

Interview with Mark Boozell

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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Tuesday, August 18, 2009. My name is Mark DePue; I'm the Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today it's my privilege to have an opportunity to talk to Mark Boozell. Am I pronouncing that right?

Boozell: Boozell [Bo-zell].

DePue: Boozell. Mark was a long-time associate with Governor Edgar through most of the time that Edgar was Secretary of State and through all of his tenure as governor, so there's a lot for us to talk about. I've been looking forward to this one because everybody says it's going to be a fun one to do.

Boozell: (laughs) Good.

DePue: We are sitting in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, as far as the location. Mark, why don't you start out with telling us when and where you were born.

Boozell: I was born March 4, 1955, back in the good old days.

DePue: You were one of the young people associated with Edgar, by the way.

Boozell: You know, I was looking at a picture when I went through this *Meeting the Challenge* book; there's a picture in the back, and I'll share it with you.¹ It's the final senior staff, I think, with the governor, sitting in his office. I was wondering who the really good-looking young guy sitting on the governor's right was. Well, it was me. (laughter) It's been a while. Was born in 1955 in Mason City, Iowa. I lived in Iowa probably until about the end of grade school, sometime in there, and then moved to Loves Park, Illinois. We lived in Loves Park for a while. I went to college in Rock Island, Illinois, at Augustana College, and from there moved out to Washington, DC, after I graduated... Oh, we're going to stop.

DePue: I'm going to slow you down a little bit and back up some.

Boozell: Okay.

DePue: What did your parents do for a living?

Boozell: My grandparents really raised me. My father was divorced when I was very young, I think probably around two or three years old. He lived with his parents, my grandparents, in Mason City, and my grandparents pretty much raised me through grade school years, I think. My father was a milkman, my grandfather was a mechanic for Ford Motor Company his entire life, and my grandma was a homemaker. She stayed at home. And that's where we lived.

DePue: Loves Park is where?

Boozell: That was in Mason City, Iowa. Then my father remarried and got a job in the Belvidere Assembly plant near Rockford. Loves Park is a little town right north of the Rockford city limits. I think it's on Route 51—that road goes up into Beloit, actually. So I went to Harlem High School there in Loves Park, and graduated from there in 1973.

DePue: Growing up at that time, especially when you got into your high school years, what did you think you were interested in doing after you graduated?

Boozell: I don't know if I remember. I know I was always interested in politics, and I was always interested in broadcasting. In high school, I was on the student council. I was president of the student council, I was president of the National Honor Society, so I liked being in charge of organizations.² I ran track, so that was kind of the sidelight to everything. But I was really into the broadcasting-type stuff. I liked that, and I really enjoyed the government things in high

¹ Tom Schafer, *Meeting the Challenge: the Edgar Administration, 1991-1999* (Springfield, IL: State of Illinois, Office of the Governor), 1998.

² A trait Boozell shared with Governor Edgar. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 47-71; Fred Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, April 22, 2009, 23-24; and Tony Sunderman, interview by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 8-16. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

school. So the criteria for looking for a college was, where could I afford to go and what was kind of pretty.

Back then, I wasn't so focused on what I was going to do for the rest of my life; I was focused on going to college. I'm pretty sure I'm the first kid in the family ever to go to college. My great-grandmother and great-grandfather on my grandma's side came over from Norway and settled in the Freeport area, then somehow got over into Iowa. They were farmers. I mean, these people are farmers and factory workers, and like I said, my dad was a milkman and my grandfather was a mechanic. It was a great achievement to get through high school, in this family. I think my grandma told me one time that I was the first kid ever to go to college, so that was a pretty big deal.

We were Lutheran—rich Lutheran heritage up through the family. Never missed a Sunday of Sunday school and church. So we looked at a lot of different Lutheran schools. For a while, I thought I wanted to be a pastor. Late in my high school years, I thought, Maybe being a pastor would be kind of cool, because we spent so much time at church. Looked at Wartburg College in Iowa, some of the other Lutheran-type...

DePue: Wartburg, in Waverly; that's where I grew up.

Boozell: I remember that. That's right. So I looked at maybe doing that. But then when I got to college, I really decided that broadcasting was the way I wanted to go, that was what I wanted to get into, so I did the speech-broadcasting major. After about two years of that and working at the local radio station—Country Sunshine radio, WHBF AM, in Rock Island—I decided that was kind of boring.³ You didn't even get to pick the music you wanted to play; they told you what to do, and it was very structured. I thought, Maybe I'll get a political science degree, too, so I got a double major with political science. I added that on, and that's what started me in that direction.

DePue: I'm going to back up again a little bit. While you're in high school and you're in your college years, these were interesting years politically in the United States—a lot of turmoil going on.

Boozell: Yes.

DePue: You were in high school at the tail end of the Vietnam War; the racial tension was pretty high then. Then you graduated the same year that Watergate really started to percolate. Did that capture your attention? Were you interested in all of those things?

Boozell: Really interested in those types of things. I missed the draft by one year. I had to register for the draft, of course, but my year was the year that they stopped

³ Coincidentally, another member of Governor Edgar's cabinet, Kirk Brown, had seriously considered a career in radio during his college years. Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009, 13-23.

picking the numbers, as I recall. That was a great relief, because of course Vietnam was on everybody's mind. I was probably as big a hippie as anybody. I had hair down past my shoulders in college, and looked the part with the little granny glasses and all that kind of stuff. So, it was a big deal, and it was on everybody's mind all the time.

