reflections on, not just Jim Thompson, but the Thompson era.

Pensoneau: Well, Thompson was very flamboyant. Often people thought he was bigger than life. There was a school of thought across-the-board that he could have been elected Governor for Life, that after he survived the Stevenson challenge in 1982, that there was no Democrat that could have given him serious competition in the foreseeable future. His governorship was a mixed bag. There were glamorous aspects to it. He did things with a flair and, of course, he was very unconventional. He did show favoritism. He was very close to the press corps. Like Richard Ogilvie, and like Paul Simon, too, Thompson had substantial knowledge of the inner workings of newspapers. Very shrewd guy. He knew our needs, things about deadlines and so on. He understood those things.

He did play favorites. One time he really got me mad at him when there was a major situation involving the St. Louis area. It had started in the Ogilvie years, persisted in the Walker years, was still pending early on when Thomson took office, and he resolved it. It was a big story, and he revealed his decision, at night, to Bob Hillman, who was then running the *Chicago Sun-Times* bureau in the Illinois State House. This was not a front page issue

in Chicago. It was definitely front page in St. Louis and southern Illinois. The *Chicago Sun-Times* broke it; they ran this decision, but it wasn't front page in Chicago. It would have been front page in St. Louis, as I've said. It was a big thing for us. It concerned efforts to build a second major airport for the Greater St. Louis Area, and I got stung on it, as did the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat.* It was like, how could Chicago get this story first, and it was embarrassing.

I was ticked off, obviously. I let Dave Gilbert know. I think Gilbert said, "I knew you'd be coming down. Big mistake on Jim's part. Shouldn't have given it to Bob." I said, "Well," you know me." Dave Gilbert was his press secretary and I remember Dave saying, "You want him to apologize to you or what?" I said, "Well, myself and the Globe-Democrat guy upstairs, doesn't make us two look good when a major story affecting St. Louis appears first in Chicago. You know, we don't expect to get stuff concerning Chicago first in the St. Louis papers." Dave said, "I know. I know. I know. Well, you know he spends a lot of time with Bob Hillman and I guess he just gave it to him." As I recall, Thompson did apologize. He said basically, "I made a mistake. I know where you're coming from. Dave tells me you're upset and you should be." And I said, "Well, you know, it would have made us both look good." He said he understood and it won't happen again.

DePue: Let's finish this way: Would you have gotten that kind of an apology from Dan Walker?

Pensoneau: (sighs pause) Probably not. Probably not. Might have gotten it from Ogilvie. Probably not Walker. It was a different situation with Walker.

DePue: I just wanted to ask. I thought it would be.

Pensoneau: Yeah.

DePue: We're going to pick this up next time by talking about Jim Edgar, who I would think you would classify as one of the protégés that Jim Thompson brought up.

Pensoneau: Oh yeah.

DePue: Thompson's the kind of person to cultivate other people below him for future greatness.

Pensoneau: Yes. Yes. That was a Thompson strength. He made many individuals, literally.

DePue: Well, once again, it's been fun to hear you reminisce about these days, not so long in the past anymore. We're working our way up to modern history.

Pensoneau: That's right.

DePue: But we'll pick up Edgar and certainly we'll get to Ryan and Blagojevich, probably a little bit of both of those guys next session.

Pensoneau: That'd be fine.

DePue: Okay. Thanks Taylor.

(end of interview #8)

Interview with Taylor Pensoneau

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Interview # 9: May 4, 2009
Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Monday, May 4, 2009. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the director of oral history for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today I'm here with Taylor Pensoneau. Good morning, Taylor.

Pensoneau: Good morning, Mark.

DePue: (laughs) We've gotten to know each other pretty well. Pensoneau: We sure have. (laughs)

DePue: This is like our fifth session. We finally got up to the point about the rationale for starting this project in the first place, and that was the Jim Edgar Oral History Project. It's been a blast to do these interviews as well as talk to other people who were in the Edgar administration or affiliated with that administration. We've talked about Otto Kerner; we've talked about Russell Arrington and Richard Ogilvie; we had a fascinating discussion about Dan Walker, of course, and you are the author of the definitive biography on Walker.

Pensoneau: And Ogilvie.

DePue: And Ogilvie, and Arrington.

Pensoneau: And Arrington.

DePue: And the last time, we talked about Big Jim Thompson.

Pensoneau: We did.

DePue: That's the perfect segue, I guess, into talking about Jim Edgar.DePue: We pretty much finished off with the Thompson administration. I don't recall that we talked much about the Rutan decision, did we?

Pensoneau: Not too much, if we did.

DePue: Okay. Let me do this approach, then: let's get into Governor Edgar and how you first met him, I'm sure long before he was the governor.

Pensoneau: I first observed Jim Edgar when he was an intern or an aide or both to the late senator W. Russell Arrington. In those days I was still the Illinois political writer for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch.* In covering the General Assembly, I think the first session that I remember seeing Jim Edgar was the famous 1969 session, when, if I remember correctly, Jim was very visible as obviously a key aide to Arrington. That was an incredible session, as we've talked about, and as I'm sure others will talk about. As I remember, watching from the press box Jim seemed to be very much a key part of the Arrington operation in that session, which was **crucial** to the incredible productivity, to the success of that session. I didn't really talk to Jim very much – hardly at all – but I remember Jim seemed to be very much part of the Arrington team. He was very visible. That's my first recollection of Jim Edgar.

DePue: He would have been in his mid-twenties at that time, I would think.

Pensoneau: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, yeah. No, Jim couldn't have been very old, because I think he was only thirty years old when he got elected state rep in 1976, so Jim was probably, guessing, twenty-three, twenty-four years old.

DePue: That sounds about right. What was the time that you got a better sense, a real sense, of who Jim Edgar was? Do you recall that timeframe?

Pensoneau: Well, I talked to more of the young aides around Arrington than I did Jim, because I had known some of them in my earlier years. I had been here since 1965, and in those years, I had developed a pretty good conversational relationship with John Dailey; I think Richard Dunn; I believe Rick Carlson preceded Jim, if memory serves me right. I did talk to those individuals quite a bit; they would talk about others in the Arrington team, and they had a lot of admiration for Jim. I do recall that one of the things they said was Jim, for a very young man, was very astute already politically and that he picked up on things very quickly; he was a quick study in terms of the political realities that

were surrounding the whole Arrington mystique. Then I recall—I guess it was when Arrington had the debilitating stroke, and basically that ended his effectiveness as a State Senator and as the Republican leader of the Senate.

DePue: What year was that?

Pensoneau: He had the stroke early in January of 1971, and somewhere in therei – I don't recall if it was right before then or if it was after – but then Jim became sort of, in my view, the most visible assistant to the Republican Speaker of the House, W. Robert Blair from Park Forest. When you cover these things as a reporter and you observe and you write, you get a gut feeling always for who counts and who doesn't. My impression – it seemed to me that Jim was the key aide to Blair at that time. In other words, Jim moved from the Senate to the House and I thought was very visible as a top aide right away to Speaker Blair.

DePue: That was a rare occasion – maybe not at that time – that the Republicans had control of the House?

Pensoneau: It wasn't all that rare back in that part of Illinois political history. Actually, until the last, what, twenty years, in modern Illinois history, the GOP actually had more legislative control than Democrats year-in and year-out.

DePue: It's hard to kind of wrap our brains around that now because it's such a blue state.[13]

Pensoneau: Yeah, I agree. You're absolutely right in saying that.

DePue: Were you surprised when Jim Thompson selected Edgar? Edgar, of course, was elected to the legislature in '76 and then again in '78.

Pensoneau: As I recall, Jim Edgar ran for the Illinois House from his home neck of the woods over around Charleston, Coles County, in 1974. That's when we still had the cumulative voting system. Jim lost. It's the only election he ever lost in his life.

DePue: Yeah. Max Coffey was the one that beat him.

Pensoneau: Yeah, okay.

DePue: In the primary election.

Pensoneau: In the primary, yeah. I remember I was still covering politics, and while I didn't cover that race very closely – I mean, I was aware of it and of course reported on it – and I always had an impression that Jim Edgar was extremely clean-cut. I just felt it would really be kind of neat – using a common word –

[13] At interview time, television news programs showed maps with Democrat states in blue, Republican in red.

for a guy like Edgar to get elected to a House seat because there just weren't many individuals like Edgar that came on as so clean-cut. I was kind of disappointed when he didn't survive the '74 election year.

DePue: What do you mean by "clean-cut"?

Pensoneau: Well, he always was, in my opinion, an immaculate dresser. The Arrington people, the ones that I talked to more than Jim, spoke so highly of him. I was impressed at watching him. He seemed so efficient and well-prepared – as were other Arrington people. And then it looked like he was unquestionably the top aide to Speaker Blair. Jim always seemed to have a firm grip on what was going on at the time when he was involved, where he was. You just never heard anything negative about Jim Edgar, and that was unusual.

DePue: Well, going back to the "clean-cut" comment, because a lot of the things you're talking about is just that he was a very astute politician, he was efficient, he was a trusted aide. Those don't necessarily fall into the category of being clean-cut.

Pensoneau: "Clean-cut," to me is a widely-based generic term that I use often, and maybe I don't use it always totally correctly in a dictionary sense. He was decent. He was decent, he was untainted, and there either already had been or was going to be some corruption in that legislative district with one or more House members; Jim was, in my impression, a clean face, and he would have been a welcome addition to the House scene. It was just that, having covered the chamber so closely, as I did, I knew all sorts of little negatives about almost every downstate legislator. Some things you wrote and some things you didn't. But, you know, there were very few who were really, again, untainted – I'll change the word "clean-cut" to "untainted," okay – if you knew them intimately or knew about them intimately, as it was my job to do. I didn't know anything untoward about Jim Edgar, and I just thought he would be a welcome addition to the scene.

There's always a stroke of idealism in one that never goes away. I still had a certain amount of it in those years, and I just thought Jim Edgar would have been a welcome addition to the scene. I was pleased to hear he was running. I was a little surprised, for some reason. Then I was disappointed when I learned it wasn't going to work out in 1974. I do recall, when he went for I think the Conference of State Legislatures – is that what it's called? It was based in Denver at the time.

DePue: Colorado, yeah.

Pensoneau: And I think he moved out there.

DePue: Yeah, he did for a brief period.

Pensoneau: I do remember this: He said goodbye. (laughs) I just remember that. I think it was in the pressroom. DePue: To the collective group of reporters there, or to—

Pensoneau: I'm sure it was probably to other reporters, not just to me. I'm sure he probably said goodbye to some other reporters, too; I don't assume he came into the pressroom just to say goodbye to me. But he did come in. Although we hadn't talked much, I think he said something to the effect that it had been nice getting to know me, and I think he made some comment to the effect that I had done, he thought, a credible job in covering the General Assembly. I thought it was kind of nice coming from someone like him who had been at the center of the powerhouses in each chamber, Arrington and then Blair. But I'm sure I remember him telling me goodbye. I was a little saddened by it because again, I just thought he would have been a neat addition to the House scene, that we needed some clean faces like Jim Edgar.

DePue: Well, it almost sounds like you thought he might not be coming back to the scene.

Pensoneau: I think I probably did think that. I wouldn't pretend to say I knew Jim well enough to the extent that he would ever share with me any of his personal ambitions or what he had planned, because he didn't. I just know that several years later, I guess in '76, he was back and he was running, and he got elected. How is this for a trite phrase? – I was happy to see it

DePue: Well, of course that happened…

Pensoneau: Because I liked him.

DePue: …because Max Coffey moved from the House to the Senate side…

Pensoneau: Yeah, I remember Coffey moving to the Senate.

DePue: …and that opened up the scene for Edgar. He learned enough, I guess, from the first election to win the second time around.

Pensoneau: I guess. I'm sure Jim can explain all the inside dealings that went into 1974, and again when he won in 1976.

DePue: Do you remember much about him as – well, let's call him at that time a back-bencher?

Pensoneau: A back-bencher. I think that he's been written about as a back-bencher. One thing he did – when you talk to Jim himself, the governor himself, he may correct this – I thought as a state rep he tried to push legislation that would have instituted some special individual tax, maybe in addition to the income tax, with the money going just to schools.

DePue: To allow local districts to decide whether or not they wanted to…

Pensoneau: Was that it? Okay.

DePue: …accept an…

Pensoneau: All right, well, then you're better…

DePue: …income tax to replace the property tax.

Pensoneau: Okay, you're better informed than I am. But I remember that, and it didn't go anywhere. I thought that was kind of a bold move at the time, but I do associate that with him.

DePue: Let's move up to '78. He's reelected the second time, and just months after that, Jim Thompson reaches down and selects him as his Legislative Liaison.

Pensoneau: Right. I remember that.

DePue: Were you surprised by that?

Pensoneau: I was a little surprised, and I'll tell you why. I know Jim's going to read this, but I'll say it. At the time I was surprised from the aspect that I thought, here was Jim, a separately elected individual, elected in his own right, surrendering an elective seat for an appointive position. Now, we've seen that happen, of course, in other circumstances. As we talk right now here, early in 2009, Rahm Emanuel surrendered his elective congressional seat in Chicago to become Chief of Staff for President Obama. I don't want to get too far afield here, but even that surprises me. I'm always surprised when elected officials surrender their elective seats to take appointive positions, but that's just me talking. Even then I had that view: I was a little surprised from that viewpoint. I thought it was a, quote, "classy pickup" for Thompson.

Of course, I didn't know, I'll confess, that Thompson and Jim Edgar were that close or had that kind of relationship whereby Governor Thompson would ask him to take a position so important in the administration. I was surprised mainly, though, because Jim left his elective House seat to take an appointive position. That always left a person like me wondering, Well, what happens when Thompson's not governor, and Jim has to make decisions and relocate into some other situation. Not being an expert on his district, by any means, I figured he probably had a relatively safe seat in the Illinois House. But obviously it turned out that Jim knew exactly what he was doing.

DePue: Well, this is probably really going to put you on the spot – try to recall the nuances I'm going to ask here. Edgar had been groomed by some of the most powerful legislative leaders in Illinois history, especially in the case of Arrington. Then he went to Blair—Blair's the speaker—and he saw the operations of the legislature close and personally, and then he was in the

legislature. Maybe I'm stretching this a bit – you move to the legislative liaison for the sitting governor, that's a move towards the executive. Did you think perhaps he was looking more towards an executive role rather than legislative leadership?

Pensoneau: Perhaps Jim was, and only Jim can answer that. I didn't have sufficient insight into Jim to know that. To answer your question, I did not sense that, but I didn't know Jim well enough to know that. Thompson was a popular governor; his aides, his inner-circle staff, of which Jim became part, they were mostly highly regarded. It was kind of a prestige thing to be part of the Thompson team.

DePue: And he still obviously is legislative liaison.

Pensoneau: And he's still legislative liaison. I do recall this, as an aside, though – and this is in my book on Arrington (laughs) – that when interviewing Governor Edgar – I'll call him Jim here – when interviewing Jim for my book on Arrington, he did make a point of telling me that if not the toughest, certainly one of the toughest things he had to do politically speaking was to call Arrington and tell him he was leaving his Illinois House seat for a spot on Thompson's staff. I remember that Jim's had to obviously face a lot of challenging moments and big-time decisions and all that, but it's interesting he told me that was one of the toughest things he had to do.

DePue: How effective was he as a legislative liaison?

Pensoneau: I think he was effective. I can't give you intimate details. Thompson did very well with the general assembly. As I've said repeatedly, as I've written and said in talks, Thompson rose above strict partisanship. He was able to reach across the aisle. Thompson had a charismatic demeanor about him that broke down traditional political barriers and so on, and he accomplished what he wanted legislatively, and I'm sure from the time. But at the same time, there had to be someone who knew the ropes, knew the workings of the legislature, to help foment and implement all of this; that was Jim's role, and the record there is one of success.

DePue: Well, you understand the mindset of these legislators. Most all of them were older, had a lot more political experience than Jim Edgar did. Of course, Thompson had no legislative experience whatsoever.

Pensoneau: No.

DePue: Did you sense there was any resentment or resistance because here's this young upstart who's the legislative liaison for Thompson?

Pensoneau: I don't recall that. I just don't. I don't recall it.

DePue: So was this the reward for having worked with Arrington and Blair and…?

Pensoneau: Well, I have to assume Thompson was aware of Jim's intimate experience there, experiences with Arrington and Blair. I assume that, yeah.

DePue: Well, again, I think it says something about somebody that young who's able to establish a rapport and credibility with the other legislators.

Pensoneau: Well, I think I should point out here that Jim was highly regarded. Again, among a lot of the press corps and maybe others who were always kind of **good** government reformers or looking for ethical improvement in government, there was disappointment when Jim Edgar didn't prevail in 1974 in his bid for that Illinois House seat. I think that says a lot about Edgar. I mean, I was still in the idealistic mode in those years of wanting to write about improvements on all aspects of Illinois government. I thought Jim Edgar would be part of it, and I was disappointed when he lost. So I point this out to indicate that Jim was – as we would say for the most part – as I recall, well regarded in the State House. Remember this, too, as we've seen in all the years since, when so many former legislators go into lobbying they do very well because they have a leg up on those who have never been members – as they say, have been elected to legislative seats. Jim had been elected and reelected. That in itself established his credentials with legislators in terms of serving certainly as a legislative liaison for governor.

DePue: Would it be fair or accurate to say that you and other journalists saw Edgar at that time as something of the heir to the Ogilvie traditions of reforming government?

Pensoneau: I cannot say that. I can't say that. No. I mean, that would be giving myself too much credit – credit I don't deserve – because I didn't have that much insight into Jim. I've never been what you would call a confidant of Jim; I've never been that close to him. I've always observed him, first as reporter and then as the Illinois Coal Association guy, and now even as an author. But I didn't have that kind of insight. I knew that Jim Edgar was highly regarded in Thompson's world, and that meant a lot because a number of people who Thompson brought in at one point for assistant slots and other things, went on to big things – a number of judges, other things. It was always interesting that Thompson brought a number of bright people into public life, and some of them remain in key spots today – one or more federal judges in Chicago, things like that. But no, I can't say that…

I didn't talk to Jim that much. If I had a question about a Thompson legislative proposal… I should point out that I made the transition in '78 from the pressroom to the coal association, so actually, I don't recall – actually Jim – it's coming back to me, and I'd like to talk about a personal note. Jim actually was named Secretary of State by Thompson when I was at the coal association. I had already left.

DePue: Well, that was the next question anyway, and that's 1981.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Now, I can tell you a little bit there of an interesting background, the kind of stuff you like to read about when you write books. I was at the coal association, and of course Dixon gets elected United States Senator, so we have a vacancy; obviously Republican Governor Thompson is going to appoint a Republican. Well, as I recall at the time, three prominent Republicans' names were mentioned as – if not more than possible – as likely appointees, and I happen to know they all were interested. One was George Ryan; the other two were congressmen, Tom Corcoran and Ed Madigan, both Republican congressmen. And I assumed, as did others, that one of those three would be named Secretary of State.

Well, at the coal association, we had a staff. I was then the vice president of the Illinois Coal Association. We had one very good-looking young woman, extremely good-looking, who had a staff position. A succession of young men were always coming in to have coffee with her and so on. There was a young guy, and I can remember his name – it was Tom something – who had a role in the Thompson administration and talked a pretty good game. I didn't know exactly what he did, but he talked like he was an insider, and I would just listen. You never knew.

Well, I remember a conversation when it was getting time for Thompson to name the person he was going to appoint to the vacant Secretary of State position, and this individual was over there visiting the very attractive young woman. I was doing something where I was near her desk, and I could hear their conversation; they were talking about the Secretary of State appointment, which was imminent. This guy Tom somebody, said to me, "Who do you think it's going to be?" And I said, "Well, I wouldn't know. The names that are mentioned are Ryan and Madigan and Corcoran." I said, "Probably one of those three." He looked up and me and he said, "You're wrong, it's going to be Jim Edgar." That's the first I personally had an inkling of that, and I was a little surprised to hear it. I said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah, it's going to be Jim Edgar." I'll be darned if it didn't happen several days later.

DePue: Okay, fascinating insight on the story here. (laughs) You already mentioned you were in the Illinois Coal Association.

Pensoneau: Right, mm-hmm.

DePue: I'll put you on the spot a little bit here. You and I had talked quite a bit about that move from being a journalist to now being a lobbyist. That's a significant move. I don't know if we talked much about your personal philosophical, your political views, and how they had evolved at that point in time as well.

Pensoneau: Yeah, sure. I always want to qualify it, though, because I was a lobbyist, but I was a lot more than a lobbyist. I mean, lobbying was maybe 25 percent of my role. I was more of a high-level operative, I would like to say. The coal mines

were heavily regulated, as they should have been, by a number of state agencies on environmental grounds, on safety issues, all these things. I was heavily involved; I worked for the industry, but I was a bridge between all the regulatory agencies and all the coal mines. It was a different situation every day in terms of all the challenges involved in coal mines and how every aspect of coal mining was regulated, and I was involved in that.

In addition, there was a time when the coal industry – well, it's continued – but those were in years when the coal industry was coming under heavy fire from environmentalists for its basic existence. Illinois coal was under special attack because of the high sulfur content of much of Illinois coal and the pollution that resulted from its burning without environmental controls. So that made me a very public figure because I was in a position of orchestrating a response of the coal industry – in the public sense around the state – to this very concerted, highly intensified effort by, I will say, the environmental community, to eradicate Illinois coal. So all those things went beyond the pure legislative lobbying. But I was a registered lobbyist, and I did lobby.

When we talk about lobbying, though – you can tell I'm a little interested in this (DePue laughs) – I tried to avoid the stereotype of lobbyists. I very seldom hung out at the third-floor rail, that's the proverbial hangout for lobbyists in the State House. Although I was a very visible figure because I'd come out of the pressroom and all that stuff, I was not a flamboyant lobbyist. I tried to be behind the scenes. I worked closely with a combination of downstate legislators starting here at Springfield and going south. It didn't matter whether they were Republican or Democrat, they had a vested interest in maintaining something of a healthy coal industry for economic reasons. So I worked more behind the scenes with them. I would surface in terms of committees, had to testify a lot. There were always anti-coal bills being introduced by Chicago legislators, suburban legislators, and I had to deal with those. I was in the open, but, I don't know, I didn't like the idea of just hanging out, always pigeonholing people, walking around from one chamber to another, this kind of stuff. I didn't like that.

I had written negatively about some of that, and I thought it was hypocritical if I suddenly let myself immediately fit that kind of stereotype. So I tried to avoid it – and had some success doing – because at that time, some other newspaper reporters around the state were writing stories about lobbyists. They would interview me, and they would point out – thank goodness – that I didn't conduct myself as a run-of-the-mill lobbyist; I was more behind the scenes. I always want to point that out.

DePue: How about the other perception about lobbyists, of wining and dining members?

Pensoneau: Okay, we did do some of that. I'll acknowledge that. I wasn't alone. The president of the coal association in those years was Joseph Spivey.

DePue: Yeah, we talked about him quite a bit.

Pensoneau: Oh, we already have? Okay. Joe was much more in favor of traditional lobbying. I exerted my influence on Joe to bring Joe more into my mode of thinking about lobbying. I'm going to say that for the record. I doubt Joe will ever read this.

But then you brought up about how I changed. I think we talked about this: I worked for one of the most liberal newspapers in the United States, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. It remains to this day very liberal. In my years in the pressroom I probably considered myself a Democrat. I actually did vote once when I was a reporter, as I already told you, in the 1970 Democratic primary. I did vote in that primary. I took a ballot as a Democrat, which I thought a reporter never should do, but I pretty much sympathized with Democrats on issues and things like that. However, my father in Belleville, where I grew up, ran a men's clothing store. So I had an affinity for, an empathy for, small businessmen, because I knew the things my dad had to go through to keep his head above water as a small businessman in Illinois; that didn't often coincide with liberal views of issues economically. So I always considered myself certainly more conservative, especially on taxes and economic issues, than the editorial page of the *Post-Dispatch*.

But I made the move early in 1978, and that brought me into a world where I became a spear-carrier, a front man, an operative for big-time corporate interests. Surprisingly, some of the heads of coal companies were Democrats, but the majority opinion was that, Well, we're Republicans – even some were conservative Republicans – at least we're business-oriented individuals; we're not big-government people, and so on. So gradually, representing these individuals – and I agreed to do this – my philosophy, my belief structure, began to swing in their direction.

I would say that the thing that probably really influenced me, when I made the move to the coal industry, immediately I was thrown into the Washington, DC picture. Jimmy Carter was president, and I had to deal with Carter people on issues affecting Illinois coal in Washington. It was a very educational, eye-opening experience for me. I didn't realize how anti-business these people were, and in my opinion how ridiculous they were in terms of what they wanted to impose and how they viewed business and how they viewed free enterprise and even capitalism. This really started to create an alienation in me towards my traditional Democratic sympathies. The Carter people did an awful lot to drive me, first towards the middle, and then eventually into the Republican fold philosophically.

I did vote in one more primary in the early 80's. I took a Democratic ballot for very personal reasons, to support a certain state rep candidate right here in central Illinois. But since then, I've taken Republican ballots, continue to so do, and so for the record in Illinois, I'm a Republican. I'm a moderate Republican. You might say I'm a Jim Edgar Republican, (laughter) because he's a very moderate Republican. But on certain issues, I could never, in this day and age, I could never run to be a candidate in the Republican circle because I don't agree with the party's hard line on abortion and things like that. That's still the old, if not liberalism, that's still the old moderation in me. I'm not a conservative Republican, but on the other hand, before I left the coal industry I grew to be very antagonistic towards a lot about liberal Democratic politics.

DePue: Okay. Well, that's all very important to get a sense of where you are and how your life is evolving at the time. You are in the Illinois Coal Association during the years when Jim is Secretary of State. Was there much direct involvement that you had, or were you watching what he was doing as Secretary of State?

Pensoneau: Oh, I was watching. One little aside, again, is our financial person on the staff – she handled the finances for the coal association – was a very personable woman named Sherri Struck. Now, Sherri and her husband, Earl Struck, who's now her late husband, were neighbors of Jim and Brenda Edgar out in the Hyde Park neighborhood. Sherri and Earl were very close to Jim and Brenda. This is when Jim was secretary of state. Brenda frequently was in our office at the ICA, visiting with Sherri; they were very close. I mean, it was my understanding that – if what Sherri and Earl used to tell me was true – that when Jim and Brenda would go out of town, Sherri and Earl had a key to their house and watched their house. So again, I hope I've not been misinformed on things like that. But I know that Brenda was up at the ICA a number of times visiting with Sherri, not to see me or Joe Spivey or other staff people, but Brenda would be up there a lot.

Now, in Jim's 1990 campaign for governor, Sherri had a key position on his staff. Sherri worked all day for us, and then she'd leave our office about five o'clock and go over and work halfway through the night at Jim's campaign office. After Jim was elected governor, Sherri resigned from the Illinois Coal Association staff and took a job – I always say – as kind of an executive aide or executive assistant to Jim. When Jim was governor, at least in times when I would go over there, when he was in office as governor, the desk right outside his office where you would go into the governor's office, that's where Sherri sat. I mean, Sherri was very close. Sherri and Earl were close to the two Edgar children, Brad and Elizabeth. So there was that personal situation there where Sherri… Jim always had kind of a sort of joke with me, that in a way he rescued Sherri from the (DePue laughs) clutches of the Illinois Coal Association. (laughter)

DePue: Let me just go through some of the major initiatives that Edgar was able to push through while he was Secretary of State. If nothing really comes to mind, then we can move through these pretty quickly, but just to kind of touch base with them. When he first arrived he or the office discovered the little bit of a scandal up in the Chicago office with selling licenses.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: Would that ring any bell?

Pensoneau: I vaguely remember it. All I know is he tried to deal with it.

DePue: I suspect you remember more about the fight in Illinois to lower DUI, or maybe it was DWI,[14] from 1.0 to 0.8.

Pensoneau: But Jim was a leader in that campaign. Jim's always felt very strongly about the drunk driving issue, obviously. I've always viewed Jim – as I think he acknowledges – as a devout Baptist. Jim doesn't drink, didn't smoke. Those were two of the things that went into my earlier word, clean-cut.

DePue: Well, I was waiting for you to say that.

Pensoneau: Okay. I should point that out. (laughs) I include that in my picture of Jim as very clean-cut.

DePue: So he had that reputation early on as well.

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

DePue: He wasn't the one who's going to go to the bars, then?

Pensoneau: I don't think so. I mean, I can't say for sure, but, I never pictured Jim Edgar in bars or hanging around bars.

DePue: Which is where a lot of business is, right?

Pensoneau: Well, yes, sometimes. But I knew about Jim's religious beliefs, the fact he didn't drink, he didn't smoke. Sherri Struck kept me filled in on those things. In those years, the things Sherri told me aided and abetted my very positive image of Jim Edgar.

DePue: Anything in particular you remember about that DUI fight from a political sense?

[14] DWI, Driving While Intoxicated, was changed at some point to DUI, Driving Under the Influence. In either case, the numbers represented the percentage concentration of alcohol in the blood, often cited in automobile driving incidents.

Pensoneau: I don't. I just remember Jim was in the forefront of it. He made no bones about it, and as I recall, there was progress on the DUI legislative front when he was Secretary of State. I think there was progress, and I'm sure Jim Edgar's got to get credit for a good part of it.

DePue: Yeah. Well, it went to 0.8 instead 1.0. Another one, very similar to kind of a campaign, is the push to make auto insurance a requirement.

Pensoneau: He pushed to make it mandatory, did he not?

DePue: Yes.

Pensoneau: I remember the insurance industry fought it, as I recall, but I think he was successful. Am I wrong on that?

DePue: No, he prevailed.

Pensoneau: Okay, so yeah, I remember it. Yeah, the answer is yes.

DePue: Another one: literacy campaign and organ donor campaign that he pushed as Secretary of State. I'm mentioning a lot of these because the secretary of state office is often viewed as one of the plums because it has so much patronage attached to it, but he also was doing some other things that brought him some attention from both sides of the political spectrum.

Pensoneau: Right, yeah. Yeah.

DePue: And another one I know he's personally proud of is the construction of the state library building, right across from the capitol.

Pensoneau: As he should be. I take my hat off there. I think that in this sterile age of architecture when the old, traditional grandiosity of government buildings has gone by the wayside for probably fiscal and other reasons, I think that our Illinois State Library is a monument to architectural magnificence of the past. I think that's a crowning jewel of Jim Edgar's whole high-level public life in Illinois.

DePue: Okay. Let's get into the 1990 campaign, then. How much do you recall about that particular campaign, again, now as one of the key figures in the Illinois Coal Association and not a journalist? Were you following that campaign pretty closely?

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah, extremely closely. I had two key individuals that kept me very well abreast of how things were going and the ups and downs; they were Mike Lawrence and Sherri Struck. Between Mike and Sherri, I was able to hear a running litany of the challenges of the early campaign. Mike was probably my best friend then. I was so very proud of Mike, considering the fact that Mike and I… We figured out in Chicago the other weekend we've known each

other since 1966. All our earlier formative years were as young, hardworking reporters in the pressroom in the Illinois State House, so we agreed in Chicago we've been friends for forty-three years. You have to understand that I was always so proud of Mike, because here he is, such a key player in the Edgar movement, *per se*, and was probably my best friend. Every Sunday morning, Mike and I had breakfast, and the only times we didn't were when Mike was with soon-to-be Governor Edgar, with Jim. Mike knew my political background and my understanding of some things, so yeah, Mike would bounce things off of me; I had real insight into the issues and the challenges and the things that Neil Hartigan was throwing up to try to beat Edgar and things like that. So yeah, I had a window into the inner workings of the campaign.