Augustana, when you talk about racial tensions, really was a lily-white Lutheran college until about '73, '74, when I went there. They started programs to bring in African-American students with scholarships, so there was a lot of tension on campus as well. We had several issues on campus where it was just an issue of not understanding what they wanted to be called and what they had gone through and how they expected to be treated. It was interesting. They started a house for African Americans that no whites could go into. I remember vividly in a religion class, probably my sophomore year, I referred to—now, I might get this wrong—but I referred to them as African American or black, one or the other. It had just kind of switched from one to the other, and some guy just went off on me, unbelievably, for how insensitive I was to their race because I had called them African American when they wanted to be called black. At the college, it was just interesting; it was different. I wouldn't say it was great. There were just a lot of differences. It wasn't like now, when people really understand that, acknowledge it, and try to work toward maybe a better solution. The college did absolutely nothing to foster relationships, other than putting you together on floors of dorms and stuff.

DePue: They had actively recruited the blacks?

Boozell: They actively recruited, but I don't recall anything done to try to actually assimilate a different type of a population, which had really never been there before, into the college. And it caused some issues.

DePue: It's worth saying that there just aren't very many black Lutherans out there.

Boozell: No, there aren't. (laughs) No, there really aren't.

DePue: Were these urban blacks, primarily?

Boozell: Yeah, because Augustana College—most of the population is from Chicago and its suburbs—so that's where they came over from.

DePue: You already described yourself as looking like a hippie. How would you describe your political leanings, since you're following this stuff and you majored in political science?

Boozell: I remember I had an "Impeach Nixon" bumper sticker on my car; I do remember that. I worked for Congressman Tom Railsback, who was on the Watergate Committee, in an internship my senior year at Augustana. I think I considered myself more of a Republican, probably because my grandparents

and my father were more Democrat—you know, a union household. I think, like every other kid in the world, I did what they didn't do and wanted to be what they weren't, so I got involved with the Republican Party, which is how I got the Tom Railsback internship. At the time, it wasn't so much an application process and picking the best person; it was who came in and volunteered and did some work in the office, and then that was the guy they picked to do the internship.

DePue: What was the nature of the internship? What did you do for—

Boozell: I traveled around with the congressman. He had a guy that ran the district office—and I can't remember his name off the top of my head, Rick something-or-another—and I worked for him. As I remember then, black lung was a big deal, and black lung benefits from the federal government were something that people were applying for all the time in the Quad Cities. So I learned how to fill out these applications and submit them to appropriate agencies. I traveled with the congressman when he went around to visit college campuses or went to talks somewhere. When he was in the district, he let me just kind of follow him around to see what it was like to be a congressman, and that was fun.

DePue: How closely did you follow the Watergate hearings?

Boozell: I followed them quite closely; I watched the hearings all the time. I also had a foster family, I mentioned to you before, who I grew up with my last couple of years of high school—the Oyens in Loves Park.

DePue: How do you spell their last name?

Boozell: O-y-e-n. Don and Shirlee, S-h-i-r-l-e-e. Shirlee is still alive and remarried to George Famighette and lives in Roscoe. Don died several years ago of lung cancer. I worked in the Hiway Grocery in Loves Park—if I get into too much stuff you don't want to hear, you can cut me off.

DePue: No, go ahead.

Boozell: I had to get a job when I was in high school. We didn't have a whole lot of money, so I had to get a job. I had a paper route; that was one thing. I drove around on my bike, and I just stopped into places and applied for a job. I stopped into the Hiway Grocery, this tiny little grocery store in Loves Park with a meat counter and some groceries, and I walked in and asked the lady at the counter—Alice was her name—if they were taking applications. She said, "Well, let me check." She calls this guy up, and this old guy comes up. His name is Humpy. I don't know what his real name is, but they called him Humpy. Humpy was just this crude, rude, and socially unacceptable guy. He kind of cussed at me a couple times and said, "Yeah, we'll hire you." He hired me to stock shelves and stuff like that. Don Oyen was the owner of the grocery store, and his daughters all worked at the store. I told them I'd like to

learn how to be a butcher, if that was something I could do other than just stock shelves. He said, "Sure," so through high school, and then every summer after college, I worked behind the meat counter at Hiway Grocery.

I guess that's the long way to get to the Watergate hearings. I remember watching the hearings, working behind the meat counter. Because of course, I didn't get the glamorous job of waiting on customers right off the bat; I got to cut up chickens, bone beef necks, trim stewing beef, and all the cool kind of stuff back there. (laughs) I had a TV, and I watched the whole Watergate proceedings, working behind the meat counter at the Hiway Grocery store in Loves Park, Illinois.

DePue: We should say you still have all your fingers.

Boozell: I have all of my fingers. I've got a couple of extra holes and some different fingerprints, basically; I think I've cut virtually every finger on both hands.

DePue: The reason I was asking about the Watergate hearings is, that for so many people, that changed their perspective of politics and government; they had a much more cynical viewpoint towards the whole proposition. Yet you were in political science, and you're soon to start a career in politics. How did that affect you in terms of the way you looked at it?

Boozell: I think the interesting thing is remembering that I had that "Impeach Nixon" bumper sticker on my car, yet I was a Republican. I think that was because of being able to talk about it with Tom Railsback and with his staff, who were very, very close to it while I was not, and what was going on there.

DePue: What was Railsback's view?

Boozell: As I recall, he voted for impeachment. I'm pretty sure that Tom Railsback did vote for impeachment.⁴ Like Jim Edgar, he was a squeaky-clean guy; he was known for being an honest, normal, down-to-earth, everyday guy who just happened to be the congressman. He was very approachable and accessible to the folks in his district. As I remember, he thought Nixon was guilty of oversight, if not guilty of something worse than that, and that the people who were in charge, the people who were responsible, had to take the responsibility for what happened under their watch.

DePue: How about some of the other students that you were with, especially those who were political science majors, or more politically astute or politically active? Did you see some growing doubts or cynicism among them? Was there some lively debate among you?

⁴ Although Richard Nixon's resignation from the presidency forestalled an impeachment vote by the full House, Railsback was a member of the House Judiciary Committee and voted for the articles of impeachment the committee reported to the House. *Chicago Tribune*, July 28, 1974. For insight into his thinking leading up to the vote, see *Chicago Tribune*, March 25, 1974.

Boozell: There was. Back to the “Impeach Nixon” bumper sticker—I keep kind of going to that. Even those of us who thought we were Republican and wanted to support the Republican Party—because that was big in the Quad Cities; I think it was bigger than the Democrat Party at the time—we had this feeling that we’d been betrayed by the people at the highest levels and that they should go. If they did something wrong, they ought to go. I think that’s stuck with me. The two ways you can go in politics are—well, you tend to go overboard either way you go—you either go overboard doing everything to the T and everything right or, once you slip off the edge, you try to get away with a little bit more than you ever got away with before so you go way too far the other direction. Who knows what decision you’d make if you were given an interesting opportunity, if you’d been schooled in a different way.

But the Tom Railsback experience and the folks in his office, and then working with Governor Edgar—I learned how important it was to make the right decision or the appropriate decision, and how it is a path. It’s a lifelong decision. If you look at some of the folks who made the other decision, they go to prison.

DePue: When you were working for Railsback, when you started, would it be fair to say that your own personal political philosophy was kind of unformed?

Boozell: Yes, it would be. You know the old saying, “If you’re not a Democrat when you’re in college, you don’t have a heart, and if you’re not a Republican after you get a job, you don’t have a brain?” That old saying? I think I had a heart, but like I said, I didn’t want to be a Democrat because our family were all Democrats. So I needed to be the other party, but tried to see if the party could be maybe a little bit more of what I wanted to be. It didn’t turn out that way, of course, with Watergate and Nixon, so then you end up with Ford and Jimmy Carter. I think then you get into the whole other side of—or at least I did, because that’s when I went to Washington to try to get work out there, and Jimmy Carter was the president—the ineptitude and just that the role of government had really changed a lot. I wasn’t even sure it was something I wanted to be involved in, at least not in the executive branch. At that time, I was more intrigued with the legislative branch; that’s really what I wanted to get into, to try and work at a staff level in a legislative branch office.

DePue: So you graduated in 1977, and you already mentioned you had decided to go out to Washington, DC?

Boozell: Yeah, I did. I loaded everything in a U-Haul trailer, a little U-Haul—smallest one they would rent you—and had a lot of room left over. I had met my future wife, Sue Abelt, at Augustana. I was a senior, and she had graduated. She’s a year older than I am; she’s a teacher, and she was teaching in the Quad Cities. She was renting a house from a professor that she had to move out of because some other students—some guys—were moving into it. It was kind of one of those rotate-in-and-out student houses for somebody. So Sue had to move out

of this house. I didn't know her, but I knew the guys who were moving into the house. Harold Beatty was a friend of mine—and now that you mention it, Harold is an African-American man, and (laughs) he was one of my very good friends. So I guess that did turn out okay. But Harold was a good friend; I went over to visit Harold at his new place. He had to move in a week earlier than everybody else did, and Sue and Harold overlapped in this house by a week. I went over to visit Harold, and Sue was there; I met Sue and we just built a relationship. So that was kind of an interesting way to meet.

DePue: That was right at the tail end of your college experience?

Boozell: I was getting ready to leave. It was the tail end of my senior year. I was getting ready to head out to Washington. That was my plan, to go to Washington to get a job. So I left Sue behind (laughs) in Rock Island, and I drove out to Washington, DC.

DePue: Why Washington?

Boozell: Because I'd never been there, and that was the hub of government. That was where I felt that everything happened, where all the action was, and by golly, if you wanted to make it big, you had to go out there and do it.

DePue: Was Railsback telling you that there were some opportunities out there?

Boozell: No. As a matter of fact, Tom Railsback may have been done by then. He might have left office.⁵ But no, he didn't say he could help get me a job. I knew somebody, who knew Senator [Chuck] Percy, who gave me a letter of recommendation from Senator Percy that said something like, "I've never met this young man, but I understand he's a fine person." So I went out with absolutely no juice, no recommendations, no clout. I made copies of my résumé; I walked my résumé to every single congressman and senator's office on Capitol Hill. There wasn't a central hiring place. If there was, I probably threw it in, but I went to every single office and dropped off my résumé. It didn't matter—Republican or Democrat, I wanted to get in; I wanted to be a part of it. I would walk around downtown Washington, DC, every night, and I just loved walking by and seeing what you saw on TV every night, live and in-person right there in front of you. I thought that was the coolest thing in the world.

DePue: Now I'm going to put you on the spot here. This might be tough this many years removed, but—

Boozell: Where's the off button on this, just in case? (laughter)

DePue: It's right there. How would you define your political philosophy at this time?

⁵ Railsback lost the 1982 primary and was out of office in early January 1983.

Boozell: At that time?

DePue: At that time.

Boozell: I've always been more conservative than liberal. I would guess I wasn't as conservative at the time as I am today, but I was still very optimistic that, since government seemed to be so pervasive in what we did, it could do a lot of good for people. I had hoped to be a part of some congressman's staff so that I could get to know how things were done and try to make things a little better. The kids of the '70s—you and I—I think we were frustrated, or at least I was frustrated, that we couldn't have a bigger impact, that the things we wanted to do or the things we said were kind of ignored; the establishment just didn't listen to us because we were a bunch of kids.

I see that today in my son. I have a twenty-year-old son. My daughters are older: twenty-four and twenty-six. My son is twenty, and it's kind of interesting: he has the same frustrations now that I did, I think, back then; that nobody will listen to me because I'm a kid. I have good ideas. Why do you have to be an adult to have good ideas? So I think that's the way I was back then. I was fortunate enough; I did not get a job in Washington, DC, but did get a referral to a job here in Illinois and did get to become involved in politics.