And then Sherri—I mean, during the day, I was with Sherri. Sherri was working all night at Edgar's campaign headquarters, and then she was working for us during the day. Mike shared more with me than Sherri. I learned more about the inner details about all the details that go into running such a massive undertaking as running for governor of Illinois, and it was fascinating. It was kind of an education to me just to listen to Sherri and Mike talk.

DePue: We haven't established for the record, I don't think, what Mike Lawrence's role was in the campaign, so could you explain that?

Pensoneau: Well, I can't remember…

DePue: Well, you mind if I help?

Pensoneau: I can't remember what his title—(laughs) yeah, help me on it. We were together every Sunday morning, and then usually once during the week we'd have maybe lunch, you know, so…

DePue: I believe since 1987, Lawrence was appointed as the press secretary.

Pensoneau: Okay, I remember when he went to work for then–Secretary of State Jim Edgar. Yeah, I remember that, because at that time, I remember Mike and I had some heart-to-heart. He wanted to talk to me because there was an earlier time in the state house atmosphere when reporters never went to work for the state; that was almost unheard-of. It was not an everyday occurrence. Of course, I was one of the first to leave the pressroom to go into what you would call lobbying, okay? That was a pioneering move. Okay.

Well, I think Mike wanted to have a heart-to-heart talk with me about the different mindset changes that come about and how I dealt with leaving the objective role of a reporter in the State House pressroom into going into an advocacy role for a particular special interest or cause or whatever, which I did. Now he wasn't doing exactly the same thing; he was leaving to go to work for a bright young statewide officeholder who was highly regarded. But

still, he did want to discuss some of the feelings, though, of leaving, for him, a lengthier pressroom role than it turned out I had. He had been there more years and had been in the newspaper business longer than I. So he wanted to talk about these things, and we did have lengthy discussions. I remember when he went to work – that was, as you said, '87 – I think he originally went in with the title of Press Secretary.

DePue: That's what he was during the administration. I believe that's the role he played during the election campaign as well.

Pensoneau: Okay, sure.

DePue: But would it also be fair to say that, not only is he the press secretary but probably Edgar's closest personal advisor, political adviser?

Pensoneau: Well, this is where my personal prejudice enters in, and I will talk about it. As I said, Mike's probably been off and on my best friend. Okay, having said that, I'm always kind of prejudiced in favor of Mike. I think there's just no question that Mike has just been a **key** adjunct to the Jim Edgar movement. Mike's been there. I don't think there's anybody that's more of an insider than Mike.

DePue: Well, then, describe his personality for us – who he is.

Pensoneau: Mike or Jim?

DePue: Mike.

Pensoneau: Okay. (laughs) Mike was a hardcore journalist. Mike was very straight. Mike is scrupulously honest. Mike has a lot of the characteristics of W. Russell Arrington. Mike does not tolerate incompetence, does not tolerate slackers. He's a straight-shooter. He didn't get into government to feather his own nest. He is intent on staying clean. He was intent on avoiding anything that appeared to be a conflict of interest, I can assure you that. I think Mike, though, felt that he could play a bigger role in life around here than his pressroom role. And I think, too, a little bit like me, I think there was the early signs of a burnout factor with Mike in terms of daily journalism. But I think that Mike jumped when there was someone he considered attractive and honest. Mike was clean, and I think he felt that he was willing to take a major gamble and go with someone that he felt to be clean—those are the words we used—and Jim Edgar was, for Mike, not just the best fit, the perfect fit.

But Mike's a tough guy, and I know that some of those in Jim's retinue didn't like Mike's straightforward ways. Mike can be gruff. Mike probably would not win many personality contests. Mike can be crabby, and as the Edgar years evolved and as the Edgar governorship proceeded, a number of people were scared of Mike because they knew that if Mike was aware of something untoward, he wasn't going to ignore it.

DePue: Was he the kind of person in counseling and working with Edgar to tell Edgar what was on his mind?

Pensoneau: I think so. Most people around the governor in the palace guard or inner circle, it's my impression – and I think it's a relatively safe impression – don't question too much what a governor says or shows he intends to do. I think that Mike would be honest in his relationship. Mike was honest in his relationship with Jim. I think there were times that maybe Mike felt this particular thrust or undertaking wasn't going well, or there was a problem with this individual or that individual, and it had to be dealt with. I think that Mike had a very man-to-man, straightforward relationship with Governor Edgar. That was the outside impression, and it was my understanding that was the reality of it inside.

DePue: The primary election. Edgar is running against Steven Baer. Remember much about Baer's campaign?

Pensoneau: I never met Baer. As I recall, Baer was the candidate of a fringe conservative group in the party. Didn't Edgar win by about 75 percent, something like that?

DePue: Yeah, Edgar had a considerable victory, but I think the margin of victory – as I have read, at least – wasn't as wide as some would have thought, which gave some cause to have some concern about that conservative wing and the message they would deliver. Again, I don't want to put you on the spot too much, but obviously it was about the income tax surcharge, because already by this time Edgar had come up… Just kind of background here: Thompson late in his administration, because of some fiscal problems with the state, pushed through temporary income tax raise.

Pensoneau: They call it a surcharge. Yeah, I remember that.

DePue: Yeah, from 2.5 to 3 percent for personal, from 4 to 4.8, I believe, for corporate.

Pensoneau: Oh, for corporate. Yeah, for corporations. Okay.

DePue: And that was due to expire in a couple of years, and of course Edgar comes out in favor of—

Pensoneau: Making it permanent.

DePue: Okay. So having stepped on you a little bit…

Pensoneau: That was a gamble, politically.

DePue: And Baer is running against that.

Pensoneau: Yeah, I guess he was. I just remember he was running as a candidate of the conservative wing, I'll call it, of the Illinois Republican Party.

DePue: Well, the other thing that he was running on was anti-abortion. Can you talk a little bit about Edgar's position and how he arrived at it?

Pensoneau: That's such a touchy issue. Gosh, it's a good question, Mark, but I've got a mental lapse on where Governor Edgar stood on abortion. You may know from the record. Conservative Republicans in Illinois, obviously anti-abortion is a major tenet of their political being. I'm sorry, I just can't—

DePue: Edgar was the pro-choice Republican candidate.

Pensoneau: Was he? Okay. I mean, that's certainly believable. If that's what your research has shown, fine.

DePue: Okay. Well, again, I don't mean to put you on the spot here, because you're in a different role at that time.

Pensoneau: I am.

DePue: The general election, then, running against Neil Hartigan. Tell me about your impressions of Neil Hartigan.

Pensoneau: I had known Hartigan. In fact, back when Walker was governor, when Hartigan was lieutenant governor, Hartigan wanted me to leave the pressroom and go to work for him. So I had known Neil Hartigan. I met Neil Hartigan; I knew who he was. From early on, he was always considered one of the bright young people coming out of Mayor Daley's circle in Chicago. Of course, Neil was part of a longtime entrenched major respected political family in Chicago. I didn't really get to know Neil, though, personally, until the 1972 election campaign when he was the running mate of Dan Walker. That was not by choice, but we know all about that.

DePue: Right.

Pensoneau: Okay. I spent some time as the Illinois political writer for the *Post-Dispatch*, covering the lieutenant governor's race. I knew the Republican candidate, Jim Nowlan, much better. At the start of that race, I knew Jim quite well. But then I got to know Neil, and I thought he was personable.

DePue: Would you use the phrase "clean-cut" for Hartigan?

Pensoneau: I didn't know him that well. Perhaps I could use that phrase, but I didn't. I found him to be personable, almost fun to be with—this is in '72—because it was so obvious he and Walker had nothing in common. They were thrown together by weird political circumstances. It was like Hartigan kind of made a joke out of it. How do I phrase it? It was like, This is a joke. You must find

this all interesting. Here I'm a candidate for lieutenant governor of the party, and I don't even talk to the candidate for governor. We have nothing in common. It would be like, What's he doing next week? You're covering this stuff. It was almost at that level, okay. So Walker and Hartigan win, and sometimes there would be times that Hartigan would call me down to his office to touch base on some downstate issue or something. I think he came to view me as a reliable source of information on downstate issues. Often I would (laughs) say, "Well, governor" – you call lieutenant governor 'governor' too – "Well, governor, are you sure you got the time?" He says, "That's all I got. I'm not doing anything." (laughter) I remember that like yesterday. (laughter) So I would go down and have lengthy conversations, and eventually he asked me if I would consider going to work for him as kind of his downstate emissary. Of course I didn't do that, but I remember that. That's when he was lieutenant governor.

DePue: Let's bring up to the 1990 campaign again. The central issue in that campaign is the income tax surcharge. Of course Neil Hartigan takes the opposite position, so this is kind of, we're working against political convention. Here the Democrat is running and says, I don't want to make that a permanent increase, and the Republican is advocating that it **is** a permanent increase. So your reflections on that, and what were you hearing from Mike? That's what I'm really curious about.

Pensoneau: Oh, I think Mike talked about it, but the conversations were predictable, probably along the line of what you said. In a way, you sometimes answer your own questions, and you do it better than I do.

DePue: I'm not supposed to do that.

Pensoneau: I know you're not supposed to, but… (laughs) But I think Mike would point out, as you've just done, the irony of it, and say, You know, here we are, (laughs) and the secretary – Jim was still secretary of state –this is his position on the surcharge; it would be like, Hartigan knows the state needs it, but for political expediency he's turning his back on what would be a normally Democratic position. Yeah, yeah.

DePue: Does that mean that Lawrence and Edgar expected that if Hartigan won, he'd impose the permanent income tax anyway?

Pensoneau: I can't remember that much in detail. I'm sure that there was an expectation, generally speaking, that had Hartigan won, yeah, he would have changed his position – that or there would have been another tax hike proposal.

DePue: Okay. How about the outcome, the results of the election, then?

Pensoneau: It was close. It was close, as everyone predicted it would be. I don't have the board of elections figures in front of me. I'm not sure I ever had them. As I recall – again, Mike and Jim can correct me on this – it was close downstate,

even though Jim was a downstater and Hartigan was a Chicago Democrat. I'm sure Jim did quite well in traditional Republican suburbs of Chicago. I think where Hartigan lost it was in some wards in Chicago where he didn't do near as well as a Democratic gubernatorial candidate normally would. I think he had problems in some of the black wards lost – I think – because, and maybe in more than that. In other words, I think Hartigan he did not do as well in the city of Chicago as you would have thought a traditional, died-in-the-wool, down-the-line Chicago Democrat would have done in the city.

DePue: And I know that the election results; at the end of it all it was a very close race, as you mentioned. The plurality was 83, 909.

Pensoneau: Was that what it was? Okay. Yeah, it was close.

DePue: In Illinois circles that's very close.

Pensoneau: Agreed.

DePue: What was Edgar's relationship with the media? Again, you're at kind of a bird's-eye view, talking to Mike Lawrence as press secretary.

Pensoneau: Yeah. One little personal recollection is, on the night of the election I was actually at my home in Springfield – still living in Springfield then, yes – and I remember I got a call from Mike about midnight – I'm going to guess, about midnight. As I recall, basically I was listening to the radio, but the radio had it uncertain as who was going to win, and the hour was getting late. I got a call from Mike; I don't know, it might have been anywhere from 11:30 to 1:00 in the morning. Mike said, "I can't be on the line long, but we got it; we've won," and that's how I found out Edgar had won.

Okay, back on the media. Well, Mike was a tremendously respected member of the media, and, of course, that was a big plus for Jim. That would have been a plus for **any** major officeholder that had hired Mike to handle that job. Jim had a terrific weapon in his political arsenal in having Mike handle the media; Mike was a natural, and Mike did a good job. The media was pretty favorable – as I recall – to Edgar throughout the whole thing. I know that if Mike saw something he considered unfair or certainly inaccurate, he wouldn't hesitate to call the reporter or the broadcaster and clear the air and correct whatever it was for the record; I know that. Mike didn't mince words in dealing with the media any more than he did so later on in dealing with administration officials who he thought might be on the verge of becoming problems. Mike had tremendous respect. Mike developed and maintained very respectful, close relationships with the political editors of the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times*, and that was always crucial in terms of the media situation of a major statewide officeholder. There would have been some media people who would have taken shots at Jim Edgar in the campaign, and later on as governor, who thought twice about doing it because of Mike

Lawrence. They didn't want to face the calling-on-the-carpet that would result with Mike. (DePue laughs) Jim did quite well in the media, but of course, I have to say, he had a top-flight media person.

DePue: Well, let me put a question a little bit different way, because he's succeeding somebody who is, by most accounts – Jim Thompson is the master at cultivating the press room and cultivating the… So compare and contrast…

Pensoneau: No argument.

DePue: …the styles of Jim Edgar personally with Jim Thompson.

Pensoneau: Okay. Jim Edgar didn't engage in the kind of personal relationship situation, to my knowledge, that Thompson did. Well, nobody did. As I said earlier, Thompson was in a world by himself in terms of media relations. I think I said earlier – and I'll repeat here – that in all my years, the two major officeholders that courted and had the most success with the media, almost warm relationships, you might say, were Jim Thompson and Paul Simon. Everybody else was in another, lower orbit. Jim Edgar wasn't warm and fuzzy with the media. He had a different personality than Thompson, and that was reflected in the media relations. Jim knew who was important and who maybe wasn't as important in terms of the media. I'd say Jim certainly had a better media relationship than obviously Dan Walker; obviously Rod Blagojevich, who came afterwards; probably better than George Ryan; probably better than Otto Kerner. Richard Ogilvie, all things considered, had a pretty solid relationship with the media. As I've already said, Thompson was in a league by himself. So I would say that Thompson was probably incomparable in that regard, and he did it himself. He had competent people in his press office, but he did it himself. Edgar probably was somewhere in the mode of Ogilvie in terms of press relations, but as I said, but he had a strong right hand there in Mike.

DePue: A different way of looking at the same kind of issue in terms of Edgar's personality: describe his campaign style, how he connected with the public. Again, compare and contrast with Thompson in that respect.

Pensoneau: Well, Jim was more formal, and he insisted on being more dignified. You have to start off with the fact that Jim, in my impression – I don't know what other word to use – was very handsome, and he had Brenda, very pretty, and these two beautiful kids. I always said that it was like a political postcard family. I mean, when he had the four of them together this was the all-American family. Jim was kind of the all-American boy; he liked sports, and he liked a lot of the same things a lot of "regular guys" liked.

But Jim was not a back-slapper. There was always a little bit of a debate among those who didn't quite know how to act around Jim, a little bit of a debate as to whether he was, after all of his success and accomplishments, still a little bit shy, **or** was there just maybe an aloofness there as a result of all

of his success; that always kind of remained the debate among some. Now obviously, there were always Edgar critics out there, obviously Democrats, but there were some others too, and they always felt that he could have shown more warmth and let loose more personality-wise than he did. Jim always seemed to be in control. He always seemed to be, at least to the outside world and even maybe insiders, rather unflappable. But he wasn't warm and fuzzy. Thompson was.

You just didn't feel that he was ever comfortable in a back room, smoke-filled room setting where intense wheeling and dealing was going on; it just wasn't his style. There was this image of this clean-cut – I'm using the words again – of this clean-cut all-American guy; he tried to carry that through, you know, with considerable success. Jim was popular; he was popular around the state. I think people took pride in the fact that they had this handsome governor, and he was personable and very, very smart. I think Mike often said he had a photogenic memory. I think Jim read a lot. He had a good sense of history; he had a good grasp on history. Again, though, he was not warm, and he wasn't fuzzy, and he was not a back-slapper. In fact, he more tilted toward the formal side.

DePue: What kind of a campaigner, then, was Neil Hartigan?

Pensoneau: Hartigan – you got more of the affable side of an old-line Irish politician from Chicago. The Democrats always had more of an organization statewide than Republicans. It looked like in some ways Hartigan kind of enjoyed himself. He sometimes stuck to pretty traditional Democratic circles when he went downstate. Everybody knew he was "Mayor Daley's guy," and no one would dare… So he could be more relaxed and so on. In many ways, Hartigan had more of a built-in political framework, support structure, than Jim Edgar did. Hartigan, I thought, did immerse himself, did become more popular downstate than maybe any other Chicago Democrat I can think of – well, until Blagojevich. Hartigan was likeable; he was likeable. You had the impression he didn't take everything overly seriously. He had a humorous side to his personality. He had a wife who was very nice, probably considered a political asset, Marge.

Downstate Democrats made a strong effort for him, not only because it was expected – he was Mayor Daley's anointed person – but because they really liked him more personally than they did previous Chicago Democrats who had been on the statewide ticket. Some, they thought, were just thrust down their throat by Chicago, and there was a resentment factor there; there wasn't that with Hartigan. Hartigan, to his credit, achieved a pretty significant degree of popularity downstate for a traditional Chicago Democrat.

DePue: What would you say was the margin of victory, then? What was the thing that tilted it in Edgar's direction?

Pensoneau: I think I've already tried to refer to it. I think it was that Hartigan didn't do nearly as well in the city of Chicago as you would have thought.

DePue: Was there an issue or something about the personalities of the two men?

Pensoneau: You know, I just don't recall. There was always a conspiracy theory, okay? There was always a conspiracy theory, which many may not agree with – this was always talked about in hushed tones – a conspiracy theory that the Democratic leader in the House, Michael Madigan, didn't like Hartigan and really didn't want him to be governor. And there was also a feeling that if he did as poorly as he did in some parts of Chicago, was then-Mayor Daley in the end that gung-ho? Now, I throw that out. This is completely off the cuff, but there's always theories about why he didn't do better in Chicago. I mean, there was no question there was friction between Madigan and Hartigan. We downstaters were always told it supposedly went back to when they were both young, aspiring political figures in the first Mayor Daley's office, and that there was something that happened whereby Madigan was offended by Hartigan, and it was never forgotten. That was one theory. Another thought was that Hartigan definitely did not do as well certainly in some of the black wards as he should have; I can't remember what issue or issues would have created that situation. But then again, he just didn't do as well overall in Chicago as you thought he would have, especially since he ran better downstate than many thought he would, okay. (laughs) So that always led conspirators to question whether Mayor Daley really was that gung-ho for Hartigan being governor. You know, there was always a plot line in Illinois political thought that went – who knows if it's true or not – but it went as follows: the Daley family really did not always automatically endorse the idea of a fellow Chicago Irish-Catholic being governor. Now, you take it from there.

DePue: Too much competition.

Pensoneau: **You** said it.

DePue: The conventional wisdom on this particular campaign was one of the things that tilted the election towards Edgar, and maybe the thing, was that ultimately the public believed Edgar when he said, "Well, we're going to have to accept this surcharge, but I'm not going to raise your taxes after that," versus Hartigan, who said, "No, we aren't going to have the surcharge, but I can't make any promises about taxes." The public wasn't sure – says the conventional wisdom – they wanted to trust Hartigan. Does that wash with you?

Pensoneau: No, it doesn't. I think Edgar gets credit for having the political gumption to go out and be honest on the tax issues. Everybody knew that the surcharge probably should be renewed or made permanent in terms of the state's fiscal health. Mike and the governor himself may argue with me on this, but no, I go

back to what I just outlined to you. I don't think those were deciding issues. I think there was a chance that Edgar could have lost the election if people had reacted negatively to his openness on what he intended to do on the surcharge and then, No tax, I pledge, after that. I think Edgar gets plaudits, especially in this day and age of politics, for having the political gumption to go out and be honest on that tax issue, which took some doing. That was a real gamble, looking back on the Ogilvie example and other things in not-too-distant Illinois political history. But on my explanation, though, as to why Hartigan lost I think Edgar could have lost on that issue but he didn't, and for that he gets credit. But I don't think Hartigan lost for that reason; I think Hartigan lost because he didn't do as well in Chicago as he should have. I'm sorry to offend the political scientists and others here, (DePue laughs) but when the buttons are pushed in Chicago and the word is out that the top wants so-and-so elected or whatever, it's done. It doesn't matter whether they favor a tax increase or whether they favor tax decrease because they do what they're told. Hartigan lost the election because he didn't do as well as he should have in Chicago, and there were reasons there other than his non-stance or stance on taxes.

DePue: Well, that's why we ask the question. Again, very interesting analysis.

Pensoneau: That's my belief.

DePue: You're describing a scenario that everybody would recognize if you're talking about Richard J. Daley and turning out the vote in the 1960s and early '70s. You're saying that it still worked that way even with Richard M. Daley in 1990 campaign, to a certain extent.

Pensoneau: Certainly to a certain extent. I would say to a great extent.

DePue: Okay. This is probably a good time to take a break. We've been at this for about an hour and a half. We'll pick it up with talking about his first administration. I think we'll go through that pretty quickly, and then the '94 campaign against Dawn Clark Netsch. (Pensoneau laughs) Are you…?

Pensoneau: Mike and I just had dinner with her Thursday night in Chicago.

DePue: Oh, really?

Pensoneau: Yeah. (laughs)

DePue: Okay, great.

Pensoneau: Are we on record?

DePue: Yes, we are.

Pensoneau: Oh, take that off. Oh.

DePue: Okay.

Pensoneau: I'm sorry.

DePue: No, we'll stop that right now.

Pensoneau: She's a wonderful woman.

(end of interview #9)

Interview with Taylor Pensoneau

ISG-A-L-2009-007.10

Interview # 10: May 4, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: This is the afternoon of May 4, 2009. I'm with Taylor Pensoneau. Taylor, this would constitute our tenth session. You believe that?

Pensoneau: I do believe it. (laughter)

DePue: So we've been at it for awhile. We had just finished this morning talking about Edgar's first campaign for governor in 1990, and now we've got him in office. You've already talked about his chief lieutenant at some length, and that would be Mike Lawrence. You would describe Mike – and I think most people would readily admit – would be his closest advisor, his most trusted advisor.

Pensoneau: I think from my viewpoint that would certainly appear to be the case.

DePue: Okay, but now he's got the rest of his team to select as well, and he also has the challenge of a Supreme Court decision, the Rutan[15] decision. Mary Lee Leahy, a resident of Springfield, represented Rutan and a few others at the U.

[15] See Rutan vs Republican Party of Illinois

S. Supreme Court. In Rutan the court decided that the rules for hiring in political positions in Illinois had to change thereafter. So if you can talk about that briefly and the impact on Edgar's administration.

Pensoneau: Well, I think the impact is that the Rutan decision at the end of the day served to more narrowly limit the number of positions open to outright appointment. It increased the criteria, as I understand, for certain appointments; it made it sensitive or perhaps even illegal if certain appointments continued to be made on the basis of pure political affiliation or political activity.

DePue: In other words, the rules of patronage have changed.

Pensoneau: Yeah, right, exactly. And it was a significant step in the direction of limiting what we always traditionally knew as old-fashioned, traditional patronage.

DePue: Which was, in the old school, certainly in the days of the Daley administration in Illinois politics – and if you go back in American history – had been since Jackson and before.

Pensoneau: Was political lifeblood, literally.

DePue: So those rules had changed for Edgar from what you're saying, then.

Pensoneau: Yeah. As I recall, the Rutan decision came down when Thompson was still governor.

DePue: Yes, 1990.

Pensoneau: Right. But of course Governor Edgar was perhaps the first governor to be fully exposed to the impact of what's commonly just called Rutan.

DePue: Are there any other people in Edgar's administration that stick out in your mind as being especially important to his success?

Pensoneau: I think that you've certainly got a very valid list here, going through the names – Kirk Dillard, Jim Reilly, Gene Reineke, Mark Boozell. These are, for the most part, pretty darn good names in terms of gubernatorial assistants in Illinois. Some of these individuals are literally excellent individuals. I have to say that. I know or did know… (pause) In fact, I think I know every name on the list, (laughs) in looking at it, and there's really not one individual here that I would call, "sub-par."

DePue: He's looking at a list that I had developed after reading through the book that the Edgar administration put together after they were out of the administration. These are strictly people who worked directly for Edgar himself.

Pensoneau: Right, right. These were all key people. Every one of them played key roles.

DePue: How about Joan Walters, the budget director, since that was going to be the biggest challenge getting into office?

Pensoneau: Well, as I recall, Edgar inherited about a one billion–dollar deficit, and as I understand it, when he left office and turned the reins over to George Ryan, there was about a one billion–dollar so-called surplus.

DePue: A billion plus.

Pensoneau: So obviously Joan Walters had a key role. Joan was extremely energetic. I had met her back when Edgar was secretary of state. She might have been deputy secretary of state. I won't swear to that. She was very high up in Jim's secretary of state administration. Joan Walters seemed to be very energetic; a very hard worker; very, very, very, very dedicated; at the same time, pretty visible. I remember you could talk to her about perhaps a certain appropriation or an outlay or a proposed expenditure or… I mean, she was approachable, and that was not always the case with state budget directors. I considered her a friend, and in the post-Edgar years she has remained a friend.

DePue: Well, Kirk Dillard is at the top of the list as the chief of staff for the first couple years of the Edgar administration, and since there are rumors, at least – I'm sure you've heard – that he has his toe in the water, considering a run for governor in 2010, it's appropriate that maybe I ask you to reflect on him as well.

Pensoneau: I have not known Kirk real well, perhaps not as well as I've known Joan and some of the other names on the list. My impression is that he's a straight-shooter, makes a good impression, has done well. I know him then later on as a state senator, which he still is as we talk right now. We did talk about a few issues before I retired. He was interested in downstate issues. He seemed to take an interest in issues beyond his own district, his own immediate concerns. I found him receptive, I have to say that; rather easy to talk to; and perhaps he will be taken seriously if he throws his hat in the ring for the Republican nomination for governor.

DePue: I think he's going to have plenty of competition.

Pensoneau: It looks like it, yeah, doesn't it.

DePue: When we were talking you mentioned about Joan Walters and the huge problem she faced. When Edgar first got into office, before he started getting any kind of briefings he was assuming he was going to have to deal with a budget deficit, a debt, of several hundred millions of dollars; you mentioned that he quickly found out it was a billion dollars.

Pensoneau: That was my understanding at the time.

DePue: So how did Edgar deal with that?

Pensoneau: Jim Edgar mandated some cuts, some real cuts. As we've already talked about, he pushed for and obtained legislative approval for making the surcharge permanent. I don't recall what the economy was like during his early years in office, whether there was—

DePue: That was part of the problem, was…

Pensoneau: Was it?

DePue: …that was some years of recession for the economy.

Pensoneau: Okay, well, then that was a problem. I just recall that Jim got a reputation from some groups, especially from some groups who never knew anything but getting more money all the time, he got a reputation as "Governor No." He cut back on some expenditures. He curtailed parts of some appropriations. I can't remember details, but I know that Jim instituted – I would use the common phrase – "belt-tightening" throughout much of state government, and he saw to it that it was done. Because one thing on the plus side about Governor Edgar, he was hands-on. He was hands-on. There was nothing **token** about his administration of Illinois. So he knew, and he demanded accountability in some of the agencies in terms of what he wanted fiscally and where he wanted the lines drawn. I don't know if I can give you any specifics, but some programs were curtailed, I think, when Edgar was governor. I think there were some serious curtailments, maybe in line with federal reforms in public aid, for example.

DePue: But he was before that. He was actually before—

Pensoneau: Did he precede the feds? Okay. I think that he made what good government advocates had long advocated, some serious revisions in terms of public aid dollar allotment in Illinois as I recall.

DePue: Some expectations that women would have to find work within a period of time.

Pensoneau: Yeah, basically that some people on public aid had to make some kind of an attempt to find a job, that the status quo was no longer just acceptable in all cases. I definitely recall that. Now, I will say this: as he made these cuts, I think he always insisted, though, if I remember correctly, that public school funding was exempt from his fiscal cutbacks. There were some new sources of revenue in his years as governor in the '90s. I think riverboat gambling casinos, that was a significant new source of revenue. Some other things I think came online. But basically Jim was not a conservative Republican, *per se*, but I think he was a **fiscal** conservative. The freewheeling, big spending outlays of the previous fourteen years under Thompson came to an end under Edgar.

I know that I was in a position in those years to try to secure grants and things like that for the coal industry for certain mines, and I was somewhat successful. But I can recall once or twice when Governor Edgar would show up at some bill signing or something else for the coal industry, and I would usually be on the stage with him; several times I was amazed with the magnitude of the budget, that he would sort of grab me aside and say something to the effect, I'm sure you need this, but what was this five million dollars in here actually going for? (DePue laughs) I was very impressed with that, that a governor would actually have caught something like that.

I know one time (laughs) – I guess I can say that – I think this is in his second term; we did slide something in there at the end. I think it was five million dollars, and I can't recall. Obviously I felt it was needed, my interest felt it was needed, but, you know, those things are always open to debate. We did get it in there in the closing hours (laughs) of the budgetary consideration in the session. I saw Joan Walters at a grocery store in Springfield a couple of days later, and she actually said – laughingly " You slipped that five million dollars in there, and we don't know quite (laughs) how that got through," because it wasn't part of their basic program for our interest.

Furthermore, there was a bill signing, not too long afterward; it was down at Carbondale. I think they called it the Business Incubator; it's tied to SIU at Carbondale. There were only a couple of us on the stage; the governor was there, and I was there, and I think maybe State Senator David Leuchtefeld and one or two others, and I remember (laughs) Governor Edgar kind of touched my wrist or something and said, (laughs) "Where did that five million dollars come from in the budget?" It was kind of funny, because at that time he hadn't signed the basic budget bill yet, the budget legislation. He said, "Just tell me. I'd like to know, what is that for?" (laughs) I thought that was pretty incredible that a governor would have such minute knowledge of a multi-, multi-billion–dollar budget, that he would be wanting to know about a specific five million dollars. I gave him an answer, and I remember he said something like, "That wasn't in there when we proposed the budget, (laughs) was it?" I said, "No, Governor, it wasn't." And then I think I said something to the effect, "I sure hope that you can see fit to include it in the budget legislation when it's signed," and it was. But I thought that was rather incredible.

DePue: Well, it's a very pointed question, considering the governor has line-item veto power.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Oh, he could have eliminated it. Oh, certainly.

DePue: It may be appropriate, because I don't know that you and I have covered this turf – this is all leading toward his first budget fight. You get to July first, the beginning of the state's fiscal year, and there's no budget, and you actually get through the first pay period about halfway through July and there's still no

budget, so there's some state employees who aren't getting a paycheck. So to back up from that, here's my question for you: Explain how the budget cycle works with the legislative year, with the marks of June first, *et cetera*, and how the dynamics change.

Pensoneau: I'm not sure I can offer much insight. We have our basic state fiscal year, and…

DePue: But what does it take to get a budget passed in June first versus later than June first?

Pensoneau: Oh, oh, I see what you're… There's a constitutional requirement. It goes from the majority to three-fifths, I guess.

DePue: Yeah.

Pensoneau: It's in the constitution. I'm sorry I can't remember exactly.

DePue: But I thought you'd be able to give some insight in why it is that four individuals in the legislature play such a predominant role in those negotiations as well, and that link between the governor's office and those four leaders.