I also wanted to make sure—I think maybe a part of me saw my grandfather. Like I said, he was a mechanic his entire life. Every night, Grandpa would come home, and he was just always so tired. He would come in and he would sit in his big old recliner there, and the first thing he would do every night when he came home was fall asleep. Then he'd get up for dinner. He was just always working and always very tired, and we really never had a lot of money. It was like, I guess this is what you do. This must be what it's all like, and this is what everybody did.

Then I got to go to college and saw that, wow, there are a lot of different people, there are a lot of different things going on, there are a lot of different ideas, and maybe I can do something different. What is it I want to do? What would I actually enjoy doing instead of having to do? And that was the politics. Well, at first, that was the broadcasting side of it, because that was fun; but then that fun just got to be, Man, I don't think I could do this every day. But I really love politics, and that I could do every day, I think.

I was fortunate enough to get into it, because getting involved in politics and actually succeeding, even at a staff level like I did—there's an awful lot of luck involved, timing is very important, and I think you also have to show those folks who you're trying to impress, who are in power, that you've got some type of a quality that will benefit them and that will do them some good and further their ambitions. While you're trying to be your own

man, you're also maybe trying to be a little bit of somebody else's so you can get ahead by helping them get ahead.

DePue: Let's get you from Washington, DC, back to Illinois. How did that happen?

Boozell: I did my walking on the Hill stuff.

DePue: Did you start with Republicans?

Boozell: I don't even know. I don't even remember. I bet I did, because I had that Charles Percy, "I've never met the young man" letter. Since I got no bites—because Jimmy Carter was the president, there was a hiring freeze in government; nobody was being hired anywhere, inflation was sky-high—I borrowed money from everybody that I knew, just to be able to pay my rent and eat while I was out there. I worked in a drugstore in the evenings—a Drug Fair in Alexandria, Virginia—stocking shelves at night so that I could walk the Hill during the day.

I proposed to Sue over the phone. I missed her so much that I got on the phone and I proposed to her. First I asked her if she would move out to Washington, and she said no. (DePue laughs) And I said, "Well, will you marry me?" She said, "That, I would do."

DePue: But something's got to give after that.

Boozell: Something's got to give. And so she did—she moved out to Washington. We got ourselves in even more trouble because we maintained separate apartments. Sue was a substitute teacher and worked at a department store while I worked at the Drug Fair and was looking for work. I finally got a job at the *Washington Post* newspaper answering classified ads. Answering the phone, and people would place their classified ad: "Dog for sale," "Lost puppies," or whatever it was. I had that job for about a week when I got a call from the Augustana College placement office that the House Republican staff in Springfield, Illinois, had an opening for a budget analyst; if I was interested in applying for the job, here was the information on who to apply to.

So I did. I applied for that job, sent in the application.

Remember, we're talking '77. We didn't have cell phones and we didn't have e-mail; we mailed stuff, made phone calls, and tried to sit by a telephone (laughs) to get the call. I applied to the House Republican staff. George Ryan was the minority leader, the House Republican leader. Bob Newton was his chief of staff. The Appropriations Committee director, or whatever he was called, was Terry Bedgood. I interviewed with Terry Bedgood, and I think Terry Logsdon was one of the assistants—these are all names who have gone through government in other very high levels—and Bob Newton. They thanked me; they said they had over a hundred applications for the one position, and they'd let me know. I drove there from

Washington, DC; I drove back in my 1968 Pontiac Catalina, just knowing that I wasn't going to get the job.

About a week later, they called and said that the minority leader wanted to meet me and that they would fly me out to meet with George Ryan. So they flew me in, and I went to George Ryan's office. Sue and I had our wedding set for November twenty-sixth, and this was early November that I met with the minority leader, George Ryan. He said, "We want to hire you. We're impressed with you"... for some reason. I said, "That's great." And he said, "Now, I understand you're going to get married next month?" I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Since you're going to get married, by golly, we'll start you at 12,500 dollars a year." I just thought that was more money than... I subsequently found out that everybody started at twelve-five, but he made me feel great that I was getting married and he was going to give me a little extra because I was just going to get married. (DePue laughs) They wanted me to start December first, and I said, "Absolutely." So that must have been right after the veto session of that year.

So Sue and I got married in Mount Prospect on November twenty-sixth and loaded up all of our gifts—once again, loaded it up in a U-Haul. (laughs) We didn't have furniture; all we had was our wedding gifts. We drove from Mount Prospect down to Springfield. It was only the third time I'd ever been here—two interviews and driving into town—and I think maybe the first time Sue had ever been to Springfield. Then we spent twenty-one years here. So we drove in on Ninth or Eleventh—there was a Travelodge by where the courthouse is, stuff around here now. We had our U-Haul; we had our dog—a Brittany Spaniel, Brett—and we pulled in. We went to several hotels before we finally found the Travelodge. It was the only one we could find that would let us stay there with a dog. I had to start work on December first, and this was very close to December first, the weekend before the Monday. So we said we needed to stay there for a week or so, we didn't know how long. They let us stay with the dog, so we lived in the Travelodge for a couple of weeks while we looked for a place to stay. We found a duplex.

DePue: And you said your assignment was as the budget analyst?

Boozell: I was a budget analyst on the House Republican staff.

DePue: What does that mean?

Boozell: That means you're assigned some state agencies to analyze the budget that they're submitting to the general assembly for the next fiscal year. I had some great teachers in those folks who interviewed me, and others. Jerry Rettig was one I remember. You went through the budget; you saw where they wanted to spend their money and why were the amounts increasing; what new programs did they have; what were the old programs; how were they performing? It got a little bit into programmatic issues because that's what drove the budgeting

process. There was a policy staff and an appropriations staff, two really distinct, different staffs for the House Republicans. Every staff had that way. Eventually, within a year or so, Ryan decided—or whoever made the decisions, could have been Terry Bedgood—to put these together, the programmatic and appropriations folks working on each other's stuff, then actually [putting] a person in charge of an area instead of just an agency or one budget.