Pensoneau: Well, the governor proposes the budget; the legislators have to pass it. Oftentimes – more so some years than others – they may rewrite parts of the budget considerably or change it. They may add dollars here. They may try to institute their own completely new programs that the governor hasn't proposed or may not even know anything about until it gets to his people to evaluate. A million things can happen there. The way the system works now, the legislative leaders almost have to be involved. The governor **has to** include them in the final negotiations on a budget, especially if there are major **upheavals** or **tax** increases or **tax** revision proposals, things like that, because one cannot do it all alone. The governor never gets completely from the General Assembly what he wants in his budget, but if there are major divergences or deviations from what he proposes they have to talk, because he's got to know what their thinking is. From their point of view, they have to know how much of what they're changing he will accept or veto. The way it works, right now they have to meet, because neither the governor nor the general assembly exercises control over the budget in a vacuum situation. I mean, they're interdependent.

DePue: One of the reasons for my question, though, is the critique that you often hear about the way the Illinois legislative process works is, that all the power seems to rest in those four top individuals…

Pensoneau: Oh, there's no arg…

DePue: …and the rest of the members are rather irrelevant in this discussion.

Pensoneau: Oh sure, if you want to talk about that. Sure, there's no question about that. I mean, that's the reality of it. That was predicted by those who opposed the approval of the so-called Cutback Amendment to the constitution back in, what, 1980 or '81.

DePue: Eighty.

Pensoneau: That greatly led us in the House, obviously, to more consolidation of power in the hands of the speaker and in the hands of the majority party. I can tell you, it wasn't so much that way prior to the Cutback Amendment, because in the House, even the minority party was virtually automatically guaranteed one of the three seats from each district. It was much more of a diffuse process, both in considering expenditures and considering issues and everything else, and it was not so much of an oligarchy. What that Cutback Amendment did was make it considerably easier for the Speaker of the House, especially if he's a very potent and smart individual like Mike Madigan, to become omnipotent. We have seen the way it has worked. Again, to follow along on your question, critics have said in the end in terms of the legislature, why don't the people just elect the four leaders? It's kind of a joke, obviously, but since…

DePue: It's a cynical viewpoint.

Pensoneau: It is a very cynical viewpoint, but the truth of the matter is, the bulk of the members in each House simply wait in the last concluding weeks when things are really decided, to basically see what the four leaders have decided, sometimes in concert with the governor, sometimes not in concert with the governor. We don't anymore see legislative revolts. We used to see revolts – more often in the House than in the Senate – but we would see those back in my early years as a reporter, back in the late '60s and in the early '70s, but those days seem to have ebbed considerably, perhaps entirely, with the advent of the four leaders as men in really, surprisingly, almost absolute control of the process. I mean, in a lot of committees, the majority party get a list ahead of time for the bills to be considered, and there's a proverbial up or down arrow; very few committee members deviate from that. I mean, individualism has really diminished. But the thing that people do point out, though, and this still has some merit to it, is that these are separately elected people.

DePue: Well, in a previous session you and I had talked about **why** they're so powerful – the Speaker of the House, for example, the President of the Senate, and likewise the minority leaders – because, as you explained – and just to move forward on this – you explain it's because they control the purse strings for election campaigns in some instances.

Pensoneau: They do. They do. First of all, that's definitely true, and certainly many groups if not most groups contribute just to the leaders. I had control over the dispensation of coal industry political money; I didn't have as much to work with as many other major groups. There was a time when I don't think the

coal industry even contributed politically prior to me and Joe Spivey, but we did set up a PAC.[16] But one of the things we did is, we only gave minimal amounts to the leaders. We were a little different there. I channeled most of our contributions to the individuals who worked with us on issues, mainly, for the most part, downstate Republicans and Democrats. It turned out, not necessarily by design, but by practical practice, that our contributions were almost evenly split between Democrats and Republicans; they went to people who needed money and who were interested and normally supportive on coal-related issues. My feeling was – it wasn't very complicated – was that that money meant a lot more coming from me directly to State Representative Smith than if that same money came from Speaker Madigan. I think I can tell you that oftentimes legislators would privately tell me they really appreciated that our checks were written directly to them as opposed to going through one of the four leaders.

And then you're probably right to come back and say, But then doesn't that diminish your influence with the leaders, if you don't follow the preferred practice of going through them on contributions? Well, it didn't, because I represented a major special interest, and that special interest was important to a decent number of downstate legislators. Let's say on that kind of issue they would deal with Speaker Madigan; I didn't have to answer to him. They knew that coal legislation could be important at certain times, so therefore they were able to… I'm not sure that Speaker Madigan ever personally took note in any negative way that a small contributing factor like the coal industry gave most of this money directly to legislators; it didn't go through the speaker's campaign funding apparatus. But even if he had, I'm sure there could be no retribution because we had a solid core of supporters in the legislature.

DePue: How much of that decision that you made, to give directly to the individual legislators, have to do with the geography of the thing – that there are certain regions of Illinois where the coal mines are, and in Chicago, they obviously weren't?

Pensoneau: Yeah. I will say this: there were always a few Chicagoans, a handful of Chicagoans we contributed to for various reasons. Sometimes it may have been that we just "liked some nice Republican woman in the suburbs," or in my case, I had—

DePue: I would assume "liked" meant that she supported your issues.

Pensoneau: Sometimes. It was interesting. Not always. Before I got what you would say complete control of the political contribution decision-making process for the coal industry, there would be contributions made to people that really didn't support us. They were nice, they were sociable, sometimes we would go out to eat with them at night, but they weren't there when the votes came at the end

[16] PAC: Political Action Committee

of the session on certain issues. That's when, as I said, I had a say but maybe not complete say. When I got complete say that pretty much ended. I put down the dollars I had to work with, and they were going to the people that counted. But I will say this: In my case, I always had a few Chicago Democrats that did take an interest in our issue for some reason. Oh, it might be that one guy had three or four nephews or second cousins down in West Frankfurt working for coal mine A, B, or C or something like that, and I would channel our contributions up there, buy tickets and so on. I had a good relationship with three or four of the African-American reps in the House, and they were very helpful in committees and so on. Sometimes I needed just a little extra boost – my people did – and they would surprise me and provide a key vote in committee when I needed it and stuff like that; I would contribute to them.

DePue: Well, let's go back to the legislative process. Let's see if I get this timing right: you get to the end of June, and I believe it's the end of June, that you only require a 50 percent vote to get a budget passed.

Pensoneau: Yeah, but that has changed now, you know. As we talk right now, now it's at the end of May.

DePue: Okay, I could be wrong on the timeline here.

Pensoneau: Well, it used to be June.

DePue: Okay. The question is: Would the minority party deliberately stonewall so they can get past that hurdle and then have greater voice?

Pensoneau: Oh, sure, sometimes. They try. Oh, yeah, absolutely. Sure. It'd be to their benefit, because once the three-fifths majority came into play they were players again. Oh, yeah, so the answer is yes. Easy question to answer.

DePue: Okay. The discussions part at that time between the governor's office and the majority leaders of the two houses?

Pensoneau: I think there was no particular singular rhyme or reason or process of how that worked. I suspect that sometimes just the majority – especially if you've got a Democratic governor and the Democrats are in control of both houses – maybe the speaker and the president would be brought in ahead of time with the governor before the Republicans.

DePue: So it's more of a function of personalities and attitude? Pensoneau: It can get down to that. The personalities definitely enter into it, absolutely. When you get five big-time political figures with distinct personalities in the same room and a **lot** at stake on the **table**, sure, personalities…

DePue: Let's talk about personalities, and we'll go right across the board. We've got Jim Edgar's and his administration's relationship with the top four that he

started with in the first two years when these big budget battles were occurring. And just as severe in 1992 for him as it was in 1991, in part because the economy had gotten that much softer that year. So we've got Mike Madigan, Speaker of the House.

Pensoneau: My attempt to decipher that is that it went back and forth. There would be periods when there would be maybe somewhat of an amiable relationship between Madigan and Edgar, and then maybe not in the end. I don't know. It's my impression that their relationship perhaps took a southward direction as the years of Edgar and the governorship progressed. That's my impression. And I guess I also was led to believe that his relationship with then–Mayor Daley – the same Mayor Daley we have now – sort of went downhill, if it ever was at a high positive standing. I don't know now—I can't—

DePue: It's Richard J. Daley, though, who is the cause for his emergence to begin with in the early '70s, correct?

Pensoneau: I've got to think about that. Richard J. Daley?

DePue: I have heard that from some insiders.

Pensoneau: With Jim Edgar?

DePue: No, no. I'm talking about Mike Madigan.

Pensoneau: Oh, Madigan. Oh, I thought you were talking about Madigan vis-à-vis Edgar.

DePue: Yeah, but we're talking about Madigan's personality and his emergence in power, too.

Pensoneau: Oh, we're talking about Madigan?

DePue: Mm-hmm.

Pensoneau: Well, Madigan is a whole political story in itself. He came from a politically established family in Chicago, but he's carried the mantle of political power to a far greater degree than we have seen before. I'm sure he's going to go down as the longest-serving Speaker of the House. He has virtually the closest thing you're ever going to see to complete control of the body, far more so than the House of Representatives I used to cover in my days as a reporter. Madigan is very, **very** smart; extremely disciplined; very much under control; I'd use the word "unflappable"; has a great combination of instinct and knowledge of knowing what the individual members want. Sometimes it's maybe not just what they want, what they need. He's very shrewd at divvying up things into issues. A bottom line is to get people reelected so you can maintain a majority, and he is very shrewd at dishing out bills and getting names on certain issues of people who may need it; it might help them in their districts. He's very astute. He's very well organized in terms of when it comes to issues like

redistricting and so on; he's got complete sets of voter breakdowns and maps and everything that go into that. He's up-to-date with census records. He's the complete product. I've often said, and I wrote in my book, that he's the closest thing on the scene to W. Russell Arrington since Arrington himself was alive and on the scene.

DePue: More motivated—

Pensoneau: I might add that after my Arrington book came out, Madigan wrote me a letter – in fact, it was within the last year – in which he said, having read the Arrington book, that he's pleased at the comparison to Arrington. Basically I think he says in the letter that Arrington, although Republican, set precedents that he certainly has tried to follow in his role as Speaker of the House.

Madigan – extremely headstrong. I think that, as with most big-time successful political figures, certainly the first Mayor Daley, you may not react at first to a political situation you found to be disfavorable, but you don't forget; I think that comes into play. He knows how to subtly punish those who perhaps get out of line in his view. For example, right now we're involved in a situation where there were a number of Democrats who were very close to Governor Blagojevich with whom Madigan clearly crossed swords; those who were always in Blagojevich's corner during the ongoing multi-year feud are now feeling in a very diplomatic way the retribution (DePue laughs) of the error of their prior ways. So Madigan is extremely shrewd, plays his cards very close to his vest.

DePue: What was Edgar's relationship with him?

Pensoneau: Not ever being privy to the face-to-face meetings between these two powerhouses, I can't say. It's my impression, though, that they came from two different worlds: Madigan out of the traditional Irish-Catholic political environs of Chicago, and Edgar, a downstate Baptist teetotaler and so on. (DePue laughs) Not that Madigan's a drinker I don't know that he is. We started out with individuals who are not exactly natural brothers, and so I think that enters into it. I think it got pretty snippety. You're talking to someone like Mike Lawrence who witnessed firsthand these things, and Mike would be the authority on Edgar vis-à-vis Madigan and Edgar vis-à-vis I'm sure, even Mayor Daley and so on.

DePue: Let's move on to the next one, then, the minority leader for most of Edgar's years as governor, and that would be Lee Daniels.

Pensoneau: Okay. Daniels and Pate Philip, the Republican Senate leader. Both were from DuPage County, which of course provided the biggest reservoir of Republican votes in Illinois. It's easier to start off with Pate Philip.

DePue: Okay, do that.

Pensoneau: Pate Philip was a true-blue Republican conservative; he actually held, almost in disdain, Republican moderates. There's no question Governor Edgar was a Republican moderate, and that never pleased Pate Philip. So there were legislative situations through the years when Philip was part of the blockage situation that prevented Jim Edgar from maybe getting what he wanted in a certain area. That was, I think pretty clear with Philip, okay? Sometimes Philip would be openly critical or would openly second-guess Governor Edgar.

On Daniels, I'm just not as clear-cut. I never got a complete handle on Daniels in terms of political nomenclature. Okay, I just didn't. I ended up in my last year or two at the coal association having some very personal interaction with Daniels, more than I had bargained or wanted, but Jim Edgar wasn't governor then; George Ryan was governor. I think that Daniels probably was in the Pate Philip mode in some areas; I just don't know – and I can be wrong in this – I just don't know if he was as much of an impediment for Edgar as was Philip.

DePue: Of course, only two of those years of the eight that Edgar was governor was Lee Daniels actually the speaker.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: That was an anomaly, and that was the '94 election, I believe.

Pensoneau: Right. DePue: 1995, '96 terms.

Pensoneau: Correct, correct.

DePue: James "Pate" Philip was President of the Senate for six of the eight years. That leaves us the other personality to begin with, that would be Phil Rock. He was the Democratic President of the Senate for the first two years of Edgar's administration.

Pensoneau: I'm going to say that Phil Rock, for a Democrat, was quite cooperative with Governor Edgar. Phil Rock was not a partisan ideologue. He was a practical man. I think Phil Rock, in looking back, is going to be treated more favorably by political historians as time passes; I think that Phil Rock probably was more amenable and supportive to Governor Edgar on some things than Philip. That was my impression. Rock was kind of a political gentleman, and a man quite worthy of compromise, and certainly quite engaged in give and take. I think the trite phrase is, "You could talk to Phil Rock." In many ways Rock was more of a statesman. He was not in any way, shape or form a Democratic hack. I don't say that just because we've become fairly good friends in the years (laughter) since he left the Senate. Rock was known as kind of a gentleman.

DePue: For six of those years that Edgar was governor, Emil Jones was the Senate minority leader. Of course Emil Jones figures prominently in the current discussions because he's considered to be, by some at least, the mentor for our current president[17] as well. You're not as…?

Pensoneau: I'm not sure if I… I don't know. People more astute with me say that, I acknowledge that, and certainly the national press has bolstered that opinion.

DePue: Well, let's put Obama aside.—

Pensoneau: I don't knowMy only comment there is that Obama seems so classy, and my impression of the other guy isn't. It's just hard to… I don't know. Maybe he gave him political help when he needed it, but having to deal with Obama and having to deal with Jones are like two different worlds entirely.

DePue: Okay, so flesh out some meat on Emil Jones's bones, if you would.

Pensoneau: Okay, it's a good question; it's a very good question. I hardly ever dealt with Jones directly. In fact, I would say that Jones didn't even know my name, okay? Now, having said that, what I did in terms of the Senate was what I've tried to portray here in my own personal dealings. I had a coalition of senators that had a vested interest in the maintenance of a somewhat healthy coal industry and all the jobs they provided. So therefore, I had senators like Ken Hall from East St. Louis; later on, James Clayborne from East St. Louis and then Belleville; Sam Vadalabene, from Edwardsville. These were individuals that pretty much represented me. Well, certainly I can't forget Senator O'Daniel of Mt. Vernon. These guys carried my water, and I didn't really have to talk to Jones because they were going to guarantee that we didn't get shut out – and we didn't. I just didn't have any kind of relationship at all with Jones. I just didn't.

The longest time I ever spent with Jones – if we want another anecdote on the side – was actually just a couple years ago when my Arrington book came out. It was unveiled before each house. Jones was still Senate president. We sat in a little anteroom behind the Senate chamber leading up to the session; Governor Edgar was moderating this thing, so it was Governor Edgar and myself; Michael Arrington, the senator's son; and Jones. That was the longest I think I ever talked to Jones. I think that when I was introduced to him that morning, as far as I could tell, that looked like the first time he had ever been introduced to me. Now, I'd met him at a couple fundraisers, but, you know, that didn't mean anything.

So no, I really didn't know Jones. I was not impressed with his style, though. Lucky for me and the coal industry that we had downstate Democrats who recognized that coal could not be ignored.

[17] At the time of this interview Barack Obama is President of the United States.

DePue: One of the other ways that power in Illinois is exercised, if you will, at the executive level – we've certainly seen a lot of this in the last six years – the line-item veto, which we talked about before, but also the amendatory vetoes.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: Was there a difference in style between how Thompson used amendatory vetoes than Edgar?

Pensoneau: Oh, it's a great question. I don't think I can clearly answer it. I know generally speaking that the first governor to use the amendatory veto was Ogilvie, if I'm right. It was in the '70 constitution; I mean, that's how it came about. He used it extensively, and he used it **way** beyond what the framers of it had intended for its use to be.

DePue: "Framers had intended…?"

Pensoneau: It was intended to allow the governor more flexibility to correct grammatical errors (laughter) and things like that. Let's put it this way, Mark: It was not intended to (laughs) enable a governor to completely rewrite a bill (laughs) and completely change the intent of a bill. Everybody agreed with that. So it's been a source of controversy ever since, but all the governors have used it, and from a legislative viewpoint, all have abused it. Now, I just can't specifically remember to what extent, how far Governor Edgar went, nor Thompson for that matter. But they've all had it. It's a terrific vehicle at their disposal, though, and it turned out, one of the biggest **gifts** for the executive branch, (laughs) in the 1970 constitution, but it wasn't intended to be that way when it was drafted, inserted and approved.

DePue: Well, that was certainly one of the things we've seen here recently, when both the House and the Senate took Governor Blagojevich to task during his impeachment hearings in terms of his abuse of that. Well, as we've been hinting and leading up to here in all of this discussion in terms of the legislative process and who the leaders were and Edgar as the governor who faces a one billion–dollar hole to fill, all of that leads up to July first of 1991. There is no budget, and now you go into an overtime session. Do you recall much about the fight from that point on?

Pensoneau: I certainly do. The budget was an issue, but there were two issues that also were heavily responsible for keeping the General Assembly at that time going **way** beyond its normal termination point: Illinois coal and a proposed expansion of McCormick Place in Chicago. I was in the middle of it for Illinois coal every day. We were trying to get a major package approved to protect some Illinois coal mines and to protect some of the big utilities in Illinois that still burned Illinois coal. Chicago people could care less about that; we considered it a life-and-death thing for the lower part of the state. Chicago wanted this expansion of McCormick Place, and all of our people

south of here could have cared less about expanding McCormick Place. So we had this incredible standoff.

DePue: I see strange bedfellows here.

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah. Oh, right. No, I was in the middle of that from day one. We finally did get a package that was intended to pretty much, through different mechanisms, virtually **mandate** the use of Illinois coal in several major utility plants in the state, and an expansion of McCormick Place was approved. As I recall, that session went up to about July 17,18, 19.

DePue: Yeah.

Pensoneau: Okay, None of us had any summer that year. Now, the budget part of it; I know that was there too, but I can't recall the details of it. But as far as what the **press** was writing about and as far as what people in the **State House** were going on about was this big go-around on the issues keeping us there, and at the center of the issues were Illinois coal and McCormick Place. Ironically, we got what we wanted, Governor Edgar signed it. It would have been great, but a federal judge in Chicago held that our legislation violated the interstate commerce clause: It penalized coal coming in from western states, so it got kicked out by a federal judge in Chicago.

DePue: Just your portion of the legislation?

Pensoneau: Well, there were two separate issues; they weren't mixed together. One wasn't going to pass without the other, but no, McCormick Place was not affected by the federal **decision** in Chicago.

DePue: Okay. The scenario you described is, both went forward as part of the legislation that was signed, but…

Pensoneau: Oh, I'm sure it was separate legislation, or I assume that. But no, to my knowledge, the McCormick Place legislation was not affected.

DePue: Yeah, well, it certainly was expanded during his administration.

Pensoneau: Yeah, yeah, but we certainly suffered. Western coal and railroad interests came and very quickly filed a major suit in federal court in Chicago and said, This legislation violates the interstate commerce clause in the constitution, and by golly…

DePue: Was there some pushback from the EPA against that bill as well?

Pensoneau: A good question. I don't recall. Well, the Illinois EPA may not have had a problem because the legislation included financing mechanisms and step-by-step procedures for putting major scrubbers on major coal-burning plants, which is something the EPA and environmentalists wanted.

DePue: Okay. Let's move to 1993, and a different kind of problem that faces the governor in 1993. By July and August, Governor Edgar was dealing with a **huge** flood of epic proportions.[18]

Pensoneau: Literally. Unbelievable. Many of us that have been around Illinois all our lives have never seen anything like it, before or since. Much of western Illinois was a **sea**. Governor Edgar dealt with it quite well. He marshaled all available state resources, individuals, programs, coordinated it, and I think in retrospect, as I recall, gets high marks for dealing with it as much as one could. It was a tremendous property loss, people displaced, in some cases whole towns displaced. But as I recall, Governor Edgar… see, that was down in his alley. He didn't have to negotiate, as I recall, with the Pate Philips on that kind of thing. He was a good administrator, and that was right down his alley, because he had complete control from the state viewpoint of every program and apparatus and board or commission that would come into play with meeting the challenges posed by the flood. I think, as I recall, he did an excellent job on that. I think he got high marks.

DePue: So that helped him out politically as well.

Pensoneau: Oh, I think so. I'm sure it did.

DePue: I kind of hinted around at this in an earlier line of questioning, by this time in his career would you consider that Edgar's talents and abilities lent themselves toward being an executive versus a legislator?

Pensoneau: Absolutely. I couldn't phrase it any better. He was a good administrator, and he was hands-on, as I said earlier. He was very good when he had a free hand to direct people to do what they were supposed to do and didn't have to get the approval of the General Assembly. He was a good administrator. When the General Assembly came into the equation, like on legislative issues and the budget, that was another matter. I think Thompson **loved** to get in there and wheel and deal and personally meet with legislators and do all sorts of out-of-character things. Sometimes, I recall, they'd be debating some major fiscal thing or some program Thompson wanted or whatever, and while the debate's going on, he himself would walk into the chamber, perch down in somebody's vacant chair, put his feet up on the desk, and just listen to what's going on. I mean, this is most unusual. Governor Edgar wouldn't do that; that wasn't his style. He was, again, more disciplined and much more formal than that. I wasn't around all the time, so I can't say, but I certainly couldn't see Jim Edgar walking around the House floor slapping backs and cajoling and engaging in some energetic give-and-take and so on. He went in the chamber for the formal occasions, like the state of the state address, budget presentations, things like that, things before joint sessions. I wasn't there

[18] In 1993 the Mississippi River flooded extensively all along it's border in Illinois and beyond. The flooding continued for weeks as rains continued in the north, meaning the flood couldn't subside as soon as would normally be expected,

every day; it was the way I operated. I didn't stand around like some did, but I don't recall people telling me that Jim Edgar did those things. If he did do those things, knowing his personality and his demeanor, I would have been surprised to hear it.

DePue: I want to ask you just one or two questions about Brenda Edgar. What was your impression of her role as first lady of the state? What were you hearing from some of your press friends?

Pensoneau: First of all, I think the first time I really met Brenda Edgar was in the interim period back when… I remember it was at a small get-together at the house of a man named John Caldwell, which was in Springfield. John invited my then-wife and myself and one or two other people and Jim and Brenda Edgar to a little very beautiful Saturday afternoon get-together in his backyard, as I recall. John had been an aide to Senator Charles Percy and so on, was kind of a local Republican operative, a very nice guy, and obviously liked Jim Edgar. I think that's the first time I met Brenda. As I recall, I had heard people say nice things about Brenda. She had on a red dress, and she was very pretty. I'd always thought he was handsome, but I saw then that they were a **very attractive** couple, very much so. That was the first time I saw her; I was introduced to her that day, probably got to talk to her a little bit.

Later on when I would see her, I would say, she was always very nice to me. As I said a number of times, she was in the Illinois Coal Association offices because of Sherri Struck; obviously they were very close. My impression was –and I think I'm on solid ground here – is that Governor Edgar certainly talked to her and got her viewpoint and her input on a number of issues. I think that she definitely – I'll use the word – she definitely counted. That's important, because we couldn't say that for a lot of other so-called first ladies at the time – obviously not for Mrs. Kerner; based on what I'd written in my own book on Governor Walker, that did not apply to Mrs. Walker; I don't think it applied too much to Mrs. Ogilvie; but I can't say about the relationship between Jim and Jane Thompson.

DePue: She married him at the time when she absolutely knew what his political aspirations were.

Pensoneau: You're talking about Brenda?

DePue: No, Jane.

Pensoneau: Jane. Yeah. Oh, yeah. No, he was a candidate for governor.

DePue: Yes.

Pensoneau: Yeah, right. But no, as people like me are led to believe, I was led to believe, and I do believe, that Jim and Brenda were a team, a real team. It just appeared to me that they were very close, very close.

DePue: You've described a very effective executive, a good manager. Was he the kind who—

Pensoneau: He was a good manager.

DePue: Could he be a micromanager?

Pensoneau: I think he was in some cases. I think the answer is yes. I don't know that I can give you any specific examples, but I was always told enough that I had an impression he could be a micromanager. Yeah, mm-hmm, the answer is yes. Very hands-on.

DePue: Put a different hat on him. In terms of being a politician, was he also an astute politician?

Pensoneau: Oh, I think he was an astute politician.

DePue: He had a good feel for the political lay of the land, if you will?

Pensoneau: Oh, I think he did. Yeah, I think he did. I think that the general tenor of people, even today still, is that there's still second thoughts and some misgivings about rapid growth in government at any level. That's still my feeling. Jim Edgar was a proponent of moderate or even sometimes limited government, and I think people recognize that. Edgar felt that private enterprise and the private business sector had a role to be respected and perhaps even encouraged; I think that separates him from what we've seen since, I really do. I have to say that, and I'm trying to be positive here about Governor Edgar. I know this: he must have done a lot of things right, because he was very popular. I would go down to my home area around Belleville, and I circulated in southern Illinois all the time in my coal industry role – I mean, I was out and about – and people spoke highly of Jim Edgar. People liked him. A lot of people were proud that we had this handsome governor who had this good reputation along with it. He was respected, and he was popular. Now, I was never in a position to judge how he was thought of in certain wards in Chicago. I can't speak to that because I just didn't have that kind of insight, but I can tell you, though, certainly south of Chicago, he was popular. More than respected – these are two different things – he was popular.

DePue: One of the things I was trying to get to with that question is whether or not he was the kind of person who knew the political score in any particular area or district—knew where he was strong, knew where he wouldn't play strong, knew what kind of things would play well.

Pensoneau: Oh, I think so. I think so. I have—

DePue: I mean, the things that we would credit Madigan or maybe Richard J. Daley with that kind of stuff.

Pensoneau: Well, they certainly get credited with that descriptive language. No, I think Governor Edgar knew where his political bread was buttered. Oh, yeah. I heard Mike talk enough through the years to know that they knew what the score was in different parts of the state, and they knew what individuals could be counted on and which ones were maybe just hot air.

DePue: I'm jumping around here; I apologize.

Pensoneau: Sure, go right ahead. No, no, no.

DePue: We were talking about Brenda. Another part of the equation that people always seem to remember today are the first pets that Edgar had in office.

Pensoneau: I know they had, what, a couple dogs, and (laughs) they really treasured the dogs. I don't know if I could say anything beyond that. I think I probably got to go in the mansion a few times. As I recall, one time I went in there and the governor was there. It was that, I think, lower level office that he used sometimes; as I recall, there were not one but two dogs lying there in front of his desk. I know that they treasured the dogs, but I don't know much (laughs) beyond that.

DePue: Well, let's move into more familiar turf, then, and the 1994 election campaign. The primary election, he was unopposed. There was a pretty contentious election on the Democratic side: Dawn Clark Netsch, and that year I believe she beat Roland Burris, who was probably considered to be the lead candidate for a while…

Pensoneau: Could be.

DePue: …and Richard Phelan. So then we get into the general election campaign, and this will probably jog your memory a little bit here as well: July 7th – I think roughly the time he had another budget passed close to that timeframe, he suffered major heart bypass surgery.

Pensoneau: I remember that. Oh, yeah, right, right.

DePue: What was the mood in the state—

Pensoneau: Was that the triple bypass or whatever?

DePue: Yes.

Pensoneau: I remember that. Triple or quadruple.

DePue: What was the assumption at that point in time about his political future?

Pensoneau: There was concern. He was a heavy favorite for reelection in 1994, and there was obvious concern, that this might upset the apple cart, from a Republican

point of view. Democrats: I remember some were putting out the line that, He's a fine fellow, he's a decent guy, but can we really reelect someone who has serious health problems? That was being fomented. How far they went with that, I don't recall. Obviously it didn't stick, and he did bounce back. He even showed some vigor, as I recall, before the actual election. But I know that Democrats were certainly pointing out that, Hey, common sense now has got to prevail; we got a new situation here, and we got a guy who's got a bad ticker, and how can we retain in office someone who is not in good shape health-wise? Obviously he demonstrated sufficient vitality to counter that word the Democrats are trying to circulate. I don't recall if it was in print or not, but that was the ploy, about, We respect him, and he's a nice guy, he's a decent guy, but hey, he's got a problem here that we can't take a chance on the governor departing the scene at any given time. Now, obviously that didn't work, but I remember that that was like the line being passed around.

DePue: Tell us a little bit about Dawn Clark Netsch as an opponent. She had been the comptroller.

Pensoneau: Yeah. She was a classic – some called her a lakefront liberal. I'm not sure if she was literally lakefront, but she came out of the liberal wing of the state Democratic Party. She was really never, in any way, part and parcel to the Chicago Democratic machine. She was very smart. She went back to Otto Kerner. I might point out while we're talking, after Chris Vlahoplos, Dawn Clark Netsch might be the next-best person to talk to about Otto Kerner if you guys are going to consider some more Kerner.

DePue: Absolutely.

Pensoneau: Okay. I described her in my Arrington book as chic. (laughs) She was sort of a pioneer feminist, I guess at least politically. Let me see. Was she the first woman elected to a statewide office? She might have been. I know I've got that in one or more of my books. I know that. I had heard Chris Vlahoplos talk about her a lot. She had left Governor Kerner's office right before I arrived here on the scene, and he used to talk about her a lot. She was very bright and very enlightened, but she also was close to several of the reporters in the pressroom, and she was a good source for inside stories, which Chris also mentioned to me. (laughter) He said it jokingly because the situation didn't exist, but one was Tom Littlewood of the *Chicago Sun-Times.* But I first really got to know her a little bit was at the 1970 Illinois Constitutional Convention where she was a delegate; she was one of the more outspoken, studious delegates, a delegate to be taken seriously. Very sincere, very much of a staunch liberal, a traditional liberal, and was in that band of Chicago liberals that the Daley machine never felt comfortable with.

DePue: A lot of them like to call themselves "independent Democrats," which…

Pensoneau: I guess we can call her that. To her credit, she never was part of the Democratic machine. But she got elected state senator, what, a few years after the constitutional convention, I'm guessing, and then, of course, elected state comptroller. I know there was a primary fight, as you pointed out, in 1994, but I kind of thought that the money was on her to win that primary fight. That was my recollection.

DePue: Was it that campaign where the – I hope this rings a bell - —the ad that she had of herself playing pool, and maybe the punch line was – and I might be mixing a couple things up here – but there was another punch line to her campaign "Not just another pretty face."

Pensoneau: I vaguely recall that punch line. I must confess, I do not recall the pool commercial.

DePue: Okay, what were the issues at play in that campaign once she got to the general election?

Pensoneau: She didn't have a lot of issues against Governor Edgar. We had the continuing controversy over state revenue, the budget, and how school funding was tied into it. As I recall, I think she said if she got elected, she was going to seek a hike in the state income tax.

DePue: Yeah, absolutely. And a corresponding [spending] decrease, or do something about property taxes.

Pensoneau: Okay. Throw that in, too. This was something along this line that Governor Edgar had espoused in an earlier point in his career, or at least looking at it, something like that, but then he sort of disavowed it in the campaign, and I think that she was criticized by Republican spokesmen as being a big pro-tax candidate. She was the decided underdog from the start, and that didn't help her at all. Governor Edgar beat her badly.

DePue: Yeah, 60 percent is what he pulled, and I believe she didn't poll 40 percent, it was 36 or 34 percent, so there was a third-party candidate in there as well.

Pensoneau: I don't even remember who that was.

DePue: This was a huge year for the Republicans across the country - 1994.

Pensoneau: Huge.

DePue: Did that play into this as well?

Pensoneau: Apparently it did. I didn't realize it at the time, but looking back, it well might have. This is when the GOP came out of that election with control of both houses of the Illinois general assembly.

DePue: And even at the national level.

Pensoneau: And at the national level. That's when they got Congress, right?

DePue: Yeah, that's the Contract for America year.

Pensoneau: Right. So again, you've answered your own question. It was a heck of a year for the Republican Party; 1994 was a banner election year. Yeah, I mean I remember sitting with Mike at one of our breakfasts after the election, and it was like, Fantastic. Can you believe this? In Illinois, we've retained the governor's office, we've got both houses of the general assembly… I'm trying to remember who controlled the Supreme Court then. Republicans might have still then had a majority on the state Supreme Court, too, but I won't swear to that; I'm not sure about that. But yeah, I remember it was like, the election you would certainly have to view as a vindication of the Edgar governorship up to that point by the voters of Illinois.

DePue: Okay. Let's move into his second administration. I'm going to ask you about something I **know** that you're fairly close to, and it's an important issue in terms of the reorganization of several departments that resulted in the Department of Natural Resources. That was 1995.

Pensoneau: Yeah, I can talk the rest of the day on that one if that's what you want to do. I was, of course, heavily affected—

DePue: Not quite the rest of the day.

Pensoneau: I was heavily involved and heavily affected.

DePue: What was the reason for the reorganization in the first place, as you understood it?

Pensoneau: Well, okay, my understanding was – I can be second-guessed, and I may be second-guessed – I know you're going to probably talk to Al Grosboll. I was given the impression that was basically Al Grosboll's baby.

DePue: Al Grosboll was who in the administration?

Pensoneau: Well, Al was a key—okay, I'm trying to remember… I'm looking here at this list you've given me. Eventually, before all was said and done, he was a deputy chief of staff. Allen was always in the picture. Allen was sort of the Edgar designee to monitor, regulate, watch over the natural resources agencies – in other words, the state EPA, the Department of Conservation, what was then still the Illinois Department of Mines and Minerals, which regulated my industry. Al had wanted this. Actually, there had been proposals going back to the years of Governor Thompson, when different people wanted to merge at least the Department of Mines and Minerals into a larger agency, be it the Department of Conservation or be it something back in those days called the

Department of ENR – Energy Resources. And we, meaning the coal industry, had always opposed that. We didn't want to lose our independent regulatory agency. We successfully opposed a number of incursions along that line back when Thompson was governor, and we continued to oppose it during Governor Edgar's first term.

However, we were weakened by the fact that a number of coal mines had closed, production had gone down, and the number of miners had greatly decreased, so we were in a weakened position. In this kind of bureaucratic maneuvering, we were not as strong and we were not as able to defend ourselves as we were at earlier stages on this issue. So, as I recall, it wasn't long after the second term started in '95 that Allen made his move, and this was a priority. I hope I don't have it wrong, but I think he obviously got a green light from whomever, and—

DePue: The argument that he was proposing was, this is more efficient?

Pensoneau: Oh, I'm sure it was. That was always the argument. It'd be more efficient, less costly. Streamlining was always good. Sometimes on issues affecting coal – which was true – different agencies had to weigh in: conservation, mines and minerals itself, the state EPA, and so on. So this was proposed, and we knew we couldn't beat it, we couldn't stop it; it was a decision we made. At that point I was running the coal association, so I sat in on the negotiations implementing it, I guess you might say. There were only a few people involved. Brent Manning was then the director of the Department of Conservation. Basically what was happening was that Conservation was swallowing three or four other entities, including the Illinois Department of Mines and Minerals. So Manning was involved. Also his deputy directors at the time, John Mercurio and Bruce Clay.

This is hard to believe: I think I was the only other one at the table; I was included in it. I was allowed to participate, and I did. I don't recall anybody else sitting at the table on this thing. My role was to get the best deal I could salvage out of it for Illinois coal and for the state's regulation of Illinois coal. I had some success. What I did get out of it was a political pledge that in the new Department of Natural Resources, DNR, that there were going to be two directors, and one of those, when it opened up, the one which would be over in the chain of command, the new Office of Mines and Minerals—we were being absorbed—that I would have a say in the naming of that deputy director. That was not in writing, but that was understood at that table, regardless of who might want to contradict me later on, okay.

The other thing is that I had to fight hard because there were attempts made to eliminate the State Mining Board, which was a combination of company and union people set up to enforce safety regulations. The other thing, which was key was, for the Director of Office of Mines and Minerals – the person who regulated coal, the main person – they wanted to eliminate a

requirement that that person had to have so-called mining papers, had to have worked in a coal mine, had to have qualified for what are called mine manager papers: you knew how to run a coal mine, you knew what went into safety, you knew what went into all this. They wanted to eliminate that requirement for that director, which meant you could have named the number-one environmentalist in Chicago to run the Office of Mines and Minerals, or you could have named some society matron in Chicago that the governor owed a lot to to run it as a patronage position. I said no, and there was a a verbal contest on that. What I threatened to do was two things: I would go out and tell, first of all, my downstate legislative coalition, which probably would have been enough alone, but secondly I said I was going to go tell my buddies in the pressroom. They didn't want that at all. And thirdly, I was going to go tell the United Mine Workers, whose members were dependent on safety regulation. And can you believe this? I won. (laughs) So we kept in there for that office the requirement that the person had to have mine manager papers, which meant he or she had to be very qualified and have a history of technical competence in coal mining. Okay, so we did that. There were some other things, too, that I recall.

DePue: Did you suffer any consequences because you'd taken that hard stand?

Pensoneau: Not that I'd noticed at the time. Later on, when there were vacancies in those deputy director positions – I think it was when Ryan was governor – both Mercurio and Clay were gone, they had retired. Manning right away appointed James, Jim Garner, I think, to one of the deputy directorships, and, of course, that wasn't our person. The other deputy directorship was open, and that's the one that was over the Office of Mines and Minerals. At that point I was involved in a situation involving the director of mines and minerals, who was a man named Richard Mottershaw from Carlinville, who had been formerly the safety director for Monterey Coal Company. He was an excellent director, a very fair man, of course had all the papers, everything. He decided he wanted to advance up the chain of command and be the second deputy director in that second vacancy.

I said, If you want it, fine, because this goes back to the deal back in '95 with the Edgar people, who were no longer in control, but it went back to the fact that I would have a say in that, or the Illinois Coal Association would, but in this case it was still me. And I remember Brent Manning was still director of what was then DNR, and he forwarded over to me a name that was a nice person, was a woman, kind of a friend of mine, but no way.

I reminded him, even though Governor Edgar was no longer in office, "Back in '95 we sat there face-to-face and you said that coal would have a say in that second deputy directorship." He tried to fudge and so on, and I told him that I would have to remind as many people as I had to remind of that deal, calling it a deal, and that we had a person who wanted it. He tried to tell me that the governor would never approve of Richard Mottershaw but **would**

approve of the woman he wanted as one of his two deputy directors. I said, "Well, then we'll just have to see who wins." I happened to know – apparently Director Manning didn't know – that George Ryan thought a lot of Dick Mottershaw. So I knew in my heart this wasn't going to be a contest, and I said it just so **you'd** know.

Oh, oh, a key Ryan aide had called me and said, "What about this now? There's several names. Come over here." I said, "Well, we had a deal." He said, "Well, that's what we've been told; this goes back to the Edgar years." I said, "We had a deal," and they said, Well, we got two names here, and we want to know before we take the names in to Governor Ryan where you stand. I said, "It's very clear: Mottershaw, I don't want her, and I'm free and clear, and my own conscience is saying this, because this goes back to the deal back in 1995."

When the names went in, I got a call about an hour later from the key Ryan person, and he was laughing. He simply said, "This is no decision at all; it's Dick Mottershaw." I knew ahead of time that once Ryan saw the two names, this was not even a question. But this goes back to the '95 situation, and I did get that. This was in my time. I was able to implement that part of it. Even though Grosboll was no longer there, I said, "A deal's a deal." And I said, "But Manning was there, and he remembers." So that's how that worked out.

DePue: Looking at the organizations that ended up being rolled into the Department of Natural Resources, there's always an element of sense in understanding why they ended up there, but there's one part of it I'm sure you have a reaction to. In some respects, I would think that—is it the Department, or the Office, of Mines and Minerals? Which one? Is it the Office of Mines and Minerals?

Pensoneau: Yeah. That was the former Department of Mines and Minerals. It became the Office of Mines and Minerals in the new DNR in '95.

DePue: Okay, so the Mines and Minerals and EPA being separate institutions, they're now both wrapped up into the Department of Natural Resources, and I'm not sure there is a compatible…

Pensoneau: No, the EPA was still separate.

DePue: It was still separate?

Pensoneau: Yeah, positive. The original idea was to include the EPA, but it didn't fly.

DePue: Because…?

Pensoneau: The EPA is still separate.

DePue: Okay, so I stand corrected on that.

Pensoneau: Well, because the environmentalists always had a certain degree of clout.

DePue: I mean, there's clearly an adversarial relationship between the two institutions.

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

DePue: That's what I'm getting at.

Pensoneau: Agreed, agreed. Yeah, it was just felt that the EPA wouldn't fit in. Everybody kind of agreed on that except some people who wanted it in. I don't recall that I wanted it in there, and I don't think the environmentalists wanted it in there.

DePue: Okay. Well, I'm glad you corrected me on that, because I seriously misunderstood that part of it. Another big focus for the Edgar administration, especially in the second administration, was education. I guess it could be a focus because most of the budgetary problems were behind them.

Pensoneau: Yeah, right, and you're right. I just recall that Governor Edgar insisted upon increasing the base so-called funding or foundation level for public school pupils and students in Illinois, and that he fomented and insisted upon, and I think got, legislative approval for some aspects of redistribution that guaranteed more money going to some of the poorer districts. My memory seems to be pretty clear on that. That was a hallmark of Edgar; he was a strident public school advocate. I mean, his own two kids went to public schools. He never wavered in his proposals and adjacent maneuvering to secure and increase funding for public schools.

DePue: One of the things that's often put forward as a criticism against Edgar, especially in these last four years, is in the election campaign in 1994, Dawn Clark Netsch is advocating increasing personal income tax and, as an offset to that, doing something to address the problems with property tax. She lost by a huge margin to Edgar in that campaign. It wasn't shortly thereafter that he's proposing roughly the same kind of initiative.

Pensoneau: I remember that.

DePue: Your response to that criticism?

Pensoneau: (laughs) I think politically it was some validity to it. (laughs) I don't recall why his stance on that was in abeyance during the campaign, if that's the right interpretation.

DePue: Well, this is a person that before this time, you described—

Pensoneau: Yeah. Oh, no.

DePue: —as being very upright and straight arrow and doing what he says, and…

Pensoneau: Well, but also remember, he was very shrewd politically. As they say, he could put his finger to the wind, and sometimes you had to pay attention to the way the wind was blowing. I think that when she came out… As I recall, she came out strong, as I said earlier, for an income tax increase, or said she would, and I think that was just too much of a big political balloon to throw up to the plate. He had to take a swing at it.

DePue: So does that mean that this is strictly political posturing in his part in '94, or did he have a change of heart?

Pensoneau: Oh, I think so. I think so. I don't know that he had a change of heart. I'm guessing it was, campaigns are different from governing and governings are different from campaigns, and (laughs) this is really campaign posturing. What you're saying is true, but I may want to add to it or maybe qualify it a bit by saying, When he ran the first time and got elected, he was upfront about making the surcharge permanent, but he also said no new tax increases after that.

DePue: That's correct.

Pensoneau: Okay, so I'm going back to that. I'm trying to put myself in his position here for a few minutes. I think that if you look at that position he was safe, because, remember, his positions on income tax increases were often offset by property tax relief positions. I think that from his viewpoint—and I don't recall—what they did was they emphasized the income tax increase part of her proposal, not the other part. But I think that he had several previous positions to rely upon, and I think he could rely upon the one way back when, when he said after the surcharge was permanent, no new tax increases. You know, politics often comes down to a matter of rhetoric and a matter of semantics, and I think we probably are getting into a little bit of that here (DePue laughs) in this area.

DePue: One of the things I know he did – I don't know exactly the timing, but early in his second administration – is he appointed a blue-ribbon committee here, and Stanley Ikenberry, who was…—

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah.

DePue: …the former president of the University of Illinois, was the chair of that., I believe the purpose was to examine this very issue.

Pensoneau: I believe you're right. I'm sure you're right.

DePue: Recall any of the specifics of how that part of it played out?

Pensoneau: I remember him naming Ikenberry. I think that Ikenberry and Governor Edgar had a fairly close relationship. I think they each had a lot of respect for each other. Well, as I recall, did not the Ikenberry Commission, if that's what we're

calling it, that blue-ribbon panel, didn't it propose going ahead with solid planning and looking for the switch we're talking about?

DePue: Yes, it did. I guess what I'm leading up to here is, did Edgar do that to provide himself some political cover?

Pensoneau: (laughs) A great question, but I can't really answer it. As I recall, though, to carry this through to fruition, was it ever proposed as legislation? It was bounced off of…

DePue: Yes.

Pensoneau: It was proposed as legislation?

DePue: Mm-hmm.

Pensoneau: But it didn't go anywhere, if I recall. It did? No, it didn't.

DePue: It did not.

Pensoneau: No, it didn't. That was, I think, an example where Pate Philip, and probably Daniels too, joined in the blockage situation.

DePue: This is the other part of this whole scenario playing out that intrigues me: January 1997, Edgar's getting close to another election year, and I don't know that in '97 he had made up his mind yet what he wants to do, but…

Pensoneau: I was led to believe he had not.

DePue: But he decides to spend some of his political capital. I mean, he's spending some of his campaign fund money to support an ad campaign series to do something to address the problem, to establish a floor for minimum payment to all of these school districts, which would mean that somewhere we're going to have to find the money in the state to do that. Do you recall that ad campaign?

Pensoneau: I don't recall the ad campaign. I know that the ad campaign is addressing a situation that I know you described accurately, but I don't. I do not remember the ad campaign.

DePue: Okay. Let's move on to some other territory I think you might remember some of the specifics on. Any administration you pick, you can always discuss this. We're talking about scandals now. In Edgar's case he had a scandal early in his tenure as Secretary of State, which we've addressed a little bit. I want you to talk about the Tollway scandal.

Pensoneau: Basically my understanding is that Robert Hickman, who I think was an old Edgar friend from Charleston…

DePue: Had been important in fundraising for him as well.

Pensoneau: Apparently so, apparently so. …was named Executive Director of the Illinois Tollway Authority, which basically exists up in the Chicago suburbs, and got crosswise in one of the land deals which the authority is generally engaging in – engaging in or disengaging in – and lost his position. I just don't recall how far it went. He was convicted, I think…

DePue: Yes.

Pensoneau: …of obviously illegal activity in connection with a land deal or a land transaction or a proposed land transaction. I can't recall whether he went to prison or not. I just can't, really. I know that it was considered unfortunate. I think that…

DePue: Considered by whom to be unfortunate?

Pensoneau: Oh, I think the Edgar people. Yeah, obviously.

DePue: The main scandal that he dealt with is what is now known as the MSI scandal – Management Services of Illinois – and that really started to percolate later in his administration.

Pensoneau: Correct.

DePue: Tell us a little bit about what you know on that one.

Pensoneau: Well, what I basically understood there is, Management Services of Illinois was hired or contracted with to try to detect fraudulent or duplicate payments in the area of Medicaid, and maybe other areas too, and it turned out that payments to MSI itself, or a remuneration, were rigged in a way that obviously they were excessive, but MSI was remunerated in improper ways. It was making, I guess some would say, a killing on a situation when some of its services were duplicative, and some of their remuneration was based on false reporting or false accomplishments or false headway. This activity, which was judged to be illegal, was spelled out rather convincingly in a letter that came to Edgar's office. I think that a decision was made by the powers to be, which would probably be the governor himself and Mike – I'm not sure if there was anybody else, I don't know. This source in the letter – I don't know if that source was named – seemed to know what he or she were talking about. I mean, you can tell the difference between something that looks like a legitimate complaint and something that looks superfluous; this, I think, unfortunately looked pretty legitimate. I think maybe a few questions asked discreetly reaffirmed the feeling that there might be a real problem here. So, as I understand it, it was decided that the matter would be referred to the state police; the state police would be brought in to look at it. And then obviously at some point there was a federal investigation or inquiry, because that's where indictments were returned

DePue: The original allegations, though, had to do with campaign donations and then expectations that there would be lucrative contracts afterwards?

Pensoneau: Oh, I don't know that. That well may have been part of it, I don't know, because obviously principals of this MSI had been heavy in the campaigns. At least, I think, the first campaign, back in '90, they had been heavy contributors. I think actually one or two of them had been rather visible in the campaign. And so they were overly milking the cow. I'm searching for a phrase here, because I don't have the details of it. I could resurrect clippings and newspaper accounts of what transpired, but I just don't have it off the top of my head.

Obviously this was a very touching and disappointing situation. But I think that the governor's office felt that the allegations could not be ignored, and as I understand, they went to the state police with it and asked the state police to initiate an investigation. Now, I just don't recall, vis-à-vis again, the federal aspect of how this ended up in federal court. Obviously there was a corresponding federal investigation, too. Obviously. But I just don't recall the details of it.

DePue: Well, there were convictions at the end of this.

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah, there were.

DePue: Michael Martin, who is convicted, he's an MSI official, and Ron Lowder, who is an official from the Department of Public Aid, were both convicted. Robert Wright – I'm not sure what his position was – and Mike Belletire, who was deputy chief of staff for some of this period on Edgar's administration, had charges dismissed against them. But I guess I'm putting you on the spot, as I have all day today, and I feel bad about that.

Pensoneau: Sure.

DePue: But, by golly, you were a journalist for many, many years, and when you were a journalist, your bread and butter was to investigate situations like this.

Pensoneau: This is true.

DePue: So I'm asking you now, as an official with the Illinois Coal Association and a part-time lobbyist with lots of friends in the journalistic community, what was your perception of how this all played out?

Pensoneau: (pause) I don't know. I mean, people were burned. Obviously this did not help the image of the administration. I think it played out in a way that obviously disappointed some who were surprised that this would occur in the administration. I think in any gubernatorial administration, as we have seen, there's not just the likelihood but the actual carrying out of fraudulent activity, and whether it gets detected or not is another matter. It often comes to the

surface, if at all, because some of those aware of it or even supposedly part of it aren't getting their share of the pie, and they get mad; then they talk and they write letters and things like that. I think the governor's office went along seemingly with the tide of investigation, and the feds attempted to carry it out to obviously an extensive degree, and then it reached a certain level when it suddenly ended. As I recall, there were the convictions you mentioned. Then there was, I think, an assistant director who maybe his name was on some contracts or something who was implicated but was acquitted, and then when that occurred, it pretty much ended; it didn't go beyond that. I know that the governor wasn't personally shown to be involved in it.

DePue: Would you say that once the allegations came to light, would you say that the administration dealt with it appropriately?

Pensoneau: I think it did. I do know this, to be fair to the administration, that once this thing came to light, the administration certainly didn't try to hamstring, put a gag on, or derail, to my knowledge, in any way, the direction and energy of the investigation. I think that it was prepared to live with however far this thing went. As it turned out, it went up to I thought it was as high as an assistant director of one of the agencies.

DePue: The Department of Public Aid was where it seemed to be centered.

Pensoneau: Yeah, and I think it got as high as an assistant director. I keep going back to that. I can't remember the guy's name, but the bottom line is he was acquitted, and so that seemed to signal an end to the fact that the feds had successfully prosecuted individuals supposedly involved up to that level. Then when they got to that level, they didn't make their case and the guy was acquitted, and so then that seemed to be the end of it. I mean, there were always rumors flying around about, oh, who all might be involved and who wasn't involved. You hear that all the time in something like this. We've heard it on all the Blagojevich stuff, all the Tony Rezko stuff, all the stuff going on right now as you and I sit and talk. But until there's an actual public indictment and a hearing and a subsequent trial if it goes that far, it's not really fair in looking back after all these years to toss out names who might have had some inkling of what was going on.

DePue: Okay. That pretty much brings us to the end of his second administration and to the important decision that he has to make and his close political advisers, and that's obviously, Will there be a third administration? From your seat, observing this from the outside very much, were you surprised when Edgar's office finally came out and said there will be no run for a third term?

Pensoneau: I, of course, like the rest of the Illinois political world, didn't know what his decision would be, but if you're asking if I was surprised, I wasn't. I just wasn't. I kind of felt that he had maybe had enough. I don't know. You know, that was one time when the whole Edgar world got pretty closed-mouthed

about what he was going to do or not do. I would get maybe little inklings here and there. As I recall, there were three decisions: run for reelection, don't run for reelection, or—am I right?—run for the United States Senate.

DePue: Run for the Senate was also an option.

Pensoneau: Right, right. Mike and I were close, and Mike would kind of let me know that the governor was weighing back and forth, obviously, the pros and cons of each of the three decisions. But I think even Mike indicated that up until the last moment, he wasn't totally sure what the decision was going to be. I'm sure he'll tell you about that. Possibly even the governor himself will talk about it. I'm just really way in left field talking here, but I often felt like, Why would Governor Edgar want to go to the United States Senate? Many political figures through the years, a number have told me that there's no question in Illinois politics, being governor of Illinois is a lot bigger deal –well, Obama's proving it wrong – but at least up to this point, being a governor of Illinois is much more significant politically than being a United States senator from Illinois. At least that was the feeling back then. I know a number of the big names in Illinois politics felt that way, whether they admitted it or not; several did admit it to me through the years. It's hard to see, after what he had accomplished here and the heights to which he had risen, where he could look forth to flying back and forth to Washington, DC all the time. But that was said to be an option. Nobody told me anything, but just on my layman's intuition, my private guess was that he was not going to run, that he was going to back off and maybe enjoy life more.

And then, of course, I think definitely – although I don't know what her advice or feeling was – but whatever Brenda felt about the situation, I would have to believe weighed heavily in the governor's decision.

DePue: During any of his years as governor did you think that he had presidential aspirations as well?

Pensoneau: That's another good question. You know, I got to say, (pause) compared to other Illinois governors I've had a chance to observe or be aware of, Governor Edgar wasn't very visible on that issue. Of course, whatever the governor says is the case here, but I just don't recall talk coming from the Edgar camp about him entertaining White House aspirations. I don't. And that's definitely opposed to, obviously for a while, the talk around Governor Thompson, opposed to the talk going back to Governor Ogilvie. I can tell you that Governor Dan Walker did entertain such aspirations; I think you yourself know that. But as opposed to those individuals, I just don't… Well, more recently, Governor Blagojevich[19] (laughter) said that he (laughs) thought he

[19] Governor Rod Blagojevich was convicted in Federal Court on several counts of trying to "sell the office of Illinois U. S. Senator." When that office was vacated by the accession of Barack to the U. S. presidency, under the Illinois constitution the governor had the authority to appoint a replacement senator.

was White House material, so there's another example. But I just don't recall that sort of talk emanating from the Edgar camp. I don't.

DePue: Let's finish with this question, then, for the day.

Pensoneau: Sure.

DePue: In the final session I want to talk to you and cover this in a much more brief period of time than we have with the previous governors, but to talk about your impressions about George Ryan, to talk about your impressions of Rod Blagojevich, and to talk about your feelings about the state of journalism in America today. I think that's probably a great topic to finish with.

Pensoneau: Love to talk—we can do all three in one sitting?

DePue: But let me finish with this question for today: do you think Edgar had the ability? Was he of presidential timber?

Pensoneau: Gosh. I mean, (pause, sigh) I just don't know. You know? I mean, I… (pause, sigh) You know, I hate to end our great double session here today by saying I don't know. I think part of having presidential timber is having that incredible burning desire in your stomach that you've got to have if you want to be president or you want to be head of a major corporation or maybe even if you want to write a book. I don't know that I was ever made aware of an intense, burning desire harbored by Jim Edgar to be in the White House. I will say this: I think if Jim Edgar had so desired, I would say that he would have been a serious, legitimate candidate for the White House. I am going to say that, because he represented a lot of what the American public wanted. To the public in general, he had a certain degree of charisma that went beyond the good looks. He was popular in Illinois.

I will add this: If he had decided to run for a third term as governor, I think he would have been elected. I will say that right here for the record before we quit. I think the inclination is to say, Very few major political figures have presidential timber. But I would answer it this way – who ever knows until you're actually in a situation like that – but I'm going to answer it by saying, I think if Jim Edgar had had a burning desire to reach the White House and to lead this country – something I was never aware of – I think he would have had to have been taken seriously. I do, because people were willing to work for Jim Edgar politically. People admired him, and although the Republican Party as a statewide organization wasn't ever near as strong in my time as the Democrats statewide, politically, party-wise, organization-wise, Jim Edgar could marshal a sizeable following. He really could. I would not want to say that I didn't think he couldn't do that on a national level. That's really… You know, there have been times in this country when we've elected people… Jim Edgar in many ways strengthened and maintained what we've got, and let's get the most out of what we've got without imposing

undue burdens; let's not in every area of life rock the boat, and so on. There have been times in American history when the populace has wanted an individual like Jim Edgar. I think Warren Harding was an example; perhaps even Calvin Coolidge fit that mold. Maybe one can even interpret that to include Dwight Eisenhower. I think in those times, Jim Edgar, if he had so desired, certainly would have been a serious contender. I conclude by saying, I think that if Jim Edgar had had a burning desire, like some of his predecessors in the governor's mansion, he would have had to have been taken seriously.

DePue: This is the kind of thing historians aren't supposed to do but we inevitably do anyway: If he had had that burning desire, as you've called it, and it's absolutely a necessity…He had a burning desire to be governor, apparently.

Pensoneau: Apparently.

DePue: …the timing would have been such that the logical year he would have run for president would have been 2000. The other two candidates in the Republican side were obviously George W. Bush and John McCain.

Pensoneau: Well, obviously (pause) Governor Edgar certainly wouldn't have pretended to approach trying to match John McCain on international issues. That would have been difficult competition, there's no question about it, since you're being accurate here. I think Bush turned out to be a formidable competitor for McCain in 2000, and Bush would have been formidable for Jim Edgar or almost any other Republican, one reason being his father had been a president. That would have been tough competition. Bush would have in particular, maybe, because Bush was governor of Texas; Bush might have had a little bit, in looking back, of the same appeal that Jim Edgar might have had: those who wanted occupants of the White House to come from governorships or places other than Washington. Again, I think Edgar would have been a legitimate contender, but at the same time, I think that would have been – since you reminded me of who the contenders were in 2000 – both would have been tough contenders for different reasons: McCain because of his service and because McCain and Edgar are probably both, in many ways, Republican moderates, I think, using terms loosely. Bush, being a governor, would have had some of the same appeal as Edgar. But also keep in mind, though, if they all three had persisted, you never know. I mean, we've had situations whereby – who knows – Bush and McCain might have gotten involved in a loggerhead situation, and some might have started looking for a compromise, and here's this attractive, popular governor of Illinois, and maybe this is the way we go.

DePue: I said before that was my last question. This is my last question. (Pensoneau laughs) Your assessment of Jim Edgar as a governor of the state of Illinois:how would you rank him?

Pensoneau: I think Jim Edgar was a competent and successful governor of Illinois. I do. I really don't say that because I consider him a friend. I think you have to keep in mind I'm answering that from my personal perspective. I'm not an advocate of continually burgeoning government. I am an advocate of letting the private sector, giving it as much play as you can. I would say for the record that we're in an economic downturn right now as you and I talk here at this time, and you and anybody else have a right to come back and say, Well, do you still believe that? I still believe that, only because right now, some of the economic problems we have – sure they're being borne by and caused by private institutions, financial institutions and other entities – but government programs in certain key cases have promulgated some of the situations that we've seen develop in the private sector. I can go into great length in that; we can get into Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, and so on. I have some knowledge in another walk of my life about those matters.

But having said all that, I think that Jim Edgar was a good governor for the time. I think that it's important you bring respect to the governorship, and I think he **did** do that. I think people respected him. I think there's something positive to be said about a governor that's popular, that people like. I think that he did not dodge problems or issues. He didn't increase the state tax load on individuals, as I recall. And I think that he conducted himself in a dignified way that made Illinoisans proud of the fact that we've got this rather – to the outside world – dignified individual who's governor of our state.

You know, when you get into dynamism, the word "dynamic," with governors, there aren't too many that fit the bill; it also depends upon the timeframe in which they govern. Ogilvie was an outstanding governor, but he took over the governorship when society was being torn asunder by riots and protests, civil rights, anti-Vietnam, all of this stuff. It was a different climate; Ogilvie was a different kind of governor. He was a dynamic governor part of those times. But I think Jim Edgar was in some ways a hold-the-line governor, and in some ways even a governmental minimalist that a lot of people welcomed at that time.

DePue: Okay. Thank you very much, Taylor, (Pensoneau laughs) and one more session to go.

Pensoneau: Thank you, Mark.

(end of interview #10 #11 continues)

Interview with Taylor Pensoneau

ISG-A-L-2009-07

Interview # 11: March 12, 2010

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Friday, March 12, 2010. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here today with Taylor Pensoneau. Good morning, Taylor.

Pensoneau: Good morning, Mark.

DePue: Believe it or not, Taylor, this is our eleventh session.

Pensoneau: I did not realize we've had that many.

DePue: Well, we've had a lot to talk about. We've talked about, I don't know, forty years of Illinois political history. This being Illinois, there's (chuckle) a lot of history there.

Pensoneau: Well, that's true. You and I both know that. We've talked about most of the major figures in the political history of the state, I would say, during the last half of the 20th century.

DePue: Starting with Otto Kerner, I believe is where we picked it up.

Pensoneau: He got elected in 1960.

DePue: So there you go. Yeah, that's fifty years.

Pensoneau: Umh hm.

DePue: It's been a fascinating series of discussions. The reason that we've had quite a hiatus – it's actually been close to a year since we last talked – I've been working on the rest of the Edgar administration, have done an extensive amount of interviewing with other people in the Edgar administration, but definitely wanted to come back and finish the series with you. Today's focus is on George Ryan and on Rod Blagojevich and then we'll finish with some reflections you have on politics and journalism.

Pensoneau: Sure. Great.

DePue: So we've still got quite a bit more to talk about. Now, for the first series of discussions you were giving your perspective as a journalist. Then, of course, you had a long period of time where you were a lobbyist, but still keeping very close tabs of what was going on in the Illinois political scene in Springfield.

Pensoneau: Oh, absolutely.