So I worked more and more in the transportation area because they had me start by analyzing the Department of Transportation's budget; then they worked-in the Commerce Commission, some utility-type initiatives. But I basically, for three years, analyzed the Department of Transportation's budget along with other programmatic and legislation that would affect them. First, the legislation—how it would affect their budget. But if it was in a programmatic area that was ancillary to the budget, you'd analyze that, too. All these analyses would go to the floor in a big binder for all of the Republican members in the House, to look at, to give them an idea on how to vote.

DePue: Did you like that work?

Boozell: I loved it. I really did.

DePue: What was it that you loved about it?

Boozell: I felt like I was making a difference by telling these legislators, who were going to vote, something that maybe they didn't know, or something they should know, or a question that they should ask the secretary at the Appropriations Committee hearing, or something that might be going on that wasn't right, which could save some money. I felt good that I was doing something that actually meant something to somebody.

DePue: Was Sue able to find work as a teacher?

Boozell: Yes. She substitute taught right off the bat for a couple of years. Then—the Faith Lutheran Church was the Lutheran church we were going to in Springfield—Pastor Witkop asked if he could come over to the house. He came over and visited with us; he asked Sue if she would consider leaving teaching—she was a music teacher—to work with all of the choirs at the church, because he really wanted to grow the music program at the church. She said, “Yeah, I'd love to do that.” So, Sue left teaching; she worked at this church for maybe ten or eleven years as director of music. She took it from one adult choir with about five people in it to a big adult choir, children's choirs, handbell choirs, musical things. Sue got into church music for quite some time; then toward the end of our tenure here, she got out of that and went to work for the Rochester school district. She was a music teacher in Rochester, and she's a music teacher today in Naperville.

DePue: I want to ask you about some of the personalities that you were working with when you first got there. Now, I know that you got there at the tail end of 1977, when Jim Edgar got there, and another good friend of his at the time, Jim Reilly, was also a freshman member of the legislature—both from downstate districts that were traditionally conservative and Republican. Did you encounter either one of them?

Boozell: I worked more with Jim Reilly than I did with Jim Edgar. Jim Reilly was one of the appropriations spokesmen, as I recall, as was Pete Peters. Pete Peters was also someone who was a big adviser subsequently in the Edgar administration. Cal Skinner was also one of the approp guys. So I may be a little off here; Jim Reilly may or may not have been one of the appropriations spokesmen, but I remember Jim Reilly being active in appropriations matters. So I did work more with him than Jim Edgar. Edgar—I don't even know if he was on the Appropriations Committee. But if you analyzed a bill, and the member was either carrying the bill or had questions about the bill, you could get called to the floor to help that member out. I really don't have a recollection of working with Jim Edgar on the floor much at all. If I did, I don't remember working with him as a legislator that much.

DePue: What were your impressions of George Ryan?

Boozell: Minority Leader Ryan had a very strong staff, I will say. Bob Newton and Dave Olien ran the staff practically as if they owned you. Now, that was okay in a sense because the work ethic was strong. We were there all the time. We were there late hours; we were there weekends all the time, which was okay because we were young and we wanted to really make an impression and work hard. I tell people—I think that Sue and I both agree—that one of the reasons our marriage has lasted for thirty-one years is I wasn't home so much. (laughs) We both had very different and separate careers, and we loved each other and love each other very much, but we had separate things to do. I was gone an awful lot. When Sue did her church thing, she worked evenings and weekends. When it wasn't session, that's when I was home. We raised the kids that way so we didn't have to have daycare.

But the biggest thing I remember about the Ryan folks is when the Department of Transportation wanted to hire me: John Kramer was the secretary, Jim Thompson was the governor.⁶ Another guy and I both got offers—I can't remember the other guy—there were two of us. He got an offer at the Department of Revenue to be the legislative liaison, and I got an offer at the Department of Transportation to be the assistant legislative liaison, from the administration. As a staff person back then, that's kind of what you worked for. You worked hard to get noticed so that you could then start moving somehow into the administration. You wanted to go from legislative to executive.

⁶ Brown, 40-41, for his evaluation of Kramer.

I got this offer, and I went and told Newton. Olien was the press guy, but Newton and Olien really ran everything. They said to both of us, “No, we’re not going to let you go.” This was 1980; I’d been three years on staff, which was about an appropriate time to be on staff, and I thought that my life had just been ruined. I’d been made an offer at an agency to be a legislative liaison, working with the legislature in the executive branch. They knew I wanted to go and take the job at DOT. My boss knew that I wanted to leave and take the job, and yet they wouldn’t let me go because they said they just couldn’t afford to let us go at that time. Governor Thompson called George Ryan and asked him to please let us go to these jobs, and that’s what it took. Instead of just being able to go interview and take the job, it took the governor calling the minority leader to say, “Look, let these guys go.”

DePue: Did the governor know you?

Boozell: No, no, but what he knew was that somebody thought they had some talent on staff that they wanted to bring into the administration, and he wanted it brought in. There were two of us; it wasn’t just me.

DePue: That suggests there was an interesting relationship between Thompson and George Ryan. Were you privy to that?

Boozell: No, no. The only times as an approp staff guy or as a staff guy down on two, right at the top of the grand staircase. Two and a half is the legislative floor—

DePue: The (unintelligible) floor at the State Capitol.