DePue: These last two personalities, governors. It's a little bit different kind of perspective. I think what I want to say up front is, even though you weren't an active journalist, or even necessarily a lobbyist during this time, you were the guy who actually wrote the chapter on George Ryan and the chapter on Rod Blagojevich in *The Illinois Governors: Mostly Good and Competent.*

Pensoneau: (chuckles) That's right. Now let me point out, I was the President of the Illinois Coal Association during all of George Ryan's governorship, so I was active then. My last year as president of the association was Blagojevich's first year as Governor, so I was still lobbying and doing all the other assorted things I did for the coal industry during all of Ryan's governorship and still during the first year of Blagojevich's governorship.

DePue: Thank you for setting the record straight. Here's my first question for you, though, Taylor. Is it time now, considering the last thirty, forty years of Illinois history, to reconsider the subtitle of the book on Illinois' governors, *Mostly Good and Competent*?

Pensoneau: What a great question to start with. I think that your question only mirrors public opinion, which is widespread throughout the state. Obviously, I think my research – it's four or five of the last nine governors have either been indicted or charged with wrongdoing. I hope I'm right on that.

DePue: That would be five.

Pensoneau: Kerner, Walker, Ryan, Blagojevich and Stratton. Now, not all were found guilty. Stratton, for example, was acquitted of charges of avoiding income taxes, but your question's right on target. But in view of that, and especially in more recent years with the conviction and imprisonment of George Ryan and with, as we sit here today, the indictment of Blagojevich and his pending trial, still slated to start this upcoming June,[20] as I understand, it certainly again is a pertinent question. So, your guess to the answer is as good as mine, but based on the reality of it, which you brought up, maybe it's time to revise the title of that book.

[20] By the time this interview was transcribed Blagojevich had been found guilty on charges related to using his appointive power to try to "sell" the appointment of U. S. Senator office from Illinois to replace Barack Obama when he was elected President.

DePue: Let's jump right in with George Ryan.

Pensoneau: Okay.

DePue: You mentioned already that you were working as a lobbyist during this entire administration.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: I want to ask you, first of all, to describe his personality and his political style. But before we actually do that, I'm going to read, the first paragraph of your chapter on George Ryan, because I think it sums him up pretty well, at least the public perception of George Ryan. "George Ryan was a gruff master of old line politics during his long public career. The ultimate insider, he had the political savvy to achieve much during his one term as Governor, but in the end, his conviction for widespread corruption brought personal disgrace and left his Republican party in shambles." Do you still think that's a pretty accurate description of the man?

Pensoneau: That is still very accurate. Every word.

DePue: Okay. Tell me a little bit more about how you saw his personality and then how that manifest itself in his political career.

Pensoneau: All right. That's a good start. I'll start off with the word I used in writing that opening chapter you just read from. He was gruff. He was gruff to outsiders. He was not a back-slapper. He was not garrulous. He certainly did not exude charisma as did some of our other Governors in the last part of the 20th century. He came across, in some ways, as an old-fashioned political boss, actually, but on the Republican side, of course. As I said, he was a throw-back in the end. He was a throw-back to the past when you governed by time-honored principles of remaining loyal to those who helped bring you to the dance, by rewarding those who were in your corner, by being very shrewd at making deals with individuals from all of the political spectrums. Ryan – really, you would want to think at first glance he was a conservative Republican, and maybe at heart he was. But he emerged eventually – manifested himself eventually, if that's correct – as pretty much of a middle-of-the-road guy who actually, on some major areas of public life or in terms of the public sector, took very liberal positions.

I knew George Ryan. I met George Ryan when he was a state representative. I was not close to him then. He came from Kankakee, Kankakee County, which, of course, meant little to the coal industry and the coal industry, obviously, meant little to George Ryan. He was in a sort of no man's land as far as I was concerned, where I didn't have to really curry his favor. I met him. I didn't know him very well. I got to know him a little better in the one term when he was Speaker of the Illinois House; I think that was '80, '81, '82 or '83. I will say this, He was good to deal with. He didn't

mince words, but if he said he was going to try to do something or if he said something in terms of how he felt about your issues, you could take it to the bank. That separated him from some other major political figures. He wasn't wishy-washy. You know, he was a straight talker and so on. I always knew in trying to deal with Ryan that, of course, I was, as most people were, not an insider. I knew there was an inner circle that I was certainly not part of, and wouldn't have any way of becoming part of.

But, yet, I thought there was a certain candor in dealing with Ryan that was basically favorable. For one thing, if he agreed to help you on an issue or to take an interest, that was positive, because Ryan could work both sides of the aisle. That was a big deal. Former Governor Jim Thompson demonstrated that ability also, you might say. Ryan could produce Democratic votes as readily as he could Republican votes, and that's a plus. It was one reason why, if not for the corruption and imprisonment, he might have gone down as one of the state's, certainly in my opinion better governors, if not one of the great governors, because, basically, he could get whatever he wanted from the Illinois General Assembly. And that was a big deal. Because Ryan had been there and he knew how to talk the language of folks who engaged in the give-and-take on all the issues. He was a master at the legislative process and that set him apart from some of the other governors.

DePue: Well it certainly set him apart from Dan Walker who we've talked about.

Pensoneau: Set him apart from Dan Walker. Set him apart from Otto Kerner. Well, frankly, set him apart from Richard Ogilvie, too.

DePue: But you mentioned that he wasn't a back-slapper. Was he an arm-twister?

Pensoneau: He could be an arm-twister, and there's a difference, right. Yeah, he could be an arm-twister. If he needed something and he went to someone, say a legislative leader or something, it would be, "Okay, I need this; what do you need from me for you to give me what I need?" That's putting it in the most kindergarten-level terms.

DePue: He was a deal maker.

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah. He was. He did come across as kind of gruff. Now if you got to know him better, that gruffness sort of disappeared and he could be very nice in a private one-on-one conversation. But, as I indicated, he didn't seem to care about portraying himself as a garrulous overtly nice person, really; he didn't seem to make an attempt to ingratiate himself with you personality-wise. I don't know if he didn't care or it was his basic nature, but he was not Mr. Personality. We can certainly agree on that. Basically, he was pragmatic. With someone like me, he did not engage in small talk. If I got to him, which I could – I will say this, one could get access to him. When I did it would be short and direct exchanges. I understand you're doing this.

What do you need here? How far should I go? What can your industry do for me? I understand you've got a problem. We can try to do something, but boil it down to what you want and get it to my people and we'll see what we can do. But oftentimes when it would be like that, it wasn't meaningless conversation, though. I mean, he would follow through.

For example, in 2001 he cooperated with myself and other interests in getting through the General Assembly a major program that laid the foundation for a good future for the Illinois coal industry, and that is still in play today as we talk here in 2010. It was overall like a 3.5 billion dollar program. Now, much of that money was in the form of revenue bonds. I want to point that out when taxpayers are listening to this: revenue bonds, meaning that the projects to be financed had to end up paying for themselves and that would go toward retiring the bonds. In other words, this is not all on the taxpayer's dollar. A little bit of it was. Those were so-called general obligation bonds, and there was a provision in there for some of that. This was money that could be used by utilities, big-time entrepreneurs, to provide the financing foundation for financing big clean coal projects, new utility plants that emitted almost no pollutants and right by these plants would be brand new state-of-the-art coal mines. One of those as we talk right now is being constructed right down in Washington County – it's going to be huge – by Peabody Coal Company.

There are other projects coming on line in the state; assistance for those projects is available from this program passed in 2001. It was a major, a major step forward for the Illinois coal industry. It took the whole session to get it through; it was my main work project in the 2001 session of the Illinois General Assembly, but I knew we were going to get something because the Governor was on board, because it was something he wanted us to work out details that he could agree to, and we did. In the end, I think in the summer, he signed this program at one of my coal mines. It was a tremendous program and it remains on the books. I mean, it's there, and it's key to the future health of the Illinois coal industry. That was George Ryan.

DePue: Okay. James Mariner wrote the book here recently on George Ryan; the book's entitled *The Man Who Emptied Death Row: Governor George Ryan and the Politics of Crime*. Now the reason I mention that is because Mariner has portrayed Ryan – his way of understanding who George Ryan was and is – that he was a product of the Kankakee County Republican Party machine.

Pensoneau: Umh huh.

DePue: Just like Chicago is machine politics – that's how we normally understand things – that Ryan was a product of that organization; part of that means that you understand loyalty, you understand the world of patronage. Maybe that's some of the things that the old-style of machine politics would get Ryan into trouble later on. Do you think that's an accurate characterization?

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah, Mariner's right, but, of course, that's what I said, too, in my chapter.

DePue: Okay.

Pensoneau: I said he came out of an old-line hardball playing Republican machine in Kankakee County. Yeah. That's accurate.

DePue: Okay.

Pensoneau: I point out in my own, I think my language, is he was well-groomed for dealing in Springfield because he came out of a rough-and-tumble machine atmosphere in Kankakee County that only differed from other machines in that it was Republican and not Democratic. So, yeah, Mariner's right, but, as I said, that's the way I introduced Ryan in the book *Mostly Good and Competent*.

DePue: I know we've covered this somewhat in quite a few sessions back, but since we're talking about Ryan specifically here, I want you to reflect on his role in the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment fight that was going on for many, many years in Illinois. It really crescendoed, I think, in 1982.

Pensoneau: He was key. He made no bones about it. As long as he was in a position of power Illinois would not be one of the states ratifying the proposed ERA amendment. He was outspoken, very visible and very active in prohibiting its passage. It was because of that type of situation many people thought he was a traditionally conservative Republican. Back at that time, I, too, just assumed because of that, and other stands he took on issues, that he was a pretty conservative guy.

DePue: Do you think his opposition was motivated by philosophical differences with the Equal Rights Amendment, or was it more of a political calculation?

Pensoneau: Good question. I think maybe your guess there might be as good as mine. I think at that point, because he was very visible on the issue you've raised, I thought it reflected his political philosophy. I just assumed that.

DePue: Mm hm. Well, it was not too long after that that Thompson chose him to be his Lieutenant Governor. You don't say much, Mariner doesn't say much about those years, because you're kind of in the political hinterland to a certain respect, aren't you?

Pensoneau: That's true. Yeah. I agree with that; you are. Most Lieutenant Governors are in that situation and Ryan, I would say, was included among them. When he was Lieutenant Governor, I would average maybe one lunch a year with him. It was my impression that he felt he was being politically wasted and he felt restricted. I can tell you, that when Alan Dixon, then-Secretary of State, got elected to the United States Senate in 1980, that George Ryan wanted – I hope

I've got this right now – George Ryan wanted the Secretary of State [of Illinois] appointment. That, of course, went to Jim Edgar. Obviously, Governor Thompson felt that Jim Edgar was a better man, a better person for the politically potent position of Secretary of State. I think at the time that Governor Thompson saw in Jim Edgar, who, as you know, had a very clean reputation, that Edgar was the best man for that position; everything probably worked out more or less like Thompson ordained it.

But still, Ryan wanted it at the time, as did some other prominent Republicans, several very visible Republicans in Congress at the time: the late Ed Madigan, Tom Corcoran. They also wanted to be considered for appointment by Thompson to be Secretary of State. You know, I think that every observer of Illinois politics will agree that being Lieutenant Governor doesn't have near the cachet or the clout or the wherewithal being Secretary of State. Politically, Secretary of State's the second most potent position in Illinois. Okay. So I think Ryan felt he was in a secondary spot, even though he was Lieutenant Governor. Certainly Governor Thompson may think I'm all wet, but I had an impression at my lunches with Ryan, when he was Lieutenant Governor, that he felt constrained and that, while he had political standing of his own, he felt like he could sort of be controlled as Lieutenant Governor. I know it's a little vague here, and I understand that Governor Thompson might, if he ever read this or was aware of this, might say, "Well, there's no truth to that." But, Ryan had that impression that he was biting at the bit, as they say, to reach more of his potential in the hierarchy of Illinois politics and that he felt he was sort of in a political strait jacket as Lieutenant Governor. My recollection is that he really didn't have much to do.

DePue: Mm hmm.

Pensoneau: Okay, putting it bluntly, I always had an impression that he was frustrated in his years as Lieutenant Governor.

DePue: Let's fast forward then to 1991. Jim Edgar has stepped out of the role as Secretary of State. By almost all accounts had been a very successful Secretary of State.

Pensoneau: Uh huh.

DePue: Now he's the Governor and Ryan gets his opportunity to move into position, as you said, he wanted long before that time, to be Secretary of State.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: What do you recall about those Secretary of State years? Did you have much dealing with him there?

Pensoneau: Not as much. No. I have to say that. Once he became Secretary of State, of course that made him much more important politically and much busier

politically. In his years as Secretary of State, I don't recall having really much contact with him. I mean, nothing more than to the effect that I may go to a fund raiser, that there's hundreds of others, and he'd say, Hi and how's it going, is coal hanging in there. You know, stuff like that. No. I didn't have as much contact with him.

I should point out that back when he was Lieutenant Governor, that one of his few responsibilities was administering a program called the Abandoned Mined Lands Reclamation Program, and so that brought him into contact with me quite a bit. I mean, there were some "business dealings," and Ryan would let me have a little bit of a say in which of the more seriously environmentally impaired parcels around the state we should address first to try to remove eyesores, things like that, from mined out properties, namely some surface mines, obviously. There would be times when we would meet; he would say, This is a list, what do you think? You're the industry. Should we direct restoration funds to these sites first? Things like that.

Now, of course, that wasn't the case in the Secretary of State. My **impression** was that he was a "pretty good Secretary of State." He was very visible. He was really big on combating the drunk driving issues. He brought about lowering of the blood alcohol content limit that designated whether you were drunk or not when you were driving; that was a big deal. He was big on the organ donor program. The Secretary of State is also, by virtue of office, the State Librarian. As I recall, he was very good for the State Library in terms of letting the crew there move ahead in terms of digital stuff and all the things that signify improvement, supposedly. If I remember correct, I became active…

Actually, my contact with him when he was Secretary of State – if I recall briefly here – is, I went on a board that was called the Illinois Center for the Book and eventually I became the President of the Center. In that role, we used staffing at the State Library and our operations were housed in the State Library building. And as I recall, when I first went on the board Ryan was still Secretary of State and we were in a few meetings where it became obvious to me that he was very supportive of the library and of programs that helped authors and children's literacy and things like that. So my contact with him as Secretary of State – if memory serves me right – had nothing to do with the coal industry; it was in my role with the Illinois Center for the Book. I had the impression that he was a pretty good Secretary of State. He seemed to be very visible. That's one thing about being a Secretary of State: if you want to be visible, you **can** be very visible, and I thought he was.

I don't want to get ahead of things here, but at the same time, I, like everybody else on this scene, heard rumblings about this Operation Safe Road investigation in Chicago that had been started by the U. S. Attorney's office in Chicago. This was even before Fitzgerald was U. S. Attorney in Chicago. I know there were issues, and you would hear things about the fact that aspects

of that investigation in Chicago were going into dealings in some of the driver's license stations or outlets in the Chicago area. Of course, when you talk about that, you're talking about the Secretary of State's office. But at the same time, if you ever were in a conversation with a Ryan partisan, in the course of conversation, someone like me would say something about, hey, you know, you kind of hear about…are there inquiries going into some of the driver's license stations? And the answer would always be, "Oh, no, this is the routine stuff. Just pooh-pooh it. Whatever's going on happens under every secretary, it happens all the time."

DePue: You mentioned something there, "…that if you talked to a Ryan partisan…" That suggests that he had a loyal corps of supporters and followers, political allies.

Pensoneau: Oh yeah. He did. A lot of them were former legislators. Well, I would say most of them that I was aware of **were** former legislators, either reps or senators.

DePue: Well, you've already gotten into something that we'll develop here just a little bit and then we'll talk about his years as Governor and come back and talk a lot more about the scandals that plagued his administration.

Pensoneau: Sure.

DePue: But the license for bribes scandal is what you are talking about here, and, of course, it was Patrick Fitzgerald, eventually, that would be the dogged investigator.

Pensoneau: Eventually. Not at first.

DePue: The thing that really caught the public's attention was this horrendous accident that occurred on…

Pensoneau: Milwaukee.

DePue: It was at Milwaukee, you're right.

Pensoneau: I think it was Milwaukee.

DePue: Reverend Duane Scott and Janet Willis had six kids who died in an accident. Give us a little bit of that background.

Pensoneau: Well, I mean, it was a horrible situation and the driver was licensed in Illinois.

DePue: The driver of the truck.

Pensoneau; Of the truck, yes, yes. He was the driver of the truck and it was just a horrible accident. Everybody was horrified by it. And then, as the horror refused to

subside, different folks were starting to say, "Was that guy licensed properly? or, Is there more to this?" Initially it was Democrats who were starting to say, "There's more to this than meets the eye. We all agree it's horrible, but could it have been prevented? Well maybe so if more stuff comes out." You would hear that, okay? That accident happened, as I recall, in 1994.

DePue: Right.

Pensoneau: Ryan was then Secretary of State, of course. I think the only thing that initially I heard, in addition to everybody acknowledging the horrific aspects of it, was that even though the accident happened in Milwaukee, did you know that guy was licensed, though, in Illinois? Then the conversation started to come out like, "You know, he should have never had a truck driving license to begin with, or driver's license." Individuals like myself at that time didn't know exactly what that meant, if it was just political talk or not. But there was a school of thought developing that that is an example of some guy on the road who should not have had a license in the first place. I didn't know what the reasons for that were, but I remember you would hear those things.

DePue: Wasn't he a recent immigrant who probably had marginal English skills?

Pensoneau: Probably. My answer to that is probably. I just don't recall. I know that eventually, as the thing became full-blown I remember it really hit the fan in the 1998 Governor's race between Ryan and Poshard. Then the Democrats really tried to run with it and brought out… Oh, I think by that time, the legal action had been initiated on behalf of the reverend and his wife, Reverend Willis.

DePue: Scott.

Pensoneau: So it was an issue; it was on paper, then there was a reason for discussing it. There was a suit pending at that time, if I've got it right. Poshard and the Democrats tried to make a real issue out of it, saying, "The corruption in the Secretary of State's office was exemplified by that guy getting a license, and look, general public, look what happened. This is what happens when you have corruption in driver's license stations."

DePue: Would it be fair to say, though, that during the election campaign of 1998 Poshard didn't get the traction he was hoping for on that issue?

Pensoneau: Well, I guess you can say he did not, because he lost the election.

DePue: Yes.

Pensoneau: He didn't get the traction he needed to win the election. He probably could have got **more** traction out of that issue. I guess the answer is, I think there were other reasons why he lost.

DePue: Why don't you flesh that out, because you've been a close political observer of Illinois politics. Tell us your perception of that particular campaign between Ryan and Glenn Poshard.

Pensoneau: I'll be glad to. Poshard. Poshard in many ways was not an ideal Democratic candidate, because the Chicago vote is so important to the Democrats in statewide elections. Poshard really did not have wholehearted support from many Democrats in the Chicago area. He wasn't their kind of guy. First of all, he was not just a southern Illinoisan, but a deep southern Illinoisan. From the way they thought, he was from the bottom of the state. Okay? He was a Baptist. Need I say more? He was not liberal on a lot of gut issues. He was not in favor of gun control. He was not pro-abortion; to the horror of the Hyde Park crowd – my god, we're supporting for Governor a guy who is not pro-abortion? I'm just giving one example here. He reflected Southern Illinois values on issues and in other areas, too, and they were not consistent with the conventional political thinking in Chicago. He just wasn't their kind of guy.

I knew that Mayor Daley made one – or maybe more than one – but one or more appearances on behalf of Poshard, but I thought they were token appearances. Poshard was just not, for the reasons I've enunciated, the kind of individual whose candidacy would stimulate spirited effort on the part of the Chicago machine. Okay? Again, political traditionalists, political scientists, very honestly, may say hogwash to this, but I believe in the end in that 1998 campaign that then-Mayor Daley's candidate was George Ryan. Sorry. First of all, I know they were close. I know that Daley – and nothing wrong with this – Daley got everything he wanted or could want out of George Ryan as Governor. It would have furthered along a Daley family tradition of being very comfortable with Republican Governors. I just felt that Daley's heart, if there was such a thing politically existing in 1998, was really with George Ryan. There was no problem with George Ryan being Governor of Illinois

Poshard just had a lot of handicaps. But in addition, Poshard was not well known when the race started **and** Poshard limited himself; he had a chronic shortage of funds compared to Ryan. As I recall, Glenn – I know him fairly well, very honorable guy – Glenn wouldn't take corporate contributions. I think he maybe had other self-imposed restrictions on where and from whom he would take campaign money, and I know it really limited him financially. So he was really greatly out-spent and he basically presented himself as this decent, downstate guy who had been an Illinois State Senator and then a Congressman. He presented himself as his own man, which I think he was, to a great extent. I would say in the end it was rather surprising that he came as close as he did to Ryan in the election, when all these things that I've just enunciated were taken into consideration. George Ryan had about everything going for him in that gubernatorial race in '98 that one could have.

DePue: A good strong economy coming off a highly successful…

Pensoneau: Yeah, there was this investigative cloud which was getting darker with every month, but at that point he was still regarded as a successful Secretary of State and the other things you mentioned. He had plenty of dough. Almost all aspects of the political establishment were for Ryan. Surprisingly, a number of Democratic traditionalists **actually funneled dough** to Ryan too, as I recall. You know, Poshard doesn't want it, so let's give it to the guy who appreciates it. And so, in view of all of this, it was really surprising that Poshard really didn't finish that far behind Ryan in the balloting.

DePue: This is pure speculation on my part, but was it part of Poshard's strategy, if you will, that okay, I can hold the Democratic base and because I'm a southern Illinois Democrat, more conservative, that I can peel off some of the Republican vote?

Pensoneau: Probably. My answer's probably.

DePue: Okay. Well, let's move on to Ryan's years as Governor. Had four years, obviously, because he didn't get reelected.

Pensoneau: He didn't run for reelection.

DePue: That's right. What was your view in terms of Ryan as the chief executive of the state?

Pensoneau: Well, I go back to what I wrote in the book on the governors put out by the University of Illinois at Springfield. I felt that, if not for the corruption scandal and the eventual imprisonment, that he had the potential to go down as not just one of the **better** Governors of Illinois, but actually, potentially, a possibly **great** Governor, because of things we've already talked about. He **knew** how to **get things done**. He knew how government worked; whether you're back on the Kankakee County Board of Supervisors or whether you're Governor of Illinois, he knew how government worked. He knew how to tweak the machinery. He knew the buttons to push. He knew how to bring in the other side. He may have appeared gruff to outsiders, but he was on a very personal and favorable basis with the power brokers in both parties as evidenced by his first year as Governor, which was a dynamic year for getting what one wanted. If his first year as Governor, if his record there would have continued into the next three years, the guy would have probably gone down as one of the great Governors of Illinois.

DePue: Well, in terms of working with the legislature, you can't avoid mentioning Mike Madigan, in that equation, the relationship that those two men had, because they're the two most powerful men at the state level.

Pensoneau: Right No argument. Well, I'm trying to remember. I don't have a totally clear-cut picture in my mind of the specific relationship between Ryan and

Madigan. However, for Ryan to have succeeded to the extent that he did, at least in the first year, year and a half, he had to get along okay with Madigan. What else can one say?

DePue: Mm hmm.

Pensoneau: Otherwise it would not have happened.

DePue: Most people in my conversation with them and they bring up Mike Madigan, they always emphasize that Madigan appreciated somebody he could trust; when they got behind closed doors and there was a discussion, that when he walked away from the meeting, that he could trust what that person had said.

Pensoneau: I'm sure that's true.

DePue: In that respect, both those men were similar?

Pensoneau: I think so. I think so. I think I've already said about Ryan, and I know it applies to Madigan, that if they tell you something, you better listen, because if they say what they're going to do, they're going to do it, or they're sure as hell going to **try** their darned best to get it done, because neither one of them engage in small talk.

DePue: **A revealing comment**. Would you describe George Ryan as a fiscal conservative?

Pensoneau: Well, I'm sure he, like most other big-time politicians, considered himself a **fiscal** conservative, but the image they try to portray there often varies with reality; I think that's probably true in Ryan's case. Ryan was a big spender as Governor; at least he fostered, brought about and succeeded in getting approval of big spending programs, starting off with that, what, 10 or 12 billion dollar, was it Illinois First?

DePue: Illinois First, 12 billion dollar program.

Pensoneau: Construction program, when he was in his first year in office, which was a tremendous thing to get passed.

DePue: First standing for: Funds for Infrastructure, Roads, Schools and Transit.

Pensoneau: Oh, everything, everything.

DePue: That's a mouthful.

Pensoneau: Everything, right. Really, that set the tone, could have set the tone, probably did set the tone for not just his administration the rest of the time, but for whatever was to follow. His programs, his proposals, what he got, even what he didn't get, but they all indicate he was not a fiscal miser, okay? (both

chuckle) Republicans, more than Democrats, try to portray themselves as very parsimonious on the fiscal front, but I think that, in all honesty, to be a little fair to Rod Blagojevich, Blagojevich did inherit a budgetary deficit when he took office as Governor. Now, I don't want to get ahead of the game here, but, of course, neutral analysts put the deficit, the budget hole, at a considerably smaller figure than Blagojevich did, okay? Obviously. That's the way it works. But still, Ryan departed the Governorship with the state budget in a hole.

DePue: You cited in your book the deficit when he left office was 1.2 billion. Of course, those figures are always a matter of contention, but that ranks right up there with the budget deficit that Edgar inherited when he became Governor.

Pensoneau: Yeah. I know we've talked about Jim Edgar already, but to reiterate, Jim Edgar was **really** fiscally responsible, and that **really** separated him from most of the other Governors. You always have to say that when you mention Jim Edgar. Jim Edgar believed in fiscal responsibility; they all say they believe in it, but in Jim Edgar's case, he actually practiced it, and that kind of puts him out there (chuckles) on a pedestal, on which he has little company.

DePue: To jump way ahead, in 1990 when Edgar took office, a billion dollars sounded like an astronomical figure.

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah. Right.

DePue: But certainly it still sounded like an astronomical figure, I'm sure in 2002, and now its 13 billion we're talking about this current gubernatorial campaign.

Pensoneau: Yeah, and keep in mind, way, way back when I was the Illinois political writer for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and covering the annual budget, the total annual budget then was3 or 4 billion dollars. This was for all of state government, and there were those at the time that thought, my gosh, **how outlandish**; spending is just out of control, the state budget's out of control. It was only, looking back in those Kerner-Ogilvie years, like 3 to 4 billion dollars.

DePue: Well, another thing that was an eye-opener for some and a lot of head-scratching, is that Ryan took it upon himself to decide he wanted to take a trip to Cuba. Do you remember that?

Pensoneau: Oh, I remember it, yeah. Somehow it was announced, revealed, disclosed – probably announced – that Ryan felt a great opportunity for Illinois businesses, an export opportunity, lay in Cuba, and that he was going to go down there and lay the groundwork for it. I remember that. As I recall, originally the State Department or… I guess it would have been Clinton, right? The Clinton administration.

DePue: Yes

Pensoneau: Said at first, no dice; this is a no-no. This is counter to our long established policies towards Cuba. As I recall, Ryan was applying for or talking about some kind of exemption from formal policy towards Cuba. I don't recall if he got it or not, but the point is, he went, he did it. He went down there. I know he posed with Castro. There were good feature stories came out of it. I can't tell you if there were concrete results in terms of increased business interchanges between Illinois and Cuba – I don't know that. I have no idea, in fact, but he did go down there and he did get public relations mileage out of it.

It was something that I thought was rather unique. I don't know why. I mean, I wouldn't have thought – knowing Ryan and his make-up – that would have been something he would have initiated. So I thought that was kind of interesting and probably on a positive side. Governors are always taking economic expansion trips abroad to boost Illinois businesses. That's not unusual and Governor Thompson did it. I think going way back, other Governors did it. That part wasn't unusual, but the Cuba part was.[21] Governor Ryan at the time said that, you know, this is an opportunity that's been wasted. Cuba needs products, needs things that we produce in Illinois.

DePue: Was it primarily agri-business?

Pensoneau: I guess. That's certainly part of it. I know it's got to be part of it because whenever you try to promote Illinois outside the state, agriculture is right at the top. Agriculture's always automatically part of that. So I thought it was interesting, and sort of innovative on Ryan's part.

DePue: Another aspect that Ryan had to deal with – and nobody wanted to deal with this one – he selected in '98, 1999, 2000, those are boom years for the American economy and certainly for Illinois as well.

Pensoneau: As I recall, yeah.

DePue: Then you get to September 2001, and everything changes economically.[22] So that last year, 2001 and 2002 when he's negotiating the budget – and you cover this very well in the book – you've got a different problem to deal with.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: He's trying to force through a 535 million dollar cut in the budget that the legislature passed.

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[21] The U.S. had a very long-standing policy of no trade, no tourism, no diplomatic relations with Cuba, as it had a very communistic government under Fidel Castro. In fact, there were regular instances of Cuban refugees attempting to cross the 90 miles of ocean at great peril to try to land on U. S. shores; if they landed, the U.S. would not send them back to Cuba.

[22] Illinois had a huge unfunded obligation for state employee pensions. Also, on September 11, 2001 the New York World Trade Center was brought down by Islamic terrorists of al Quida; the Pentagon was attacked, and a third attempt, apparently to destroy the White House or the Capitol, was averted by citizen action, precipitating the Iraq war.

Pensoneau: Yes. I did write about that. As I recall, there was strong resistance to the cuts. If I recall, and I know I wrote about it, some of the cuts, some of the vetoes were overridden. I don't recall, though, the breakdown.

DePue: But it was a smaller percentage. I mean, I'm sure Madigan and the House would have wanted much more of that to be restored since they were the powers behind passing it in the first place.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Sure. Oh, yeah, yeah. Of course.

DePue: Since only a small part of his veto was overridden, is it another example of his clout in the legislature?

Pensoneau: I think you can say that. I guess you can say that. All I can recall is that he made the cuts, mainly through, what? line item vetoes?

DePue: Right.

Pensoneau: And that some of the vetoed money was returned by overriding one or more of the vetoes.

DePue: Okay. Let's go back to the issue of corruption, because also by 2001, the corruption allegations just were not going away for the man.

Pensoneau: True. True. And, since you mentioned it – this maybe ties back a little bit to your question – I think as his governorship neared an end, some of the politicians or political figures who had been certainly cozy with Ryan were starting to look a little bit more seriously at the relationship with Ryan. I think some were starting to impose an arm's length policy that, as you just said, the corruption allegations were not going away. Well, there were indictments. When he was still Governor, I think, the Dean Bauer indictment and conviction occurred. He was still the Governor when that occurred and you couldn't ignore that. **He was a significant** Ryan person there.

DePue: April 2002 – Scott Fawell.

Pensoneau: And he was still Governor when Fawell was indicted, so obviously, if there was no longer any doubt that we were involved in a serious big-time corruption scandal, it was gone. Politicians being as sensitive as they are to image preservation where possible, I think they were starting to say to themselves, Whoa, better back off on Governor Ryan at little bit. He may be still Governor, but this ship is keeling. There are leaks here and they are significant. This is for real. We've liked him, but if he can't control this situation I think we're going to have to back off a little bit. I think that's the way it worked. I think that's the way it did work. As he was leaving in certainly his last year as Governor, the Ryan luster was gone. There's no question about that. Although he wasn't actually indicted until after he left the governorship.

DePue: It was no secret that U. S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald was going after this hard. In terms of the last ten or fifteen years in American politics, Fitzgerald has factored in a huge way in several different scandals. How important was it? Can you discuss the role of Fitzgerald in the Ryan saga.

Pensoneau: All I know is that you start off with the assumption that just about everybody involved in Illinois politics is scared to death of Patrick Fitzgerald because the guy is obviously for real. The guy is obviously very competent and very dead-set on "getting his man" when he sets out on one of his investigations. As we know, he doesn't seem to shy away from anybody, and there's no way you can fix it with Fitzgerald. I guess you would say he's kind of a modern day untouchable.

DePue: It wasn't just state politics, it was Scooter Libby as well at the national level.

Pensoneau: Now that was another situation. I just know what I read there.

DePue: Yeah, I didn't mean to bring it up with the other issues.

Pensoneau: There are certainly those fair-minded people who say if Fitzgerald had thrown himself into one situation that really a lot of people second-guessed, it might have been that situation. Again, there are those who disclosed the woman's identity before Scooter Libby.

DePue: Yes.

Pensoneau: You get a columnist like Robert Novak and some big State Department folks and there were people that didn't quite understand the zealousness to get Libby, in view of what others were saying, were admitting themselves to have done, or contributed to what Libby was being pursued for. That's another debate.

DePue: It certainly reinforced the image of Fitzgerald as the dogged prosecuting attorney.

Pensoneau: Oh yeah, as an absolute bulldog. Oh yeah. I think its fair to say the even a thought by a major Illinois political figure that Fitzgerald was taking an interest in you would really quickly inspire **cold feet**.

DePue: Okay. The allegations that persisted from much of this dealt with his days as the Secretary of State.

Pensoneau: Correct. Correct.

DePue: What's the phrase that was developed for trading jobs for money? I'm searching for the right phrase that was coined during that timeframe.

Pensoneau: Well, in regard to those that supposedly benefitted from state government in umpteen ways, he accepted gifts, vacations and so on. Therefore that prompts the promotion of conspiracy charges. He was charged with lying to FBI agents. I think he was charged with income tax evasion; I'm pretty sure that was one of the counts. There was a long, a long laundry list of charges or counts against him.

DePue: Again, this is right from your book, eighteen counts of racketeering, conspiracy, tax and mail fraud, lying to FBI agents.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: One of the things that caught everybody's attention was when it was revealed that his office was keeping incredibly detailed records of all of the political favors they had ever done.

Pensoneau: I guess that's right, and that was eventually published, was it not?

DePue: Yes.

Pensoneau: At least on the internet.

DePue: It was also a badge of honor: "I didn't make the list." (both laugh heartily) But it's just the kind of thing the news media would eat up.

Pensoneau: Absolutely. Absolutely.

DePue: But here's the other side of George Ryan. I want to get your views on this: taking up the death penalty issue.

Pensoneau: Amazing. In view of the fact that I, along with many others, always still assumed that Ryan was a conservative, I was bordering on amazement that he went as far with that whole issue as he did. First of all, philosophically what he did fitted in well with general liberal beliefs. It is fair to say that we were having in Illinois an increasing number of disclosures being substantiated of persons who had been wrongfully convicted of murder and some of them were on death row. It was becoming an issue in Illinois; we were having on this issue very assiduous, aggressive groups, like the Downstate Illinois Innocence Project. I'm familiar with those folks. Another's in Chicago, a group, I think, at Northwestern University who were having great success in showing that we have a number of persons convicted of murder and other serious crimes in Illinois who really weren't guilty, and some of those folks were on death row. So, Ryan bought into the disclosures; at least he said he did, indicated that he did, he showed that he did, by first of all, issuing or decreeing a moratorium…

DePue: And that was in 2000.

Pensoneau: …on executions. He was still Governor in Illinois. As I recall, just a couple of days before he left the governorship he commuted the death sentences of everybody on death row.

DePue: January 11, 2003.

Pensoneau: Right. There was nobody left on death row. Through one device or another, Ryan took everybody on death row off of death row before he left the governorship. Am I right?

DePue: Absolutely. And this in a time when there's this **huge** cloud of scandal.

Pensoneau: Oh yeah, yeah.

DePue: Everybody's waiting. It's not **if** he's going to be indicted, but **when** he's going to be indicted.

Pensoneau: Yeah. I agree with the way you've just phrased it. So then you get to your question, I'm sure, "Why?" Well, you and I can't go beyond what others speculated. Did he do it in an attempt to polish his legacy, thinking that that might offset the negativity of the continual corruption indictments and the eventual likely indictment of Ryan himself. Did he do it, or did he not do it for just purely political reasons? Did he do it because he suddenly was heart-stricken over the injustices of the criminal justice system, or the inadequacies of the criminal justice system? Did he have a change of heart? Did he "see the light" while he still had the clout to do something about it? Did he do it for humanitarian reasons? Did he do it for social justice reasons? Did he do it because he sincerely felt it was the right thing to do? The most crasspossibility would have been if he did it, as some thought, simply to try to distract attention from all the negativity surrounding his political career here at the end of his governorship. Could it be a combination of both? Could it have been all of the above? Who knows? One can speculate. You and I are speculating just like others and we're as firm in our speculation as all the others, but we cannot provide a definite flat answer anymore than anybody else.

DePue: Taylor, I want to hear your speculation.

Pensoneau: I think it was a combination. I think he looked for an issue. In a way, it was a much **grander** undertaking than the Cuba thing, but it still was surprising. You wouldn't have expected that from Ryan, and certainly you didn't expect **this** from Ryan. For example, as I recall, through the years he was among those who was a capital punishment advocate, if memory serves me right.

DePue: I believe he campaigned on that issue. Pensoneau: He was certainly in that camp as he matured in the political process in Springfield. So, this was astonishing, this great, call it a change of heart or whatever. I think it was a

combination of the fact I think he legitimately thought there was a legitimate issue here, these little investigative gangs – and I say that respectfully.

DePue: Law school students in many cases…

Pensoneau: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Some were also journalism students…

DePue: Okay.

Pensoneau: With what were almost no resources and no clout, they were going out and **clearly** showing there were some people wrongfully sitting on death row in Illinois, and this was a legitimate issue. I mean, it was there. Okay. There was a reason, there was a handle there, on which to hang his new position; but at the same time I think that he felt, Hey, what can I do to offset this **constant negativity** about this investigation seemingly infiltrating everything now about my political career in the last seven or eight years think it's a combination of both. That's what I think.

DePue: Part of the irony of all of this is – the abuse and corruption allegations that were going on, at the same time you had the death penalty issue going on and his commutation – is that he's put in for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Right. Hey. (chuckles) So what can you or I add to that? I mean, yeah, the answer's he was.

DePue: Maybe only in Illinois?

Pensoneau: Maybe only in Illinois. (laughter) Of course, we've had an Illinoisan that's gotten the Nobel prize not too long ago.

DePue: Yeah. Well, there you go.

Pensoneau: There you go.

DePue: Forgot about that. (laughter) Okay, and to put a footnote on this discussion – of course, this is going to happen after the time Blagojevich is sitting as Governor – on December 17, as we mentioned before, Ryan is convicted and he's sentenced to six and a half years

Pensoneau: That's correct.

DePue: He's still in prison right now.

Pensoneau: He sure is, as we talk on this day, March 12, 2010, yes he is.

DePue: You are Dan Walker's biographer.

Pensoneau: Yes.

DePue: Have gotten to know Dan Walker very well.

Pensoneau: Correct.

DePue: Isn't the word tragedy in the title of the book?

Pensoneau: It is. *Dan Walker: The Glory and the Tragedy.*

DePue: Would you use that same word tragedy in describing George Ryan?

Pensoneau: Absolutely. Absolutely. It's a political tragedy in every literal sense of the phrase. Yep.

DePue: Okay. Well, I think its time to transition to the next Governor. I'm tempted to ask you that same question up front, but I'm not going to. We'll leave that to later. Let's start with this. Have you ever met the man?

Pensoneau: Rod Blagojevich?

DePue: Rod Blagojevich.

Pensoneau: Yes.

DePue: Can you describe that?

Pensoneau: Okay. This will take a bit. He's the Democratic nominee for Governor in 2002. He wins the primary. I did not know him. I knew he was a State Rep for several terms. I never talked to him once when he was a member of the Illinois House of Representatives. I knew his name. I knew what he looked like. I had a hard time even pronouncing his name. He was a definite back-bencher in the Illinois House. Then he gets elected to Congress and gets the seat that Rostenkowski once had and I had absolutely no dealings with him there at all. This is all in the coal industry years. I, of course, did have considerable dealings with downstate Illinois Congressmen, but I never had any conversations with Rod Blagojevich.

So he runs for Governor. He wins the nomination. He received very strong support from the United Mine Workers; they were very instrumental in carrying water for Blagojevich in downstate Illinois, to their credit. The leadership met him early on, they liked him, and they took him around. They were **very** helpful to Blagojevich. Well, of course, at the time, I was President of the Illinois Coal Association. Although as I've said in past discussions, I was an unusual president in that I had a close relationship with the United Mine Workers. In looking back, something I'm still proud of during my leadership of the ICA.

So, as we're approaching the election and it's Blagojevich versus Jim Ryan, then-Attorney General of Illinois, Republican Jim Ryan, the coal

industry had had several fund raisers earlier in the year to benefit Ryan. We were never big on contributions. I've tried to tell you repeatedly, we were never in the league of the medical society or the teachers or the trial lawyers and it goes on and on and on. We're small potatoes money-wise. But anyway, the Mine Workers said, We all know each other well; we want you to meet Blagojevich. The polls show he's going to win and he'd like to meet you.

DePue: Is this during the primary again?

Pensoneau: No. No. We're in the general election now.

DePue: Okay.

Pensoneau: We're in the general election. I'd never met him. Most of what I knew was what the leaders of the UMW were telling me. They insisted that I sit down with him. As I recall, it was about maybe a month, four or five weeks before the general election, and every poll showed he was going to beat Jim Ryan. So the Mine Workers said, He'd like to meet you. He's really a nice guy. He likes us. He's going to be good for coal. You got to meet him.

So I agreed. Now, you have to understand, when it's said I'm going to meet him, there's an unspecified corollary to that, and that means, if I happen to have some political donation money sitting around I would make that available. So I agreed to meet him. I made several calls to the right people in my world. I said, I'm going to sit down with Blagojevich. We're going to talk about coal. Better have a few dollars to give him. We're being very honest and blunt right now. I was quickly provided with some checks by principles in the industry, so I had those in my pocket.

As I recall, we met on a Monday or Tuesday night. They arranged for us to sit down in a motel room up on the north side of Springfield. I was to show up at the appointed time. I had several people with me, coal industry people. Okay? At the anointed hour there was a knock on the door and it was Blagojevich's advance man, who I knew a little bit. He said, Good, you guys are here. Rod then was still Congressman Blagojevich. He said Congressman Blagojevich was getting out of the car now and is coming down the hallway. So he came in the room. First time I'd ever met him. How you doing, Good to see you and so on. So we sat down.

Now he had been in Springfield the whole day. And that was the day that he had had a press conference, presumably in the State House, somewhere in Springfield – I thought the State House – whereby whatever he wanted to talk about in the press conference was completely submerged, overshadowed by the fact that there was a disclosure that he'd smoked marijuana. He got hit with this that day, and the whole news story that day was nothing to do with what he wanted to talk about in the press conference, it was on him having

smoked marijuana, and did he inhale and all this stuff. All right. So I was aware of this. Okay? So this has been **his day** prior (DePue chuckles) to this.

So he comes in the room. He sits down at this table and he looks at me. I'm sitting here, just like you and I are. We said nothing outside of, Nice to meet you. He looks at me. I look at him. And his first words to me were (laughs) "Do you want to smoke some marijuana?" (laughter) It broke up the room. I was stunned. I'd never met him before. And then he laughed. He said, "We might as well do it. I'm getting blamed for it anyway." (both laughing) That's how it started. I said, "No, Congressman. I don't think so." And he laughed. Okay.

That was a very pleasant meeting. I mean, it was extremely pleasant. It was basically, "The Mine Workers have been great to me." – as they had been – "They wanted me to meet you. I want to meet you." "I'm going to be good for you as Governor of Illinois. I'm going to win and I'm going to be good for you. Even though I'm from Chicago, I know you need help. I know things need to be done. You tell me what you want, what you want me to do." I remember one thing he said, "Hey, when I'm in office, give me a couple months; I'll call a big summit meeting on Illinois coal." I said, "That'd be great, Congressman." He said, "Call me Rod," so I started calling him Rod. I said that'd be great. He said "Yeah. That's no problem. We'll invite everybody you want."

So, anyway, at some point diplomatically I said, "I appreciate you sitting down with us and appreciate your interest in the coal industry, appreciate the fact that you've been really working with the United Mine Workers," and so on. At that point I said, "I have a little something here for you." He had one person with him, his campaign treasurer, and he said, Give him the envelope, which I did. It was very pleasant. It lasted about forty-five minutes and then everybody got up. There was a knock on the door and it was, Congressman, now you must go; someone else in Springfield wants to see you tonight or whatever. So everybody got up and left the room.

It was just he and I in the room. He came up and said, "What's your next book going to be?" And I said, "Oh, you know about that?" He says, "Oh, yes. In fact, I want you to know, I'm reading, right now, your book on Governor Ogilvie." And I said to him – it's just he and I – "You're putting me on. Come on. As busy as you are?" He says, "No, I've got the book right now. It's by my bedside in my motel room tonight. It's a great book, and Ogilvie is the kind of Governor I'm going to be." I said, "Well, I think that's great." Well, this is true, Mark. And he said, "Now what's your next book going to be?" I said, "You know, really, I don't know." And I remember he said, "Well, **you** know; you know. I'm just interested. What are you turning your attention to now?" I said, "Well, I don't know, maybe another political figure. You know, I did a book on gangsters." And he said, "Yeah. They told me that." I said, "Well, I may go back to gangsters." He laughed. I guess I

laughed. If he was laughing, I laughed. That's how it works, you know, and if he doesn't laugh, I don't laugh. Anyway, he said, "Your book on Ogilvie is really good, and that's what I'm going to be. I'm going to be as good a Governor as Ogilvie." I said, "I think that's great, Rod." That was it. That was my first meeting with him.

Now, I'll let you ask the next question. Go on.

DePue: Well, the next question is, walking out of the room and then reflecting on that meeting and the conversation that the two of you had, what was your assessment of the guy? You've met plenty of politicians before.

Pensoneau: He kind of disarmed me. I didn't know what to expect. First of all, he was a little taller than I thought he would be, and he didn't have a line on his face. I mean, he looked like he was about twenty-five years old. I remember, I said, "How old are you?" And I think he said, "I'm forty-five." And I said, "Boy, you don't look it." I remember that. I thought his hair was kind of combed with that Kennedy look. I said, "Your hair…," (laughter) I mean, he **encouraged** this familiarity on my part. Okay? This was unusual. First time we've ever met. I remember I remarked about his hair and I said is that like a Kennedy deal? He kind of laughed and he went like that with his hand.

DePue: Waving it out?

Pensoneau: Yeah, waving it away. Yeah. Yeah. So (laughing) I remember those things looking back. Okay, that was about it.

DePue: Did you think he was sincere?

Pensoneau: I did. I did. He kind of… I did. I did think he was sincere. I did. I remember then in a minute he was gone. Some of the Mine Workers were hanging around the parking lot, the leaders. They came in and said, "What'd you think, you know, what'd you think? I said, "God, the guy's really down-to-earth." And they said, "He's a great guy and boy, you know, its going to be great for us." I mean that's the way this stuff works. "He's going to be great for us." I thought, well, you know… I said, "You guys have done a heck of a job in getting him on board. He said all the right things." So that was my first meeting, and the only time I was ever with him before he took office as Governor.

DePue: Well I recall during those times that there really wasn't much of a challenge from Jim Ryan.

Pensoneau: No, there wasn't.

DePue: First of all, Ryan had the absolutely worst name you could have to be running for Governor, even though there was no relation.[23]

Pensoneau: Everything was stacked against Jim Ryan, beginning with what you've already said. The name alone was enough to defeat him. He didn't have his heart in that campaign. It was obvious to me. I spent a little time with him. People like me in my position make token appearances, nominally. Most in the coal industry, obviously, would have wanted Jim Ryan to win. As I said earlier on, in the election campaign, he had gotten some coal industry money, not much, not enough to brag about.

DePue: Ryan had.

Pensoneau: Jim Ryan. Jim Ryan had, yeah. To follow up: to have continuity in our posture, every now and then people would encourage me to make appearances at a Jim Ryan function or something. For some reason or another I decided to do one, I think late in the campaign, in, of all places, Edwardsville. There's this country club on the edge of Edwardsville where there's always political gatherings, both Democrat and Republican. I think it's called Sunset Hills. Ryan was having a fund raiser there that night. I didn't take a check. For some reason people in the Ryan campaign said, Come on down there and just make an appearance. That will help him look good, people showing up. So I decided I would. It was in the evening and I drove down there.

I didn't know hardly anybody in the room. There were maybe thirty, forty people and I went in. Jim was there and he came over to me right away. I knew Jim Ryan. "How nice to see you." I don't believe there was hardly anybody there from Springfield, which was unusual. It was all local people, probably from Madison County or that area. He was the Attorney General, and I said "Sure, General. I hope its going okay" and the conventional conversation. As I said, I didn't really know anybody and I didn't really make an effort to go around and meet people. My main reason in being there was simply to let Jim Ryan see me show up physically. I probably could have walked out of the room after that and my mission would have been accomplished for the night. He saw me. I said hi and so on. Well, I mention this, though, because it is relative to the campaign. I mean, I said, How's it going? I think he says, oh, its okay, you know, stuff like that.

But this was the part that was interesting. Normally I don't eat at those things. They always have finger food and you get drinks, Coke or something, usually wine and soda and finger food. I had driven all that way and I thought maybe while I'm here I'll have a little bit of the finger food. I filled my plate with some of these little hors d'oeuvres. I went over and there were tables; I sat down at one in the extreme corner, because I didn't know

[23] Former Governor George Ryan was facing indictment for widespread corruption in his administration at the time that Jim Ryan was running for governor. Blagojevich essentially ran against George Ryan and the corruption of his administration, more than he ran against the Republican candidate Jim Ryan.

anybody. I'm sitting alone. Well, this is why I'm telling you all of this. Ryan comes over and sits down with me. I thought, Well, this is unusual. He's talking to me. He's making conversation with me. Well that's fine, if the Attorney General of Illinois, who's a Republican nominee for Governor wants to talk to me, great.

But he sat with me about twenty, twenty-five minutes. I was thinking to myself, Why isn't he circulating over these maybe thirty-five to fifty people here in the room who have obviously paid money to be there in the room. I remember, he reached across and hit me in the chest and said, "I'm going to be really good for coal. You know that. You're going to get what you want and you know that." I said, "General, that's great. That's music to my ears. We're going to need a lot." He says, "I know you do. You need help. You're going to get it. You know, I've always been open with you about that." I said, "General, that's great. I mean, that's music to my ears."

The polls are showing he was going to lose. I'm thinking to myself, But he wasn't circulating, he wasn't circulating. I mean, I thought this was unusual and, really, nobody came over and said, General, so and so over here wants to meet you or this and that. I remember, he asked me, "Are you going back to Springfield tonight or what's your schedule?" I said, "Well, I drove down for this." "Well, I really appreciate that. Well, are you going back tonight or are you staying somewhere down here?" I said, "No, I'm driving back tonight. It's about a hundred miles. It's not that big a deal, General." He was asking these kind of questions and I didn't know where we were going with it. I was thinking to myself, He obviously didn't know anybody there, but the point was that he wasn't circulating, either.

DePue: Is he uncomfortable with that?

Pensoneau: Well, I thought he was a little bit. I had the impression that he was not comfortable there and that I was someone he could latch onto, a familiar face, and I just thought a little unusual. At some point he did eventually get up and I think he ended it by, Now I'll see you in Springfield, or something like that. Sure, General, I'll see you in Springfield – you know, pro forma. Really, Mark, he sat with me at least twenty minutes or twenty-five minutes, and that was really unexpected. I was thinking to myself, why is he just sitting here with me, when all these other people are here that have paid to meet him and are all supporters and all this stuff. My conclusion was, he didn't have his heart in it.

DePue: I want to double back and ask about what most political observers in Illinois would say was the **real** election that year. That was the Democratic primary, and you had a **very** close race. Roland Burris, who, of course, has gotten an awful lot of press here recently.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: But also Paul Vallas who was the former chief executive officer for Chicago schools, that was his claim to fame.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: Any reflections on that primary campaign?

Pensoneau: Well, I wrote about it a little bit in my book, on my Blagojevich chapter. Neither Vallas nor Burris had any money to talk of. I think Vallas was like a highly respected individual, but he didn't really have, as you and I would say, any political base that I understood or was aware of. Roland Burris was at that point regarded as kind of a nice guy, but past his prime. Roland had, of course, run multiple times statewide, sometimes successfully, sometimes unsuccessfully. By that time, though, he was regarded as sort of over-the-hill and, well, no longer really viable.

DePue: Mm hmm.

Pensoneau: You just have to understand that there's an impression that's there, and the impression was that his candidacy was not taken totally seriously. And Vallas was basically an unknown.

DePue: Well, he was well known in the Chicago area.

Pensoneau: In Chicago, yeah.

DePue: And he won in Chicago.

Pensoneau: Yeah. But he was virtually, totally unknown downstate. Because I can remember in that primary, some of my Democratic friends were actually for Vallas, some very notable downstate Democrats, who I won't name here, but they're friends of mine. They called and said, We know you're not going to get involved, but, God, he's a good guy, but nobody knows him south of Chicago. Can you give us any recommendations, people to talk to, maybe certain key newspaper people here and there, things like that. We want to try to get him around, get him a little exposure downstate. But I remember them saying, but, you know, it's got to be gratis because he's got no money. That's what they said. And it's all just trying to get it, but he's got a good name, he's a good person and we want to take him around. Have you got some suggestions in certain parts of the state where I knew about things. I remember those conversations.

DePue: Okay. Well, let's get to the time then when Blagojevich's anxious….

Pensoneau: I'm going to make a joke here. I'm going to add one thing (laughs). I'm not telling you their names, though, because several of them were later to pay a political price (both laugh) for not having supported Rod Blagojevich in the primary.

DePue: Oh.

Pensoneau: Okay. Let's go on.

DePue: Well, that's a revealing comment about Rod Blagojevich.

Pensoneau: Oh yeah, of course.

DePue: Let's start with this. I'm trying to struggle with how to structure a conversation about Blagojevich as Governor. Let's start with your perceptions. Did you have any other meetings with Blagojevich after this one?

Pensoneau: Mm hmm.

DePue: Okay. Your perceptions.

Pensoneau: He was Governor then.

DePue: Okay. Your perception of the man as the chief executive of the state.

Pensoneau: (pause) I never got a grasp or a handle on his management style. I just didn't. He turned out to be far too complicated for me to understand. Perhaps if I'd still been sitting in the pressroom I would have had to make a more concerted, serious effort to understand and try to interpret and do my best to explain his governorship, but I wasn't in the pressroom. I was running the coal association. I couldn't get a discernable pattern there. It was a very zigzag type of leadership performance that – in some areas I agree with his critics – defied easy analysis. I had a tough time following him. He came in with a great attitude of total disrespect for everything that had preceded him in Springfield, both in terms of those that had held office before he got there.

DePue: Did you mean that none of them were worthy of respect?

Pensoneau: He didn't seem to take a real deep interest in the agencies and so on. You know, I don't know, it was more of a… It looked like in some regards he was governing on a lark.

DePue: The one that would mean something to you, I would think, the Director of the Department of Natural Resources.

Pensoneau: Yeah. (pause) Oh, well, that's a good point. He named what, Joel Brunsvold, didn't he? I think, yeah, former state rep Joel Brunsvold. I know he held off for a long time in naming a director of DNR. Because I remember Brunsvold wanted it and Brunsvold got it, but he was like a reluctant appointee. Since you brought up DNR, I'm just trying to follow what I remember there. I remember, maybe like a decent amount of time after Blagojevich had been

Governor, everybody said that Joel Brunsvold wanted it and was going to get it, but for some reason he hadn't been appointed.

I remember going to some deal in Springfield, one of the downtown restaurants, as I recall, where Brunsvold was sitting there. I didn't know him real well, but I knew him, and said, Everyone says you're going to be the next director of DNR, which, of course, is very important to the coal mining industry. He said, Well, that's what I hear, too, but I don't know what's holding Rod up on it. Naturally, I wouldn't know, but I remember this: he kind of laughed and said, Do you have any clout with Rod? I said, I don't, – which I didn't. (laughs) He said, Well, if you did, would you go be among those who go and talk to him and see why he hasn't appointed me Director of DNR? I remember that conversation.

You're getting a lot of unusual things here (DePue laughs) that nobody's going to read anywhere else (Pensoneau laughs). Well, anyway, the upshot, as I recall, was within maybe a couple weeks after that he was appointed Director of DNR. But it was always an appointment that was like a reluctant one and I know Brunsvold was not treated as an insider.

DePue: Among the Blagojevich…?

Pensoneau: Among Blagojevich's people, yeah. He never was part of the inner circle. Then eventually he did resign. At some point he resigned. I can't remember when, but I mean I know he didn't remain forever as DNR director.

DePue: You said that you had some other dealings with Blagojevich?

Pensoneau: On coal issues, oh yeah.

DePue: Did he have that symposium he was talking about?

Pensoneau: No. (laughs) He did not. I don't think I ever brought it up. I don't think the Mine Workers did, either. But no, to answer your question, no, it was not held.

Early on he moved to eliminate what he considered tax loopholes for corporations, for the corporate world, and some of them affected my companies, the coal companies. Of course, everybody in the corporate world screamed loud and long saying, He can't do this. These were loopholes or tax breaks that we had worked hard, inch by inch, to get through the years and he wanted to eliminate all of them in one fell swoop. One of them for me was the partial elimination of the sales tax. My companies didn't have to pay the state sales tax if they bought certain kinds of equipment that were needed to maintain operations in a mine or whatever. It was like an economic incentive thing and we worked hard to get the tax eliminated. Other industries would get the exemption too, but we were one of the first to get it in earlier years from other governors. Well, he moved to eliminate that, plus he wanted to

impose much higher fees – so-called fees – on different permits you would get. Like coal mines had to get umpteen million fees to do everything from every agency imaginable, starting off with the Environmental Protection Agency. Well I remember one of the things there, this is an example: I think we paid like $500 to get what's called an anti-pollution water discharge fee. In one fell swoop he wanted to raise that to like $5000, which he did. We got involved expressing our displeasure about that, obviously. And he did this with other industries, too, but that was one thing. But, anyway, one thing that became particularly onerous was when he eliminated our sales tax exemption. We'll talk about it, okay? This will take a bit if you want to know about it.

DePue: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Pensoneau: Okay. Well, here's the specific real-life thing.

DePue: The stories reveal.

Pensoneau: There was a coal industry function where he was coming down to announce something on behalf of the coal industry, and it was at the Coal Development Park which is down off of highway Route 13 between Carbondale and Marion. Okay. So, we had several hundred people congregated down there – a combination of industry people, press and so on. Well, anyway, he was going to come down and reveal what he had in mind about coal. Okay? This was in the summer after he had signed his budget legislation which eliminated our sales tax exemption. My companies and all other industries in the state were really upset about losing these things. I remember, first of all he was about three hours late. It was hotter than all get out. Because there was no place to go, we all stood in the sun for three hours. He was that late. So he got there. They have like a make-shift stage, it was like on the back of a hay wagon or something. So he's finally there. This was really an interesting scenario I'm going to outline to you.

As I recall, there were only three people on the stage when it finally got going: Governor Blagojevich, myself and, I think, State Representative Dan Reitz, who was a former UMWA official and of course very strong for the coal industry. He actually had been, for years before he became a state rep, my lobbying partner. He and I were very close. He was UMWA. I was the industry. Okay. We were on the stage. Well, the deal was that I was going to talk and Blagojevich was going to introduce me (laughs).

This is really interesting. Anyway, we get up there and Dan Reitz says a few words and he steps back; I don't remember if he even stayed on this little make-shift stage.

Then Blagojevich is there to reveal that he has this intention of doing something for coal and I don't remember what it was, if it was a bill or what it was, but anyway, then he says, "Now I want to introduce Taylor Pensoneau."

He gave me, Mark, a **ringing introduction.** (laughing) I couldn't believe it. He said, "This is the man that people think to **listen** to (both laugh) in terms of Southern Illinois interests. He's great for southern Illinois. You people down here got to know that," and so on. I couldn't believe this myself and, oh, yeah (laughing) I know, I could feel my head getting bigger. This is the Governor, you know. So then I'm standing about two feet behind him. I don't know if Dan was still on the stage or not, but anyway, then Rod finishes and says, "So now I give you Taylor." He turned around and I remember he grabbed my shoulders and – this is pure Blagojevich – he looks at me and says, "Did you like that, man?" (both laugh) He says, "Wasn't that great?" I said, "Governor, that was fantastic." Then he stays on the stage; I remember that. So I talk.

Whatever I was going to talk about I talked about. I had orchestrated this ahead of time with my own network, including Dan Reitz; Dan said, I want you to bring it up. I said, "Governor, there will be a lot more good things happening in the coal industry by having you here," and I said, "but I want to say, Governor, that the elimination of our sales tax exemption, has really put a crimp in some of the companies' plans to expand or to do this or that Governor." I turn around – he sat right behind me. This is it, you know; I've got an audience of two hundred people. So I said, "Governor, we really implore you, sir, to consider the fact we need that sales tax exemption restored." Now he's standing, he's looking at me, and I'm looking at him, then I turn around and we go on to something else. I remember there were people in the audience nodding, yah, yah, yah, that's right, that's right, tell him while we got him here, you know. I did it, okay, to his face. I remember I said, "Some of those fees, Governor, are not helpful, but that sales tax exemption is really something we've got to talk about." I remember he just looked at me, kind of nodded like that.

So I'm done and then he says (laughing) he wants to talk to me. (laughs) So we go off to the side and he says, "Now, this sales tax exemption, I heard about that. I know you're really unhappy about that. But, you know we did it for everybody." I said, "Well, I'm speaking for the coal industry. It's a real impediment." And he said, "Well, look, let's restore it." (laughs) No, this is true. So I said, "That's great Governor." I remember that he said, "Now, the General Assembly's coming back in the fall veto session. We'll get a bill up. I'll support it. We'll restore your exemption then." And I said, "Governor," I said, "this affects, every other industry is affected by this, the farmers, the manufacturers, the truckers. If there's a bill out there…" Oh, because he had said, "I just want to do you." And I remember, I said, "Well, but Governor, there's no way the General Assembly's going to pass a bill that just relieves us, restores our exemption and ignores everybody else." He said, "Well, let me talk to my people and see if we can run a bill." So anyway, I said, "Well, whatever Governor." He said, "Well just let me look into it."

Okay, so about a month later I'm back in the coal association and the phone rings. It's the Governor, and he said, "You were right. We can't get it done legislatively. First of all, I don't want anyone else to know I'm doing this for you because then all the others are going to want it, too. (laughs) Now I don't understand this, but I understand there's a way we can do this administratively through the Department of Revenue," which administers all the taxes, collects all the taxes. "So what I'm going to do is, you're going to get a call from the Director of Revenue. You may understand this – I don't, but I'm told it can be done without going through the General Assembly, but I want **you** to work it out with my Director of Revenue," – who I'd never met. I said, "Well, that's fine." He says, "I've told him to call you and I want you and him to meet and line this up." I did have a vague idea. I had good tax people and one of them did say there was a way we could consider doing this without going through the legislature. So I said, "Well, that would be fine, Governor. I'll do whatever."