Boozell: Right. We rarely, rarely if ever, got to meet with George Ryan. Like I said, two approp directors are the guys we dealt with the most, but other than that, George Ryan was not a real touchy-feely guy with his staff. He gave all the power to Newton and Olien to make the decisions. If he ever came down or if you ever got called up, you just figured you were in big trouble, because you never got called up to say good job; you only got called up if something was messed up.

DePue: Talking to you folks, I know basically the structure of the staffs is that there are four caucuses in the legislature: there’s Republican caucus and there’s a Democratic caucus, and there’s a staff for each one of those. Since George Ryan is the minority leader, he’s the one who makes these kinds of decisions. Then there’s a similar structure in the Senate. Is that essentially it?

Boozell: That’s true.

DePue: Did you have many relations with people from the other caucus?

Boozell: Absolutely, on the staff level, we did. I will say this, and this may or may not be true: I believe that when I was there in the late ’70s early ’80s, it was much less partisan than it is today. And it was actually much less partisan when I

was in the legislative staff than it was when I was in the governor's office; or at least I didn't see the partisanship that was there, if it was actually as rampant as it is now, when we were in the governor's office. I worked with my cohorts on all of the other caucuses' staffs all the time.

DePue: To include the Senate?

Boozell: And I include the Senate, right, because you had to pass a bill from the House to the Senate; they have to agree, or you had to have a conference committee report to work out the differences, the changes in the budget. It was always a big deal on trying to work out what was coming in and what was going out and coordinating the final vote. Because back then, it was always midnight June thirtieth or stop the clock, and they really did it to get the budget passed on time. So we, the staffs, worked together a lot, and we shared information from what we got out of the agencies or for what a bill really did, or, did we miss something here? Was there an amendment coming? Could we work together to draft an amendment or to get something changed? So there was a good relationship between the staffs. You knew you were competitors, or you knew the folks that you were working for were basically competitors, but we really did, I think, work well together at the staff level.

DePue: What was the reputation, [among] the other staffers that you knew, of William Redmond, who was the majority leader at the time?

Boozell: This is when I first started. Bill Redmond, as I recall, was kind of everybody's grandpa—not a guy who made the decisions, not a guy who was a player—and, as history shows, he was the consensus candidate to become the Speaker as well. Bill Redmond was just the friendly old jovial grandpa guy who was kind of there.

DePue: So who was the real power in the Democratic caucus?⁷

Boozell: Mike Madigan has always been, I think, and even then, he was starting to move into the role. I remember more on the Republican side because that's where I was. When George Ryan was the minority leader and when George Ryan was the Speaker for two years after that, I remember Art Telcser was—if I had to tell you the name of one person who was making most of the decisions in the state of Illinois at the time, legislatively, I would say Art Telcser. Art Telcser and Pete Peters were two of the biggest driving forces on the Republican side with George Ryan and decision making. Democratic side, when I was on the House Republican staff, I don't know that I paid that much attention to it.

DePue: You've already mentioned you went to the Department of Transportation in 1980. Talk about that experience.

⁷ A view supported by Governor Edgar and his chief of staff, Jim Reilly. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 9, 2009, 30; Jim Reilly, interview by Mark DePue, August 10, 2009, 28-29.

Boozell: John Kramer was the secretary; Jim Owen was the legislative liaison, and I was his assistant, so I was the assistant legislative liaison. There was a pretty good-sized staff, at the department, of folks who did the legislative analysis, because a lot of bills affected the Department of Transportation. So there was a staff of folks who worked with people in the agency. It was very organized. It was very different because our office was out on Dirksen Parkway; my office had always been in the Capitol building. For part of the year, when they're not in session, it was kind of boring. I tried to learn a little bit about the Department of Transportation, but I didn't care to learn about the Department of Transportation if it wasn't legislative. And then driving back and forth a lot when they were in session and when there were committee meetings.

It was a very different atmosphere. You felt less in charge. When you're on one of the staffs, you kind of have the feeling that you know what's going on—you know what the schedule's going to be, you know the order the bills are going to be called, you know what's going to move and what's not going to move, you know in the committees what bills have up and down arrows on them, what amendments are coming in... You know what's going to happen because you helped control that. When you're an agency liaison, you're pretty much at the mercy of those folks, so you have to have good relationships. And even then sometimes, they can't tell you everything going on. In one respect, you felt less in-charge because you didn't know what's going to happen, but on the other hand, you had to be much better prepared for anything that could happen. So I learned that you have to really be prepared for any contingency. You have to really know what you're talking about, because they could throw an amendment at you, in committee, if you're testifying for or against a piece of legislation, for example. You really have to know it—you can't just pretend you know it—so you can address things that are going to change.

Jim Owen left there within about a year or so and went into two and a half in the governor's office; I became the legislative director at the Department of Transportation when we did the gas tax increase. That was an interesting exercise of traveling around with... It's a job where it reminds me, the legislative liaisons in the state agencies really have a dual master: they report to the governor's legislative director, because that's the person who decides you're going to get that job—

DePue: And who would that be?

Boozell: At that time, it was Jim Edgar. I'm trying to think if I overlapped a little bit with Zale Glauberman.

DePue: He [Edgar] got there in '79.

Boozell: So it was Edgar. You report to the governor's legislative director and you report to your agency director, and that doesn't always work. Sometimes the agency directors want to do things that maybe the governor's office doesn't want to do, and the governor's office wants you to let them know when your agency director is kind of freelancing. But if you get caught doing something like that, then that agency director (DePue laughs) will never let you know what's going on again. So it was, back in the day, a very interesting balancing act of reporting to an agency director. In my case, I was very fortunate that John Kramer had direct access to Governor Thompson. They were close. So that was good; I got to finally meet Governor Thompson and got to be involved with more meetings anyway as kind of a spectator. But then when we started the gas tax push, the governor's office called me in—probably Jim Edgar, if not one of his assistants like Jim Owen or Terry Bedgood, one of the others. They said, "Look, we want to know everything that John Kramer says to every member. You've got to be in every meeting with him. He can't be out there freelancing, because we want to make sure we know what commitments we're making and that we can actually honor the commitments and that this can be done."