And he said, "Now my only thing is, I don't want you telling the press, or I don't want you telling people that you and I are doing this." I said, "Well, Governor…." He said, "Because then it's going to put me in a spot. But I know you need it restored." He also said – to be fair during this conversation, to whoever is listening – he said he also knew that the amount of sales tax revenue was **big** for us, but in terms of what other industries were paying, we were much smaller. I should point that out in all fairness here, to you and everybody else. Alright. The figure was not astronomical in comparison to what a lot of manufacturers paid and so on. Okay.

So sure enough, about three days later I get a call in my office. The office manager says the man on the phone says he's the Director of the Department of Revenue. I knew his name but I'd never met him. So we get on the line – I can't remember his name right now – but it was like, "Mr. Pensoneau, we haven't met, but I know you know this phone call's coming. The Governor has asked me to call you and has directed me to work with you to restore your sales tax exemption on certain equipment purchases by coal companies." I said, "That's right, Director." He said, "So, how do you want to proceed? I don't fully have a grasp myself on the mechanism, but I have counsel here and they say it can be done but they've got to work with some of your tax experts." I said, "I've got one of the best in the business," – which I did – "I'll bring him with me. He said, "Okay. We're going to set up a meeting."

As I recall, the meeting was in that little conference room off the Governor's Office, in the State House. I remember I wanted State Representative Dan Reitz with me – I knew that was important – and I had my key tax person. The Director of Revenue came in and I recall he had a gal with him, a woman attorney, who was deputy counsel or something like that. She understood it. My tax guy understood it. So basically, after introductions

were made his gal and my tax guy talked turkey on how it could be done administratively, and it was done administratively.

There were several humorous incidents. As we were getting this done, we're getting late in the year, the legislature is coming back. There was some function at the Governor's mansion. Blagojevich himself was never there. Oh, I should point out, although that meeting I just mentioned was in the conference room, the Governor himself was not there. You know he wasn't in Springfield that much, anyway, but he wasn't there. Okay? It was just the revenue director, alright. So this is proceeding. So, anyway, there was one, in looking back – kind of potentially disastrous, but now humorous – there was some kind of function in the Governor's mansion; I was there and Senator Frank Watson was there, who was the Republican leader in the Senate, and Frank Watson approaches me and said, "I want to talk to you. I've got good news. We're going to run a bill to restore the sales tax exemption." (both laugh) And he said, laughing "Naturally, you're the first one I want to put on it. We're going to put the Democrats on the spot."

DePue: You're the one who's on the spot now.

Pensoneau: You got that right. So I took him by the arm and I got him aside. I said, "Frank, can I talk to you?" He said, "Well sure." I said, "Frank, don't do this." He said, "What do you mean? We want to get your sales tax exemption restored. That's important. I know you've got to want that." I said, "**I want it,** but…" He said, "Well, I told you, we're running a bill. I'm going to put you on it first" – along with others, a Christmas tree bill – I said, "Frank," – I knew Frank quite well – here's why I don't want you to do it. The Governor is restoring our sales tax exemption through another mechanism." He looked at me, and he shook his head; he said, "What? You're putting me on." I said, "No I'm not. "Seriously, he is. We're going to get it restored. It's being done right now as we speak. It's taken some weeks to do it. Frank, I can't be on that bill. That'd be nuts. I'm getting mine restored." He said, "Give me this **again**." (laughs) I said, "It's being restored administratively." He looked at me, and I remember he said, "And you're trusting the guy to do this?" I said, "Frank, he's doing it. All I can tell you is he's doing it. It's happening now as we stand here tonight. It's being done." He said, "Well, I don't believe this." I said, "If you put me on that bill, I mean, it'd be ridiculous." He said, "Well, do the others know about this?" And I said, "Frank, I don't know. I don't represent the others."

DePue: The others?

Pensoneau: The other business interests, of course. He just shook his head and said, "I don't believe this. He's really doing this for you?" I said, "He is, Frank. He really is." I was very anxious after that night because I didn't know what Watson would do, but he didn't do anything to queer the deal or the situation, I've got to say that. The only time there was something testy was, I got a call

from the State Journal-Register. It was just about the time we had it done; it was like maybe near the end of the year. The J-R wanted to talk to me.

DePue: Was it Bernie Schoenberg, maybe?

Pensoneau: No, it wasn't Bernie. I know Bernie real well. It wasn't Bernie. It was one of the other reporters they had in the State House at the time. "We understand you've had your sales tax exemption restored by some administrative means." And I said, "Well, it's being worked on." And I'm thinking to myself, oh boy, here we go. Blagojevich's message to me I never forgot was don't get into the press, you know. "Well, how are you doing this?" I said, "We're looking into it a little bit, okay; we're looking into it through means other than the General Assembly. And the guy said, "Well we know that. There was no bill." Obviously, no legislation was passed in that fall veto session that restored anybody. You know, I thought oh, man. I'm starting to sweat. Anyway I remember I said, "Well, you know, we're working on it. We're seeing if it can be done through other means." "Well how is that?" I said, "I don't really understand it. I really don't. It was very complicated. But I've got good tax people and there's other people who are trying to work it out. That's all I can tell you." The guy said, "Well, so it's true?" I said, "Well, it's true. Obviously it's true. I want to get a sales tax exemption restored." So the guy said, "Did you work this out with the Governor?" I said, "Obviously the Governor is in favor of this or it wouldn't be happening." He said, "Well, obviously. Well, you've got to really be appreciative of the fact that the Governor's done this for you or is doing this for you. Are you?" (laughs) I remember, I said, "Yes I am. I'm appreciative of the fact that the Governor recognizes the importance of the coal mining industry and the necessity of keeping it as viable as possible in parts of the state where the economy is heavily reliant on healthy coal mines." And he said, "So you **are** appreciative of what the Governor is doing?" I said, "**Yeah. I am** appreciative of what the Governor's doing." (laughs) Okay, this is weird, I know, and that was the end of the conversation.

Okay, it comes out as a front page story in the Journal-Register. I see the headline about the coal industry getting its sales tax exemption restored. And I thought, Oh man, here we go. So I read it. It was an unusual story; the whole story was on the front page. It was well written. I've got to admit it was accurate, only to the extent it was already a done deal and I had indicated to him it was on the **way** to becoming a done deal but it wasn't quite done. Well, it actually was a done deal. Okay? But anyway, in the last paragraph here I am. It said Taylor Pensoneau, President of the Illinois Coal Association, said that he was very appreciative that Governor Blagojevich recognized the importance of the coal industry and saw fit to support this effort to restore the industry's sales tax exemption. I thought to myself, Wow, you know, I think I've dodged a bullet (laughs). And that's the end of the story. The sales tax exemption was restored and that was it.

Actually, two or three weeks later I retired. That was at the end of 2003. That was my last year. I'd announced it earlier that 2003 would be my last year and that was kind of my parting act as president of the coal association, getting that thing restored.

DePue: Did you hear from the Governor's office on it?

Pensoneau: Did not. No. No. Did not. The answer it no.

DePue: Well, you're right. That was a long story, but it was a great illustration of the way the administration worked, perhaps.

Pensoneau: A great illustration of how it all works.

DePue: Mm hmm. Okay. Gosh, where do I go from here?

Pensoneau: I know.

DePue: You mentioned this a little bit. One of the first things that caused a buzz in Springfield, at least, was the Governor doesn't want to live in the mansion. What was your impression of that particular issue?

Pensoneau: I personally never got as excited about those things as some of the people, but I do agree. I mean, if you're asking me if I felt he should live in the Governor's mansion, my opinion means nothing, but I would have said, Oh, sure. Why not? That's what people expect. He's elected Governor. The state capital is in Springfield; the Governor's mansion is in Springfield. I do know that Governor Thompson, as years proceeded with his long governorship, I do understand he did spend more and more time in Chicago, which is understandable. Or, put it conversely, I know that he was spending lengthening periods of time away from the Governor's mansion. But I guess if you're saying for appearances sake and for the benefit of the public image, I guess I felt he should have lived in the Governor's mansion.

I'll go a step further there. In looking back, I guess that was part of his general attitude of disrespecting Springfield and what he was inheriting. I think that was partially a sign of Rod's lack of respect for Springfield and the Springfield scene.

DePue: Okay. We mentioned already that he walked into this job with a serious budget deficit.

Pensoneau: He did.

DePue: Over a billion dollars.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: But he also had some ambitions for some new legislation – the All Kids program, maybe at the top of the list there – but also funneling more money to education as much as he could.

Pensoneau: Mm hmm.

DePue: Talk about the legislative initiatives a little bit more if you're familiar. Maybe I'm putting you on the spot on that.

Pensoneau: No. It's just what I wrote about in the book. I researched him for what I wrote in the book and I can just repeat here. He actually did pretty well his first few years. Actually, he did fairly well throughout his first four year term, in spite of the fact he feuded publicly and would periodically exchange insults with legislators, both collectively and individually. Obviously, the relationship between Blagojevich and Speaker Madigan deteriorated drastically. He still had a pretty good batting average with the General Assembly in getting what he wanted. I mean, he was strongly supported in running for Governor by unions and he got across legislation that unions wanted.

One of the first things he did was call for and secure approval of a significant increase in the minimum wage. He got other things passed that unions wanted, things that they could have never gotten under a Republican Governor. He did increase education spending. He pretty much got everything that he… He got much of what he wanted. I say that because you would have thought with his feuding and periodic exchange of insults with legislators that he wouldn't have gotten anywhere. But remember, he took office with both chambers in Democratic control and that was a leg up. The way it works he should have gotten much of what he wanted, but because of the acrimonious exchanges with legislators, you would have thought he might **not** have gotten much of what he wanted. But if you look at the record, he **did** get much of what he wanted. And I point out there, to be fair to him he had a pretty good batting average with the General Assembly.

DePue: Okay. A couple of the other things – again, you've covered this very well in the book - but, but just to ask you here since we're doing the interviews: ethics reform. Now, in retrospect, ethics reform was very much in conversation when he took office…

Pensoneau: True.

DePue: …because of what happened to George Ryan.

Pensoneau: Exactly. You're right. And he promised, well not just Blagojevich, but every governor who takes office says he's going to upgrade and improve the ethical atmosphere of state government, the atmosphere of governing, not just for elected, but appointed officials as well. I don't recall the specifics. As I recall, he got approval somewhat early on of an ethics package. If I recall, that was the package that set up the Inspector General in various major offices and

agencies; they were supposed to operate independently of where they were sitting and seriously investigate allegations of fraud or abuse in the areas of state government in which they were set up, as I recall. In some cases, they have functioned, I think, based on what I read in the papers.

DePue: Another one here that is kind of a "red meat" Republican issue is medical malpractice reform, that he was able to do something in that regard as well.

Pensoneau: I'm drawing a blank on it. I know that's always been a big issue, and it's the big issue right now in the national debate on health care reform, but I cannot recall exactly.

DePue: Okay.

Pensoneau: It is a Republican issue. You're right about that, but I can't recall where Blago fitted in with that.

DePue: Okay. Then we get to the budgetary issues. That seemed to be a saga every year. Just from my own recollection of watching this, every year there was a knock-down drag-out fight between the Governor's Office and especially, as you mentioned, Madigan and the House.

Pensoneau: You are right.

DePue: And it would drag on…

Pensoneau: You are right.

DePue: …past June, past July in a couple of cases.

Pensoneau: You are right. You're right on all counts. I'm not sure I have much to add to what you said. A so-called nonpartisan analyst said that he inherited the governorship with a budget hole of maybe 1.2, 1.3 billion dollars. If you believed Blagojevich himself, I think, he put the budget hole at somewhere between 3 ½ to 5 billion dollars. But there's no question, to be a little fair to Blagojevich, he did inherit a budgetary deficit situation that was not funny. He never could come up with one serious coordinated approach to it, so it was piecemeal. He's not the only Governor that has tried to address it that way. I mean, that's been the case ever since. That hasn't changed as we sit here today. The obvious route was to borrow more money by getting approval for the issuance of more bonds. He had other, I call them schemes. Didn't he want to rent or sell the Thompson Center to Chicago?

DePue: Right. Right.

Pensoneau: I think he was one of the early proponents in trying to privatize the lottery, if I recall.

DePue: But the one that (chuckles) was least popular was – this was a little bit later in his administration – the gross receipts tax.

Pensoneau: The gross receipts tax. Well, that was ridiculous. I mean, even the most ardent anti-business liberal felt that was unfair. It didn't matter whether a business was big, small or neutral. It didn't matter whether a business was making any money. All businesses, whether they make money or not, take in money. They may not be profitable, but they're taking in money. Well, he wanted to **impose a heavy levy** on what they take in, irrespective of whether they were profitable or not. That's a gross receipts tax. Ironically, I think he got the idea from an old friend of mine, Doug Kane, a one-time state representative who did understand Illinois finances, but for many years had been living up in Wisconsin. In fact, Doug was brought down here to testify and to try to explain the reasoning for a gross receipts tax and so on, but that was like a Don Quixote type mission. That was like tilting at windmills. I mean, there was no way. I don't remember anybody not just the business community, but anybody that thought it was fair or that thought it was feasible. Nobody thought it was favorable from day one, but he seriously did pursue it. It was just folly.

DePue: This was 2007 when he brought this up.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Yeah.

DePue: When the state was way beyond a billion dollars in debt.

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

DePue: And what's revealing to me is that by this time the relationship between Blagojevich and the legislature, especially the House, obviously had seriously soured.

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah.

DePue: And the vote – he did get a vote on it.

Pensoneau: I didn't know he had one vote on it. He did get a vote?

DePue: Well, you mention yourself that the house vote was a hundred and seven to zero.

Pensoneau: Yeah. I don't remember anybody voting for it.

DePue: Yeah.

Pensoneau: I mean, as I recall, even the unions weren't for it. The unions recognized it was going too far. That's my recollection. Outside of the Governor, and

maybe Doug Kane, my old friend Doug Kane, I don't remember hardly anybody else taking it seriously.

DePue: Okay. But, we started this conversation by emphasizing he did have legislative successes, especially in that first term of office.

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah.

DePue: We've already talked quite a bit about the relationship with the legislative leaders. I know, in your position you weren't necessarily privy to too many of the details in here, but you mention Madigan. Talk about the relationship that Blagojevich had with Emil Jones, Senate President at the time.

Pensoneau: That was, that was a more amiable relationship. Not that they agreed on everything, because they didn't, **but**, in comparison to the Blagojevich-Madigan relationship, the Jones-Blagojevich relationship was quite harmonious. I think part of that was that whoever would lead the Senate was always considered second fiddle to Madigan in terms of the legislative respect barometer. Okay? And I think obviously, Madigan had much more respect than Jones. I think that most leaders of the Senate are, if not envious, irritated by the constant respect that Madigan gets from most all-comers, so, therefore, Jones would have found it convenient to be helpful to Blagojevich where **he** could, as possibly a way to stick it to Madigan a little bit, really; I've got to be honest. But, yeah, Jones was cooperative with Blagojevich in a number of areas and that meant that Senate Democrats to some extent would stay in line on some things for Blagojevich.

DePue: Some of the things that you read in the press about Blagojevich and his relationship with the legislature was that when you did get down to the end of the process, it seemed like Blagojevich didn't hesitate, or people in his administration did not hesitate to take out their wrath on Republican or Democratic legislators who got cross-ways with what he wanted to see happen.

Pensoneau: Oh, yeah. There was a definite vindictiveness exhibited by the Blagojevich crowd in countering or dealing with those who were obstacles.

DePue: What's your take on another one of the complaints that you heard from legislators, especially about the way that Blagojevich very, very liberally used line item veto, which of course is not all that unusual, but also the amendatory veto and kind of pushed the envelope constitutionally.

Pensoneau: On the amendatory veto, if Blagojevich tried to use amendatory vetoes to just outright rewrite bills, he wasn't the first Governor to do that. Many governmental purists in Illinois and the political scientist community and others feel that the amendatory veto has been greatly abused, greatly used by – probably starting out with Ogilvie – utilized far more extensively than it was intended to be used. I think that's been a complaint almost from day one since

that 1970 constitution went into effect. If he used it to just simply rewrite legislation, he wasn't the first Governor to do so, okay?

DePue: There are even a couple of cases, as I recall though.

Pensoneau: Well he wrote completely new bills.

DePue: It was overridden by the legislature and he still found ways to implement new initiatives and new policies without any real legislative authority.

Pensoneau: I'm sure that's true. Governors can go ahead and try, through executive orders or other decrees, to simply implement what they can't get done legislatively. I know he did do that, but again, I point out in fairness to him, he wasn't the first Governor to do that.

DePue: Okay. I'm assuming here as an old state house reporter that you heard from lots of your friends. Talk about the relationship that he had with the media.

Pensoneau: My distinct impression was that it was not good. First of all, in terms of the State House press room, he wasn't in Springfield very much, so that's a downer to start off with. When he was, it didn't take him too long into his governorship, to determine that it was in his interest to try to avoid direct contact with reporters in the State House. I'm not quite sure what was going on in Chicago where he spent a lot of his time. I suspect it was more of the same, but I don't know that. But I do know in the State House it was very limited access to Blagojevich and it was pretty much of an estrangement situation. There were certain reporters that started questioning some of his actions early on, some things rather strange, unorthodox. Is this what his governorship's going to be? Are these indications of what's ahead? And, indeed, they were indications of what was coming, but I think he took offense at that, got his back stiffened over it and pretty much kissed-off the State House press for the most part.

DePue: Do you recall a moment when you had reason to reevaluate that initial assessment that you had of Blagojevich after that first meeting?

Pensoneau: Yeah. I did. Earlier I tried to, for various reasons, follow his governorship, detect a pattern and because of these things we've talked about, I had a difficult time. He's very complex, a very complex guy; there was not a logical progression of the way he did things. I mean, you know, very knee-jerk. How's that? A very knee-jerk governor. And it was like, if you were surprised by something he did this month, you couldn't wait to see what was going to come about next month. I just felt – and this was evident among some of the key people around him – that they really didn't care that much, in some ways, about state government. They were there and they were on an ego trip and that was the essence of it.

I thought he came in with great potential. Both houses of the General Assembly in Democratic hands. He seemed to be kind of down-to-earth, kind of hip, almost glib, the kind of guy that could kind of make it with the public and so on. I had some hopes for a reasonably productive governorship at first. And in some ways it was. It was not completely unproductive. That's the point I want to make here, because it's easy to get an impression that it was an unproductive governorship and it was not unproductive. But his whole governor performance was marred by the bizarre, and it was just like he carried it too far. Now maybe that was really him. I don't know. But it's hard to believe that all that stuff was an act. I just think that he would just turn out to be very unorthodox. He certainly continued to be unorthodox in his post-gubernatorial period, which we're in now. He's just very unconventional. Maybe a tip-off to the fact that things are going to be changing was the night he won the governorship. As I recall, I was watching on television or some tape. When he came out to acknowledge his victory at his headquarters, wasn't he like singing an Elvis Presley song. You know, he's an Elvis Presley fanatic.

DePue: Um hmm.

Pensoneau: And he was mouthing the word of some Elvis Presley song as I recall. I thought that was maybe a tip-off though.

DePue: Um hmm.

Pensoneau: The fact was, not necessarily negative at that point, but here we go; we've got a real new sheriff on the block.

DePue: Well it wasn't that long into his administration when there were rumblings in the press and in the political community that there were some serious allegations floating around about the administration. Not too long after that Patrick Fitzgerald's office once again started doing an investigation. You already described him as a bulldog, so the last guy you want on your tail.

Pensoneau: Some of the early allegations involved hiring practices and the manipulation of personnel that were already there. Not that the Governor can't do those things, but sometimes you've got to do them in a diplomatic way and he wasn't concerned about diplomacy or protocol or civility in the way he treated different people his administration inherited. And then, of course, it became very evident early on that there was a pay-to-play mentality at the top.

DePue: And the pay was funding his next political campaign.

Pensoneau: Of course. Right. Exactly.

DePue: That's where Tony Rezko comes into the picture as well, does it not?

Pensoneau: Uh huh.

DePue: That's **another man** who's been in the news.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: I don't know how much more we have to talk about Blagojevich. We're getting close to the noon hour here and I want to finish the last session with your views on how journalism has changed. We pretty much have covered the terrain as far as Blagojevich is concerned. I don't want to get into all the specifics of the allegations. His defense team has only spent the last year and has just asked for an extension to get ready again because it's something like a million pages of evidence that they're trying to sort through right now, so I don't think we want to get into the details of everything. Obviously, his ultimate downfall came right after President Barack Obama got elected and we needed to fill his senate seat and the ultimate pay-to-play in that respect.

Pensoneau: I guess. It remains to be seen what the trial holds and what the verdict is.[24] I do have to say that. But there's no question – even before we get to this current very incriminating chapter – that it was evident that contributors were being rewarded with state contracts. I mean, there's no question about that **and this** is not the first time. But, as you pointed out here at the start, he entered the governorship with a pledge to institute change in the ethical atmosphere pervading state government. It wasn't very healthy as Ryan exited the post and Blagojevich said, Those days are over. But, of course, it became evident not too far into the Blagojevich administration that those days were **not** over. In entrusting – if that's the word – individuals like Rezko and Stuart Levine, and people like that with making major decisions in terms of the investiture of taxpayer dollars in terms of who got appointments and so on, Blagojevich was really slacking off in what ought to be his responsibility or mandate to oversee good government. You don't delegate or let people like those individuals have a free hand in making **major** decisions policy-wise, money disposal-wise and personnel-wise. You just don't do that. George Ryan was guilty of some of the same aspects, on looking back, to be fair.

DePue: I was thinking that same thing.

Pensoneau: Ryan's downfall was basically attributed to the fact he trusted people around him, and Blagojevich immediately fell into the same mode. It wasn't too far into his governorship when it became evident that people like Rezko and Levine were very instrumental in aspects of the new administration in Illinois. It also became pretty evident that these people were pretty far dispatched from the ethical climate that Blagojevich said he was going to foment.

DePue: Let's finish off with this question for you in our discussion of Blagojevich. You might not want to answer this, but here's the question: Knowing what

[24] On June 27, 2011, (about 9 months after this interview) Blagojevich was convicted of 17 of 20 charges of corruption. Perhaps the most important was the charge of attempting to "sell" the U. S. Senate seat vacated by Barack Obama when he was elected President in 2008.

you know right now about Blagojevich and his administration and what has happened, what would you sense is his fatal flaw? What is it about Blagojevich that brought him down?

Pensoneau: (pause) A lack of sincerity; evident deceitfulness, further colored by ignorance – ignorance of the basic workings of Illinois government. Some of the things he did just ran counter to… Let me take back the word ignorance on the record: if not ignorance, a careless lack of common sense. He was a political train wreck in the making almost from the day he stepped into office, as it turned out. Just as we've mentioned Ryan as a political tragedy, so was Blagojevich. There's no question about it. I just think there's something in his psyche, in his make-up in terms of being Governor that just didn't click. In the end, it was sad.

DePue: His harshest critics have even used the term sociopath to describe Blagojevich.

Pensoneau: Perhaps so. Who knows? When you get into some of the stuff that erupted between Blagojevich and his powerful father-in-law, Chicago Alderman Dick Mell, I mean, boy, maybe that word's not completely out of line. That's a whole weird chapter in itself. We could take the rest of the day talking about that. Who would have ever predicted that? That speaks for itself.

DePue: I suspect, in the future historians and scholars will be writing reams about Rod Blagojevich, because, in part, it's woven in bizarre ways with Barack Obama's career.

Pensonseau: That's true. That's going to guarantee continued attention in itself. As his trial approaches, interesting to see if his team is successful, for example, in drawing Rahm Emanuel into the equation at some point; they're threatening to. I mean, there was a relationship. Keep in mind that Obama was, what, co-chair of one of his… When a major political figure decides to run personally – this is interesting – I've seen it ever since I've been around. One major figure always will become the co-chair of another major figure's campaign. Then if something goes wrong, they say, well, it was only token or symbolic anyway. And that is true. But, still, the public has the right to some accountability, to some believability, in all of this stuff. If Obama was a major supporter of Blagojevich at one point, as he was, I don't think it's fair to just wink it away and say, Well we all know that's only token anyway. Maybe individuals like you and I and others on the scene know that to be true, but I think the public's entitled to more than that. That's what I think. You then have to say, well then what sincerity is there in a lot of this stuff.

DePue: Any final words then on Rod Blagojevich?

Pensoneau: Okay, on Blagojevich, you know, I would simply say he's a political tragedy. It's going to be interesting to see if indeed he's convicted. I think its going to

be a **very** interesting trial. It's going to be different than some of the other political corruption trials we've held. It's going to be interesting to see how the feds will… I mean, there's a tremendous effort being made to get him. This already unusual effort on his part to defend himself, to change his image ahead of time, to portray himself into something that he maybe was all along but we didn't know it, but who knows?

I've never seen a defendant in an upcoming major political trial be as open and as now available to everybody at any place at any time, and volunteering to do these very unorthodox things, from going on survival programs and stuff like this to being available. I understand, as we talk right now, he's been asked to come back on Letterman's program.[25] They've asked him to come back. He's obviously become a major media personality. It's incredible to look at night to national news programs, be it Fox or CNN or what-have-you, and he's often the only non-Washington story. They follow what he's up to. I mean, he's become a national name and it's like, now Blagojevich has agreed this week he's going to go on the View or he's going be with Jay Leno. We know he's going to be with Letterman. I mean, he's become a well-known figure. Maybe you might want to say he's being lampooned and he's contributing to this image himself, but he certainly has projected himself into a nationally-recognized caricature that I think is **all designed** to take the **edge** off the indictment and the charges and to try to contribute, and perhaps artfully so, in a way to his defense. He ultimately may be partially successful. Who knows? We're going to see. Right?

DePue: We're going to see. Knowing Rod Blagojevich, it's going to be entertaining to watch.

Pensoneau: It's going to be very entertaining to watch and that's maybe a good way to wrap it up.

DePue: Okay.

Pensoneau: We will see.

DePue: Thanks, Taylor.

(end of interview #11 #12 continues)

Interview with Taylor Pensoneau
ISG-A-L-2009-007

Interview # 12: March 12, 2010
Interviewer: Mark DePue

[25] David Letterman was host of a popular late-night TV show.

DePue: Today is March 12, 2010. This is Mark DePue. I'm the Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. This is going to be my last session with Taylor Pensoneau. Good afternoon, Taylor.

Pensoneau: Good afternoon, Mark.

DePue: We had a very interesting and productive morning talking about (chuckle) George Ryan and Rod Blagojevich.

Pensoneau: We did, indeed.

DePue: Two of the more colorful political characters that Illinois has had over the years, and that's saying quite a bit.

Pensoneau: It certainly is.

DePue: What I want to finish with, we have been talking – and we were just chatting before this – somewhere close to twenty hours, maybe in excess of twenty hours.

Pensoneau: Like wow. (chuckles)

DePue: You started your career, your young adulthood, as a journalist. Do you still feel like you've got some of that journalist in you to this day?

Pensoneau: Well, because of my writing of books at this latter stage in my life, it's kind of reborn within me the journalism instincts, the feeling you get of being a journalist. Between my *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* years and my current life stage, I had a quarter of a century with the coal mining industry, as you know. In some ways, after all this time here in the end, it's like I'm basically just starting to feel more like a journalist again.

DePue: Would it be fair to say – would you agree with this statement – that when you broke into journalism that was the heyday of print journalism?

Pensoneau: I would say that. I'm not sure in terms of the overall history of journalism in the United States, if it was the heyday, but in comparison to the state of, at least print journalism today here in 2010, my era was certainly a heyday.

DePue: Okay.

Pensoneau: Yes.

DePue: Well that's what I want to talk about, because saying that, you obviously have seen an incredible amount of change in journalism. So, where do I want to start with this? What would you say is the view of the print journalism in the United States today versus what it was back in the days when you broke in?

Pensoneau: Well, I can take my own newspaper, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* as an example. When I first went to work for the *Post* full-time, which was in June of 1962, the *Post-Dispatch* was still regarded as one of the best newspapers in the United States. It was on almost everybody's ten best list. If you see the *Post-Dispatch* today, that newspaper is only a shell of what it was when I went aboard in 1962. Frankly, it's got very little in it compared to what was the reality of it back when I went to work for it. To me it is very discouraging. I do not take the *Post* on a day-to-day basis; I do see it if it's laying somewhere or if I'm going through Lambert Field, the St. Louis airport, I usually buy it to take on the plane with me or if I've landed there and returning here, I'll pick it up because its an easy thing to do. They're selling it right there at the airport. But I don't go out of my way to see the paper. Both what it looks like, and I don't know many people there anymore, but those that I do, they're still there trying to make it to some sort of retirement; it's very discouraging to hear them talk. It's just not what it was. Of course, the Pulitzer family sold it – I don't know, what? – five or six years ago and I never thought I'd ever see that happen. It's certainly **not** one of the great newspapers in the United States anymore.

DePue: Would you say that situation is indicative of print journalism throughout the entire country?

Pensoneau: I'm afraid it is. I'm afraid it is.

DePue: The next question, then, is what happened? Why?

Pensoneau: Again, it's a good question. The single biggest reason has to do, I would say with the broadcast media. The emergence of the broadcast media as the most obvious, probably dominant purveyor of news – to what extent you define news – to the American populace today. It's my impression – I'm sure studies would substantiate this – but far more people get their basic news fill – if that's the right word – information about what's going on in the United States, from television and, to a great extent, radio. I think that newspapers have had to cut back economically. There are tremendous costs in putting out a daily newspaper. Newsprint itself is a major cost item and I know its prices have soared radically. You've got the always-present issue of union contracts. Everything has just mitigated against a healthy newspaper industry. Now it's been especially hard on the big city newspapers. A number of papers in

middle-sized and smaller towns are still relatively healthy and this is the case in Illinois. I know a paper I've had a lot of contact with because of my book for the last five, six, seven years, is the *Wayne County Press*, which is printed in Fairfield. It seems to be very healthy. It does a good job of covering local news and I'm impressed and I think it's healthy. Now, it has a commercial printing business on the side, which I'm sure abets the bottom line. I know other newspapers have done this, also, and that has helped ensure some profitability. I think it's a darn shame, because –with exceptions – because of the time factors and the mechanics, you can't get the in-depth coverage of issues and situations that need to be covered. You can't get that on television or radio. You just can't. And that's not necessarily a criticism of TV and radio, but it's a reality statement about newspapers that apparently is diminishing greatly. Now there are still newspapers with major news holes to fill. Obviously, the *New York Times*, papers like the *[Chicago] Tribune* to some extent and others. Although I confess I don't see…

DePue: The *Washington Post*.

Pensoneau: Yeah, definitely the *Washington Post*. Although I don't see newspapers anymore like I did at one time in my life. There was a time when I always had the Sunday *New York Times*. I saw the *Washington Pos*t a lot, even the *LA Times* and so on. Those days are long gone. I may only see those papers if I go to one of the libraries. Well, the Lincoln Library, the city library, still has a rack where you can go. Whatever reason I may be there for, I can't resist wandering over to the rack and taking out whatever edition they've got laying there of the *LA Times* or the *Philadelphia Inquirer* or what-have-you. Newspapers cannot afford the kind of in-depth reporting that they used to support economically. I had a great deal in my years with the Post-Dispatch. I was given time to go out – as I know we talked about earlier in these interviews – to develop stories in-depth and to take days at a time to determine if the situation really was a story or not, things like that. But that was a luxury in looking back. I realize then it was a luxury and now it would be almost an impossible situation; I don't know of anybody that has that luxury. But back in my years, the *Post-Dispatch* did it, the *Chicago Tribune* did it, the *[Chicago] Sun-Times* did it. Even papers like Rockford and Peoria would do it. But the number of ownership entities in the newspaper business has really shrunk to where you've got major corporations owning a bunch of newspapers. A lot of the smaller independent papers have diminished. Although in areas where they have survived, they are surviving. Again, I use the ones I've talked about as examples.

You know, this will really get some of the listeners who listen to this later on, but I'm going to point it out. I probably do more talking today to the editors and the publishers of papers like the *Wayne County Press* and the *Benton Evening News* and the *Harrisburg Register*, Peoria and so on, than in my previous life when I was much more on conversant terms with folks at the *Tribune*, the *Sun-Times*, the old *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. But these papers

today, in places that I'm talking about, they're in conservative areas politically. Having said that, they'll tell you – well, among other things – the big city papers are almost all too liberal. They don't represent what the average middle-class American's really concerned about. I hear that a lot.

DePue: From editors?

Pensoneau: From editors and owners of papers in medium to smaller size markets. Yeah. I hear that a lot. It's no wonder, you know, all you see is all the liberal stuff all the time in the columnists and everything else and you don't see this viewpoint of an America out there that isn't in that philosophical mode. Now I know that many people will be surprised to hear me say that, and I'm not saying I totally agree with it, but it's surprising how people will tell me that that's a reason for the decline in some of the big city newspapers. And they're always quick to point out – I get this all the time – look at the *Wall Street Journal*. It's still reportedly healthy, but it's got a rather center to leaning-right editorial page. I hear that all the time.

DePue: In contrast to the *New York Times*?

Pensoneau: In contrast to the *New York Times* and the *LA Times* and to some extent, I think to a little bit lesser extent, the *Washington Post*. Certainly in contrast to the *New York Times* and to the *Los Angeles Times*. Yeah. Now, of course, I should point out that the *Post-Dispatch* in all my years was one of the most liberal papers in the United States. The editorial page was heavily dominated by editors who were almost always from the liberal viewpoint. Although some of the reporters, me included, were more middle-of-the-road people. I will say this, that the editorial bent of the paper – never in my years in my political reporting life – was allowed to interfere with what I wrote. I've got to point that out in all fairness to my then-editors. Again, I'm not saying I agree with this fully, but this does come up. Just to summarize, this is a phrase they use: Those big papers are out of touch with major segments of the populace.

DePue: Let me ask you this question then, this is a phenomenon that began in the mid-1980s: conservative talk radio. How has that changed the landscape of journalism in the United States?

Pensoneau: It's changed it a lot. It has changed it a lot.

DePue: Rush Limbaugh being the most prominent.

Pensoneau: Limbaugh would be the pioneer, there's no question about it. You've kind of answered your own question. No, I think that's been a major, major influence. I really do. You know, I think the thing is, is that many Americans identify with conservative talk radio. They only realize it after they've heard it. Back in my time the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* was pretty conservative and it definitely represented the Republican point-of-view on issues. It was also very business-oriented. But in the journalistic world I existed in then, it was

about the only organ of any size or consequence that did that. I think it's fair to say – and some of my personal views are seeping out here, obviously – I think it's fair to say, it's factual to say that for **decades** – at least in my younger years – there was really no significant outlet for conservative viewpoints. I think the conservative aspect, or view of American life, was pretty much without a voice or an outlet for decades. I think that talk radio paved the way for that to change, obviously. Because, obviously, the **vast bulk** of talk radio is conservative – not only conservative, but right-wing conservative. This is why so many traditional newspaper folks and old-line practitioners of journalism will tell me that they have no use for all this talk radio. They deride it is as just gab, gab, gab, gab, gab the same stuff over and over…

DePue: Not the investigative reporting that was their life-blood.

Pensoneau: Pardon.

DePue: It wasn't the investigative reporting that was their life-blood.

Pensoneau: No. Not at all. I would say this, I think a problem the media has today, and you hear all the time – I know it depends on where you're coming from – but I think that there is some justification to the fact that the media is not more to the center. I'm going to put it as diplomatically as I can. I think that the so-called mainstream media is fairly one-sided in terms of the way it presents news, issues, what it pays attention to, what it emphasizes. I can talk about this because I grew up with the *Post-Dispatch;* the *Post-Dispatch* molded me, basically, and irrespective of the editorial page, you had to make a sincere effort to be fair in what you wrote. I was, and I had to be, because the editors insisted upon it. Not all the editors were liberals, is what I'm saying in blunt kindergarten terms.

DePue: But define fair, too, for us.

Pensoneau: Fair means you present both sides of an issue. You just don't glamorize, publicize, underline, underscore issues that make one philosophical crowd look good and the other bad, or at least, if they don't make one look good, they always point to the faults and the cracks in the facade of the other and so on.

DePue: Okay.

Pensoneau: I watch this. I see situations whereby… Well, I think I've probably gone far enough here; I think that you – and certainly those who later on might listen to this – are probably getting my drift. I really think that there should be more old-fashioned down-the-middle reporting. Okay? And I do think that is a factor somewhere in the decline of the print media.

DePue: I don't mean to be leading you anywhere in this question, but I can't figure out a better way of asking. The rise of conservative talk radio – and it is overwhelmingly conservative.

Pensoneau: It is.

DePue: Almost everybody would agree with that.

Pensoneau: Right.

DePue: Was there a reaction in the print media, where they became more liberal as a counter to what conservative talk radio was doing?

Pensoneau: That's a good question. I don't have an answer to it. I've been too far away from it for too many years. I do know that maybe… It's a good question and you may have insinuated the answer to the question in the way you asked it. I don't have an answer. I know that the *Post* editorial page is always very liberal in my time. I assume it still is. I don't see it enough to say if it is or isn't. Back when I was looking at the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* – of course, I was in Washington off and on for periods – those were always very liberal in their bent. There was nothing there. Now the *LA Times* is different. Way back in the early days when the Chandlers had it, the Chandler family, that was a little different story. In fact, even back when I was in journalism school the *LA Times* was still regarded as a relatively conservative newspaper. But that's certainly changed over the last thirty, forty years; there's no question about that.

DePue: Well the *Chicago Tribune* always had a very conservative reputation in its day.

Pensoneau: Very conservative, and it certainly was. No argument about that. I just echo what you just said. Oh, no, back in Colonel McCormick's days, heaven forbid if you were a liberal Democrat.

DePue: Would you say that the *Tribune* is still generally conservative in its outlook?

Pensoneau: I would not. No. To be fair, I think the *Tribune* is about as fair as you can get this day and age. I think the *Tribune* is pretty much down the middle. That's what I think. I know the *Tribune* has faced economic problems like much of the rest of the industry, but I think the *Tribune* still represents the hope of what a newspaper can be.

DePue: Well, let's change the focus a little bit here and put it on television. You already mentioned that television media has gotten more of the public's attention. But when you and I were growing up – much more in my case, I think – television was in its infancy.

Pensoneau: Mm hmm.

DePue: And it was CBS, NBC and ABC.

Pensoneau: Um hmm. I agree. Correct.

DePue: And would you say that the message was different or pretty much similar across those three networks?

Pensoneau: Honestly, I can't remember. I mean, in those days, there weren't nearly as many news programs. We didn't have the twenty-four hour a day stuff and all that.

DePue: It was a big thing for the news program to go…

Pensoneau: Fifteen minutes at one time.

DePue: …half an hour.

Pensoneau: The Cameron News Caravan with John Cameron Swaze. Remember that? That was a big deal. My recollection of those days compared to later days, was pretty sterile, extremely straight-forward, bare-bones. Nobody, no news caster or network or station sticking its nose out too much. I may be wrong in that, but that's my best guess at resurrecting what I remember of those early days. It seemed to me that Huntley-Brinkley, Huntley, whatever it was.

DePue: Huntley-Brinkley.

Pensoneau: Huntley-Brinkley was pretty much down the middle. Novak-Evans. I remember when they were together, pretty much down the middle. I just don't remember those early news broadcasts and broadcasters being as obviously slanted, or even biased towards one side or the other. I just don't.

DePue: Mm hmm.

Pensoneau: I just don't.

DePue: Jumping ahead from those days in the '60s and '70s especially, CNN's arrival on the scene in the late '80s and, certainly, in 1990-91, I think it caught a lot of people's attention because of the coverage of the Gulf War [in Iraq] at that time. Then later on you have other outlets. You have Fox News Network, MSNBC, CSNBC, some of these other outlets. How has the emergence of all these cable networks changed what's going on in the TV media?

Pensoneau: I think they've taken a lot of the play away from the old traditional three main networks, if I understand the question right. When I watch the news at night, I'll admit to you, that I'm 98 percent switching from one cable outlet to another. I generally jump back and forth between Fox and MSNBC. It's kind of fun for me because both of them get my blood boiling. I do it on purpose. It's a mental exercise. If I want to wake up, instead of drinking a Coke for

caffeine I'll turn on MSNBC and listen to one of those folks. Or sometimes, if I want to say, maybe, how one-sided can you be, I'll turn on Hannity[26] or something like that. The point is, I spend my time when I do watch TV news, almost exclusively switching around from one of the cable news programs to another.

DePue: For somebody who might be listening 50 years from now, let's get this marker down there, MSNBC…

Pensoneau: Very liberal.

DePue: …on the left side. Fox on the right side.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Okay. Yeah. Well put. If I watch ABC or NBC or CBS, it's only because I stumble into it. I never turn it on. I mean, I just don't, and it's a sad comment on my part, but there's a timeframe and I can just find much more lively, stimulating presentation of the news. Although I may not agree with it a lot – obviously I don't agree with MSNBC a lot, and Fox sometimes too – but I find this much more stimulating and rewarding to watch those folks go at it than I did the old-line Walter Cronkites and so on.

DePue: Uh huh. Well I think you and I have both answered my next question is: has the emergence of these cable news networks made coverage more partisan?

Pensoneau: Oh, I think so. Oh, yeah.

DePue: Is that a good or a bad thing? Maybe that's what you're torn with..

Pensoneau: I **am** torn on this. It makes it more lively, and it makes it more entertaining, and it can be more irritating, and it can even agitate at times.

DePue: But the life bread of the old journalist was deep, careful, investigative reporting.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Oh yeah. And that's what I was groomed to do in my *Post-Dispatch* years and that's what I tried to do. Right. We never went in for cheap shots. Cheap shots are a dime a dozen this day and age, from both sides. We know that. It's obvious. It's kind of funny. In a way, these cable outlets are going back to what newspapers were back in the 1800s and even the early 1900s. Many of them started out as organs of political parties. That's why you see so many names, like the *Globe-Democrat* this, the *Republican* this. There's a reason for that. I still remember from my excellent journalism history courses, back when I was in journalism school at Missouri, that it was heavily emphasized how one-sided and bitterly partisan so many newspapers were in their earlier years, even to the extent that some **were legally** and **especially** mouthpieces for one party or another.

[26] Sean Hannity, host of a late-evening opinion show on Fox News.

DePue: I have to admit that as an historian reading newspapers from the late 1700s or around the timeframe of the Civil War and then you hear these comments about Oh, what's terrible about what's going on in the media now, they're so biased. (Pensoneau laughs) You reflect back at the stuff you read back then, or even the late 1800s.

Pensoneau: Oh, no. I know.

DePue: The McCormicks and the Hearsts of the world.

Pensoneau: Right. Hearst is a wonderful example. "Give me an incident and I'll give you a war." (both laugh) And he did. As a person with some interest in history like you, I try to point out – but most people don't get it or don't care – I said, You know, in a way, we're going back to what newspapers were at one time, except it's these cable outlets now that are playing the role as opposed to newspapers.

DePue: And talk radio.

Pensoneau: And, oh yeah, talk radio. Definitely talk radio. No question about it. Right. (laughter) People are just assassinated every day on talk radio. (laughs)

DePue: How about the other wave of technology that's hot? We're talking, obviously, about the internet. How has that changed journalism?

Pensoneau: Well, that's a good question and I should have mentioned it earlier. There are studies that are showing – and this is just completely beyond the pale as far as I'm concerned – that actually people are getting what they consider their fill of news off these internet blogs. And as we talk right now, you can write about anything on those blogs.

I'll give an example. Again, here we go with Obama. Back when Obama announced for President the Associated Press called me to comment, and I did. I said, this is kind of an idyllic situation and I thought it was kind of neat he was doing it from the steps there by the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois., and I said how idyllic. I said in one of my sentences about it – and I meant it in a positive way – "It's really like a neat political fairy tale." Okay. Bad choice of words. This got printed all over the country. It was an AP story and everyone picked it up. Okay. I got raked over the coals by blogs for being racist because of those words fairy tale. I meant it in a very positive way. It was taken up by umpteen bloggers from San Diego to the East Coast, writing about it, and I was identified as a political historian in Illinois who happens to be racist. I mean, you know, it's interesting. I was amazed. I'd go on the internet and resurrect this stuff. It's there.

Then I got sucked into the Obama-Hillary Clinton primary campaign thing. She was being pressed to release her personal papers from when she was First Lady, where she would get involved in issues and things like that.

She retaliated by saying, Why aren't you asking then-Senator Obama about his personal papers when he was in the Illinois legislature? Okay. So, again, I get calls from newspapers, including the AP, and they wanted to know if any of the Illinois State senators ever kept records of who came in to see them and their appointments and things like that. And the reason I was asked was because Obama said, or Axelrod said or somebody, "We have nothing. We'll tell you right now, we've kept nothing, there's nothing from his Illinois legislative days in terms of any records or memorandums or mementos or reports.

I said, "Well some do." Yeah, some do, some don't, but a number of them do. They'll keep logs of who comes in to see them. They'll keep little mementos on how they voted and things like this, and what issues they were dealing with. Well, that ran nationwide and I got raked over the coals again by Obama partisans for trying to undercut Obama. Then it was interesting, because they always pointed out, how dare I say this because I was a lobbyist for the coal industry, as if that was a sin. You can see this stuff. It's on the internet. No big deal. I have fun. I go in and read all of this stuff. It's just interesting; you know, that I meant it factually. Some of the state senators did keep records, I know, and some didn't. It's as simple as that, but they wanted to know if it was unusual, that Obama as a State Senator, that his people said that he kept nothing, there was nothing in Springfield, in the Illinois State House, in Chicago about his years as a State Senator. And I said, Some keep and some don't. Well, the fact that I said some do keep records, maybe it was picked up by the Hillary Clinton people and she tried – well maybe she did not personally – someone tried to run with it. Right away then, that sparked another backlash on **me**; basically the thing that got them ticked off is the fact that **I** said some Illinois State Senators do keep records. They keep records of who they see, of who their contacts are, of who saw them on what issue on what day. You know that sort of stuff.

DePue: Well, again, we are talking about the contrast of journalism in the 19th century versus today.

Pensoneau: I'm saying, You can't believe everything you read on these blogs. Right. It's almost – I don't want to say alarming – but it's shocking that so many people on the survey say this is how they got a lot of their news, off of these blogs. I mean, they're fun reading. I've gone to some length using myself as an example to indicate that one can write anything of these blogs. Anybody who really knows me would laugh at the "fact" that I'm a racist. There's no truth to it. It's just interesting to read in print that I'm "a racist historian."

DePue: Some of what you're just talking about hits on what you hear all the time about how much more partisan politics is today than it was even twenty, thirty years ago. Would you agree with that? That it is more partisan?

Pensoneau: You mean politics themselves?

DePue: Yeah.

Pensoneau: Right now, we're really – a very partisan answer is yes, oh yeah. The system is dominated by the two sides being at loggerheads with each other. Absolutely.

DePue: This is the chicken or the egg question, then. Is that a result of the evolution in the way the media has been discussing politics, or did that occur in politics and then the media just picked up on it and figured out it makes money for them?

Pensoneau: Well, I think the latter sense is true and it speaks for itself. Even I remember from my reporting days, controversy and negativity sells much better than positive feature stories. It's much more rewarding in terms of getting your "kicks" in readership to write that somebody's sleeping with somebody, as opposed to somebody representing God, motherhood and apple pie.

DePue: But in the days of Arrington, the days of George Ryan when he was serving in the House – you've mentioned yourself – their ability to cross the aisle.

Pensoneau: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, yeah. No, no, we're getting away from the media part of it. No, no, I think it's obvious. No, we have partisan stand-offs now that I haven't seen in my adult lifetime of trying to pay attention to these things. Yeah, I agree. It's just, there's no giving, there's no compromise, no giving quarter to the other side. No. In fact, I think that the support groups of each side have gotten more radical and more active and even more visible and in some cases more irresponsible. I think that all contributes to it, also.

DePue: What's your prediction for the future of journalism, and what's your concern for the future of journalism?

Pensoneau: Well, that's a great question. To maybe not be as pessimistic as I sounded some other time, I do remember that when television came on, many people said that's the end of radio. Radio would have no place. I can remember when television came on with movies that that was the end of movie theaters, as we knew them. Bye-bye drive-ins, bye-bye movie theaters in many towns and many movie theaters have closed over the past half century, that's true. But still, movie theaters are still going strong in many places. Radio is now apparently more profitable and more substantial than ever. So, I'm simply saying I'm trying to apply that parallel to newspapers. I think that there will be a future for the print media. Now, it might be more in terms of reading things on line and so on. All newspapers have their own websites now. I personally hate to see it.

Being a traditionalist, the first thing I do in the morning. We take two daily newspapers here at my house in New Berlin, Illinois: the *Illinois State Journal-Register* and the *Jacksonville Journal-Courier.* The first thing I do in the morning is a ritual. I wouldn't know what to do if I couldn't get up, fix a

cup of coffee and get right out on that porch and bring them on in. And I **really** can't envision – I don't even want to think about it – that a day may come when I can't do that. Now I know that some of the big city papers are cutting back on editions. Maybe one or two have already gone on line completely. I feel in my lifetime, with whatever years I've got left that – and I'm pushing, I'll be seventy years old in October – that I'm going to still have access to a printed newspaper every day of some kind. I do believe that. I like to optimistically say, and to some extent I believe, that there will be a role for a print journalism product.

DePue: Do you envision your grandkids going out to that front stoop to get the newspaper?

Pensoneau: That's another question. I really haven't thought that far ahead. I've just thought about the years that I have left. I really don't want to think about it. I will tell you this: I may be critical of newspapers today, but I really rue the day that they don't exist at all, if that day ever comes. It makes me very sad to think of that possibility.

DePue: I think some of the angst – I'm just going to make a personal observation – that the newspaper business is going through right now is trying to figure out how to still do journalism the old-fashioned way. They're okay with getting it on the internet, but they haven't figured out the business model for making money from it that way.

Pensoneau: Right. That's exactly right. I have a good friend who makes a very lucrative living by going around – and most major papers in this country have hired him, he's a brilliant economist – to do what you're saying: improve their business model end of this. Some of the negative stuff he comes back and tells me over lunch is kind of discouraging. But you're right. The business model end of it has got to be improved. Of course, that's where things really changed about newspapers. I mean, you know, back again, I entered the newspaper world where papers had to sell advertising to bring in revenue, but advertising and the business people didn't dare try to interfere with the news operation, or even in some big newspapers, ever even set foot on the news editorial floor. They'd be kicked out of the city room. They were like necessary evils or something to all the news-editorial people, and the news-editorial people ran the organizations. But that changed. That was changed even before I left big city daily journalism where the business people, at the end of it, were gaining the upper-hand in running the papers and in making economic decisions and so on. They were doing more than selling ads; they were running the newspapers. Some papers were starting to have a say in who to hit and not hit because of who was advertising and who was not advertising. These factors were entering in. I watched that change even before I left the business.

DePue: Any final reflections then on where journalism is headed today?

Pensoneau: Well, at the moment, we have this almost **frenzied** attention to the twenty-four hour news cycle stuff as presented by the cable outlets. At some point I just hope that their market reaches a saturation point whereby there's still going to be room for print journalism. I'm going to conclude by saying I think that there **will** be room for print journalism. The print journalism we see today is already, in many cases, far different from the world that I was once a part of. I think the print journalism that's going to survive is going to be even more different from what we see today. But I think that people are still going to want to **read**. They're going to want to read. You talk about books. I'm involved with books. There are those who say some day everybody will have these little pocket deals where you can dial in and read any book right there on your little, I don't know what, iPod, Blackberry, whatever they call them. You can see how out of it I am. I just can't believe – I can't – I just can't believe that there's not going to still be some people left in America, in the World, that want to pick up an old fashioned book and just read it.

DePue: Curl up at night with an electronic device doesn't sound quite as nice, does it?

Pensoneau: It doesn't to me. It doesn't to me. I have friends now – some surprise me – who will only read their newspapers on-line. They still read newspapers, but they only read them on-line. I just find that very, not boring, but I find that cheating myself. I just feel you're missing so many of the traditional good qualities of reading a newspaper, what makes you feel good about it. I just think that that's a very sterile way to go. I don't do it unless if somebody's written about one of my books or something, I'll do it then. But outside of that, I don't do it for any general news objectives. Hey, maybe you're talking here to the last guy left on the scene who still wants to have a printed newspaper delivered, laying out there on his front door step at six in the morning when my papers come and he can fix a cup of coffee and go out there and get that newspaper and settle down in an easy chair and stay in a robe or pajamas and just read to his heart's content. I hope that never ends and if, for it to never end, it means I'm the last one still doing it, then so be it. I'll be that person.

DePue: Okay. I want to close with some much more general questions and look back over a long career in journalism.

Pensoneau: Sure.

DePue: And as a lobbyist in the coal industry and now as a successful author. Of all of those things that you've been involved with, what's the accomplishment or the accomplishments that you look back most fondly on now? Of what are you most proud?

Pensoneau: I look back on my life, you know, I was a kid in Belleville, Illinois, grew up under modest circumstances. Neither my mother nor my father graduated from high school. I was the first person in my family to graduate from high

school. Then, obviously, I was the first one to go on to college. My mom and dad were loving parents. They were great parents, but they did not encourage me to go to college. I went off and did that on my own. I'm very proud of the fact that I ended up getting a bachelor's degree from the University of Missouri, and it never cost my mom or dad a dime. Of course, big public universities were much cheaper then. **Much**, much cheaper. I couldn't pull that off today, but I could then. I did it with scholarships and jobs and so on. I'm very proud of that, looking back.

I guess I'm just proud of the fact the way my life has turned out. In many ways I've just been a blessed individual and I should be very positive because I've been lucky, I've been blessed. I've taken what little talent I was given, which was basically in the writing end of it, and I've made the most of it. I've not wasted my little talent. I've been given good opportunities. People have given me opportunities. I've tried to make good on those opportunities. I've been lucky. Only one regret in my life was my brother getting killed in the Viet Nam war, as you know, as a Marine officer. That was a big set-back in my life. But I've been, I've been a blessed individual. I've been lucky and I've been blessed and, as they say in politics, I've had my opportunities and I've taken them. I'm amazed, as I think back, at how I've gotten to both talk to and rub shoulders with major figures in our time, especially in Illinois, obviously. It's just amazing.

Oh, I'll give you one example; it exemplifies my life. When I was a kid in Belleville Township High School, to get out, then you had to take a civics course, which meant you had to study, basically, Illinois government. You had to get some understanding of state government. I'm sure that's not the case anymore, but then you had to memorize all the state officers, starting with the governor and going on down to lieutenant governor and so on. Well, when I was in high school, the governor was Republican William Stratton. To kids like me sitting down in Belleville, Illinois, he was a god, an absolute deity; to think that you would ever get to **meet** a governor, okay, was like unthinkable. I mean, that was beyond recognition. In those days, Alan Dixon was a young state representative and **he** was like a god. Okay? I mean that's all people talked about: Alan Dixon. The point is that years later I'm on the advisory board of *Illinois Issues* magazine and I'm sitting in Chicago – the meeting's almost always in Chicago – and for three or four years running, who's sitting next to me at every meeting? Former Governor William Stratton. Doesn't that kind of make my point?

DePue: You're on first-name basis, I suspect.

Pensoneau: Yeah. Yeah. I told him, You know, back in 1950 when I was in high school, we had to memorize your name. You were like a god to me. And he just laughed. You know? But I mean, he was. It would have been anybody who was governor, okay? But now, here all these years later, I'm the biographer for two of them: Walker and Ogilvie. I still talk to one of them about every

other week, the one that's alive. Right now Alan Dixon wants to pen his memoirs. He's engaged me to help him.

DePue: Have you agreed to that?

Pensoneau: I've agreed. In fact, I was with him all day Tuesday. I think back to a kid in Belleville, you know, and I would have never dreamed I would be lucky enough to have pursued a course in life that's taken me down all these corridors. I was in Washington sitting beside the House Judiciary Committee, covering it, when they voted the articles of impeachment against Richard Nixon. You know?

DePue: One of the highlights of career, then, I would think.

Pensoneau: It was. Yeah. It was incredible.

DePue: How were you a different person today, and maybe you aren't – I mean, I don't want to stack the deck here – from that cub reporter that you were back when you first entered the business?.

Pensoneau: Oh, I know a lot more. There's still an idealistic streak. Maybe it doesn't amount to much, but there's still a little idealism left in me. I was awfully idealistic then. I was. I mean, gosh, when I got to go directly to the *Post-Dispatch*from Mizzou, I just thought – I mean, I was so idealistic – that was "it" right there. I couldn't do any better than that. Every day has been an education for me. I just learned a lot. What I have learned that's convinced me to really keep my feet on the ground and not to ever get carried away because it can end so quickly is, I've watched a lot of personal tragedies, both in public life and personally in my lifetime; I just feel that you've got to keep your feet on the ground and not get carried away with it all. I am truly amazed. I mean, I will confess to you here at the end, I do sometimes sit and Liz, my beautiful wife, doesn't want to hear it, she's good for me because she says, you know, enough's enough. Sometimes I'll sit alone and muse, a cup of coffee or whatever, and I'll just think about all the water under the bridge and how, like wow, I never dreamed and certainly never bargained for all of the different phases of my life and of the people I've been able to encounter, and in some cases interact with.

In the coal industry, which I said earlier, has gotten sandwiched into little recognition, gosh, I was involved there in situations where if I said the wrong word or looked at the wrong guy cross-eyed, it could mean twenty-five coal miners jobs, could mean the death knell for a coal mine. I was amazed. Even though it's not been that long ago, some of it now is getting hard to believe in that I was part of and involved in issue show-downs, compromise decisions and so on that kept some mines open and some people working and so on. And I was on my own most of the time, and made some real big-time decisions in terms of the welfare of a lot of other people.

DePue: Have your political views evolved over the years?

Pensoneau: I've changed, and it's evident to you. It should be evident to others that know me. Yes. I grew up in a family whereby you always voted for the Democrat because he was for the little guy. Republicans were for the big people, the rich people. I've changed. I changed pretty much in my coal industry years. I represented corporate America and most of the people I rubbed shoulders with, worked with, worked for, interacted with, were business-oriented Republican voters. I think when I went to work for the *Post-Dispatch* I considered myself a liberal Democrat, although I also adhered to the fact that you didn't declare yourself then; you didn't join organizations, you didn't admit to being, you didn't admit to anything. You were just a straight, neutral person, neuter-type. I came out of a Democratic atmosphere in St. Clair County and most of our family friends were Democrats and all that stuff. But, yeah, I've gotten a lot more conservative. I don't vote straight tickets; I never have. I vote for my friend Dick Durbin for U. S. Senator, even though I really **cringe** at some aspects of Dick's senatorial role. I don't agree with a number of his positions, but that's it. But the point is, I know him to be an honorable man personally and a friend. So I'm just seeing one of many examples. I vote for Dick Durbin. I know a lot of people on the ballot, so a lot of times I vote **only** because of my personal relationship situation. I know them to be good people, irrespective of how they perform publicly. I started taking Republican ballots in the primaries in the 80s and I've never stopped, but I don't vote a straight ticket. But philosophically, yeah, I've gotten a lot more conservative. That would be getting into a whole another twenty hours (DePue laughs), which you don't have time for and no one else would.

DePue: Well how about this one here for maybe the penultimate question. How would you like to be remembered?

Pensoneau: I would like to be remembered. I'll say in a few words what I've tried to say in twenty minutes of rambling. I'd like to be remembered as somebody who ended up counting for something. You knew he was here, hopefully. I think I've taken a step in that direction with my books, because books last.

DePue: On my hope that they last, huh?

Pensoneau: Well, it's my hope, yeah. It's my hope. In whatever I can envision in terms of the future, at least the books establish or provide a prayer for that to maybe happen. I want to be remembered as the person who counted for something and who tried like hell to make something out of himself. I **will point out**, I was never **given** anything. I had opportunities, but I was not a silver-spoon product. With a few exceptions, I worked my way up from the bottom, certainly with the *Post-Dispatch*, and certainly in other areas. I will admit I like to be highly thought of and, for the right reasons, I hope that's how I'll be remembered.

DePue: Well what you're just talking about is the great American narrative: coming from pretty meager surroundings and background and accomplishing something in your life.

Pensoneau: Uh huh. Right. Yeah. Well put.

DePue: The last question then.

Pensoneau: Mm hmm.

DePue: Here's your opportunity to pass on some wisdom to the future generations.

Pensoneau: Sure

DePue: That's the question.

Pensoneau: Oh, my advice? You can still go a long way in the United States in spite of the criticism, in spite of realities. You're darned lucky to be born in this country. We still don't have a caste system; if we do, you can **fight it**, you can get out of it. Just realize you're lucky to be here and you've got opportunities. (pause) Pay attention. Don't do foolish things. Don't destroy your life early by things like substance abuse and so on. Give yourself a **chance** to **blossom**. Many, many people, most people I know, have talents and can exploit or develop or go a considerable distance on those talents if you give yourself a chance. Don't sell yourself short and don't hamper your own ability or opportunities to get ahead.

Try to keep an open mind; that can be tough to do sometimes. I think it's getting tougher to do, but you can still do it, try to conduct your life with a degree of integrity. It's more than not stealing or robbing banks; be honest in your dealings with people, and I think in a lot of situations, if you are, it will pay off in the end. You may not get the short gain, but in the long run you're going to benefit.

Show respect to other people. Always give credit where credit it due. Don't sell a lot of people short. You may be tempted at some point in life to sell certain people short; don't do it. That can come back and bite you. Give everybody their due.

Just thank God if you've got a good parent, parental or other situation where they instill in you some good traditional values. Just try to stick to them. It will pay off for you in the long run.

Always remember, just don't forget, there is such a thing as common sense.

DePue: (chuckles) Well maybe we can end with that. We've had a long go of it Taylor.

Pensoneau: We really have, Mark. I can't tell you how much I've enjoyed it.

DePue: I really appreciate it. I've learned an awful lot about Illinois' political history and about journalism and a whole lot of things in these conversations with you.

Pensoneau: You have. (chuckles)

DePue: It's going to be quite a legacy for people in the future. From my side, I sincerely hope that people take the opportunity to read and listen to these – not just these interviews, but the entire Edgar collection – and they'll learn a lot about what's going on.

Pensoneau: That would be just great with me, Mark. I hope that happens.

DePue: Okay. We'll end with that. Thank you again, Taylor.

Pensoneau: Thank you.

(end of interview #12, Volume II)