DePue: In respect to the gas tax?

Boozell: In respect to talking with all the members about the projects they were interested in should the gas tax increase pass.

DePue: Was this part of the package for Build Illinois?

Boozell: No, this was prior to Build Illinois. This was before Build Illinois.

DePue: But it was all money that would be earmarked right back to road construction?

Boozell: Right, into the road fund for road construction.

DePue: Were there matching dollars at the same time?

Boozell: There were always matching federal dollars. Probably part of the argument was to access the maximum amount of federal dollars, we needed more money to grow the fund.

DePue: This is a Thompson initiative. How much was Thompson sticking his neck out, in a tax increase, with the public?

Boozell: I don't think he cared. He was all about spending money, and he was never afraid to talk about tax increases. I think that he just liked to show that he could bring you stuff. He was a great politician and probably a pretty good governor. Jim Edgar was a great governor and a pretty good politician. Viewing Governor Ryan, Governor Blagojevich, I don't think you can be great at both of them. I think you have to decide: am I going to be better at governing or at being the politician? Because I think you have to make real

changes in the way you operate. I just think you have to make a decision. I don't think you can be a great politician and be great at governing. I think there are too many conflicts, and you have to make a decision on what you want to do. I think that Governor Thompson made his decision partly because he loved the politicking part of it, and governing is a little more mundane and I think a lot harder to do than being a politician. I think that's why, if we get into that, we're in the mess we're in today in Illinois. This state hasn't been governed for a half-dozen years.

DePue: We're going to get to that point. These are fascinating (laughs) reflections—really what this whole project is all about. But I want to go back and talk a little bit more about your initial impressions of Jim Edgar. He's not that much older than you at the time, either. You're still both pretty darn young.

Boozell: Yeah. He just had a birthday. Governor Edgar just turned...

DePue: He's about ten years older, perhaps. '46, I think, is when he was born.

Boozell: Yeah. So as I said, I don't remember working with him. I don't think I really worked with him when he was a member. He made big headlines when he decided to leave the legislature and take that two-and-a-half job. That was like, "What's this guy thinking? Why is he doing that?" because being a member was the coolest thing in the world to us staffers, and I don't think we understood the importance of the governor's legislative director, or at least what it was going to become under Governor Thompson.

DePue: "Two and a half"—you keep referring to that. That must be the lingo within the Capitol building.

Boozell: Yeah, sorry about that. The legislative office is located on the second floor mezzanine. Two and a half is what we called it, so between two and three; just one area of the Capitol building has this second-floor mezzanine area. It's always shorthand referred to as two and a half; two and a half is the governor's legislative office.

I met Jim Edgar when Jim Owen had decided to come to work with him in two and a half, so they needed to have somebody in charge to be the legislative liaison at the Department of Transportation. It's not a given that because you're the assistant liaison, you're just automatically promoted up; you've got to be a guy that they're going to trust and the one that they're going to work with from the governor's office. Jim Edgar called me in, talked to me about being the legislative director at the Department of Transportation, what he expected, how I could take that job. He was real straight-laced, buttoned-up, always a very neat and tidy kind of guy, and he was intimidating because he seemed aloof. Maybe it was because of who the other guys in the office were. This is when Zale Glauberman and Terry Bedgood and Jim Owen—these guys were all, if they could be, wearing jeans and t-shirts or

open shirt collars, and kind of leaning back in the chair and having a beer. Two and a half was known for—if you wanted a beer, you'd run up to two and a half, and you'd grab one.

When Jim Edgar came into two and a half, that all stopped. No more beer on two and a half. He would be in a coat and tie, he would be very professional—took the job very seriously—and you knew that he had direct access to Governor Thompson. So when you were sitting down with Jim Edgar, you knew that you were practically sitting down with Governor Thompson, and that Jim Edgar was a decision-maker in the administration. He made decisions; he helped advise the governor on what decisions to make. When Governor Thompson was deciding what to do on a piece of legislation, Jim Edgar would be the guy in charge of putting together the teams of people who would put together the bills of review, and then maybe even go in and advise the governor on what he should do on any piece of legislation. So he was an intimidating figure. He wasn't really known as a friendly guy that you could run over to Brown's and have a beer with after work or something. He was there, he was working, and when he wasn't there working, he was at home.

DePue: Did you enjoy that experience, working with the DOT?

Boozell: Yes, I did. I was there for three years, about the same amount of time that I was on the House Republican staff. John Kramer was the secretary the whole time. He was good to work for because he knew that I had that governor's office relationship, and he knew that sometimes the governor's office didn't really trust him. He also knew that he couldn't always go to the governor. You can wear yourself out going directly to the governor all the time. So he put a high priority on his legislative office, as the secretary of transportation. He made it known that, Look, when the legislative office calls, if they need some information, if they need something, supply it to them; it's like me calling them. So that was very nice. He was good at—or Terry, his assistant—was good at things like when our child was born, when Kari was born; he called me up to the office and he gave me a gift, stuff like that. Like Speaker Madigan—same thing. These were guys who knew how to make you feel as though you were important to them, and John Kramer was that way.

DePue: Take a different turn here, because I want to get the inside two-and-a-half view of the Cutback Amendment and how that changed things in the legislature.

Boozell: Yeah. What year was that?

DePue: It all started in '78, so the election was in 1980, and then it went into effect in 1983.

Boozell: I remember it.

DePue: Of course it all started because right after the election, the legislature had passed a pay increase for the legislature. Thompson immediately vetoed it, conveniently, so the legislature could immediately override his veto. It had a huge pushback that was basically led by Pat Quinn.⁸

Boozell: Pat Quinn. The little trick about overriding the veto—I think if that had been handled differently, the cutback never would have happened. I think people just looked at that and said, “Show us a little bit of respect. Don’t think we’re too stupid to see what you’re doing. If you’re going to do something, tell us; don’t try to pull it over on us like that.”

It really did away, in my mind, with a lot of the real characters in the general assembly. When you had the cumulative voting, you had three members in every district: you always had a Republican in a Democrat district or a Democrat in a Republican district, so you knew you always had that outlier in every district. I think it meant more bipartisanship in working out deals in the general assembly, because the three would try to work together for the district’s sake, and they always had to work with somebody in the other party. They couldn’t just say, “This is my district, and I’m a Democrat, or I’m a Republican, so this is what my district says and wants and thinks.” You really had to think about everybody in the district, all the constituents, because of that guy from the other party who is going to be working with you on this issue as well.

I guess it was designed to, number one, punish the general assembly for, number two, being disrespectful of us as voters, and, number three, save a lot of money. I think it’s been proven it didn’t really save any money because you had to spend more money on staff and other stuff that you wouldn’t have had to do—I don’t know what the finances turned out to be on it. It really did take away in the House—because I was working mainly with the House at the time—the characters that... Jake Jacobs, I’m thinking of. He was a Republican in a basically Democrat district who was just a fun guy and really worked to get people together. He was on the Appropriations Committee at the time. But you lost folks like that who otherwise never would have been elected because they were representing a minority party in any particular area.

DePue: Were you and most of the other legislative liaisons, the staffers, opposed to the whole change?

⁸ In 1980, Illinois voters approved the Cutback Amendment 2,112,224 to 962,325; a margin of 1,149,899 votes. <http://www.ilga.gov/commission/lrb/conampro.htm>. For Edgar’s views on cumulative voting and the passage and impact of the Cutback Amendment, see his interviews with Mark DePue for May 28, 2009, 52-56; June 9, 2009, 66-74; and June 10, 2009, 93-94. Other members of his administration also shared their opinion of this important development in Illinois governance: Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, March 4, 2009, 38-41; Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, June 4, 2009, 20-26; Kirk Dillard, interview by Mark DePue, September 29, 2009, 61-63; Jim Reilly, interview by Mark DePue, August 10, 2009, 41-43.

Boozell: Yeah, I think as a group, everybody was basically opposed because we couldn't figure out what it would do to the institution. Why would you want to change this, because it seemed like it was working. I'll tell you one thing it did. If you go over now to the House and see 118 members in the House of Representatives on a regular day, all talking, with their staff, and moving around—imagine 177 of them. It was the same room, and it was packed, and it was always **chaos**. Maybe controlled chaos, or maybe designed chaos, in a sense, to get something done for your area.

DePue: You're waxing nostalgic about the good old days when they had chaos on the floor.

Boozell: (laughs) Yeah, the good old days of chaos on the floor. The members could actually get together. I think maybe they had a better opportunity when there were more of them, and I really do think that they had better bipartisan relationships to force the leadership to do something. What this has really done, I think—the Cutback Amendment: it has crystallized all of the power into the leadership, to the extent that it might actually be too concentrated. I don't know that members have much say in what happens in the general assembly, either house, anymore. It really is a top-down-driven organization, both the House and the Senate, the general assembly. It's not bottom-up anymore. I think it used to be bottom-up; the leadership had to listen to the members more than they do now.

DePue: Let's get to your next move, then, because you said you spent about three years there. What was the next move?

Boozell: Jim Edgar was appointed secretary of state because Alan Dixon, the secretary of state, was elected to the United States Senate.

DePue: He would have moved there in January 1981.

Boozell: Right. He called me up. It wasn't right in January of '81...

DePue: I know you didn't go there for a couple years.

Boozell: I didn't go there right off the bat, but my next move was to the secretary of state's office. Carter Hendren and Tom Taylor were two staff folks that Jim Edgar really listened to, I think, politically speaking, and they both went to work for him when he was appointed secretary of state. They then, after a period of time, decided to leave and go work for [James] Pate Philip, the president of the Senate. So Jim Edgar called me and asked if I would come over and run his legislative office because Carter and Tom were leaving.

DePue: I know Carter ran his 1982 campaign.

Boozell: He ran the campaign.

DePue: Was it shortly after that that you came over?

Boozell: I came over before the campaign. Carter and Tom may not have gone right to Pate's office yet; it might have been that they left the state payroll to go on the campaign payroll, then Jim Edgar needed somebody to be on the state payroll to run the legislative office. Now, Tom and Carter were really front office personnel, but they oversaw the legislative office, which was housed over in the Centennial Building, which I think is now—is it the Howlett Building or the Centennial Building? The big building right south of the Capitol—what is that called now?

DePue: The Centennial Building.

Boozell: Is that the Centennial Building?

DePue: Yeah.

Boozell: I think it might have been the Howlett Building at the time.⁹ That's where the legislative office was. It was not a front office staff job. This was partly because when Jim Edgar became the secretary of state, he didn't just fire everybody. That office had been run by Democrats for a very, very long period of time; the folks running all the departments in the secretary of state's office were Democrats. Jim Edgar just had a couple of years—and probably only a year—before he started running for reelection, but I think he knew he was going to run for election to the office.

DePue: Yeah, pretty much out of the gate he knew that he had to do things with that in mind.¹⁰

Boozell: So, being not the politician but being the person who likes to govern, he realized, I think very wisely, that by getting rid of all the Democrats and bringing in all the Republicans, you would automatically take an agency that was working real well, that seemed to be humming getting stuff done, and that was very public. The public saw exactly what—and because the public had to visit you all the time and your name was on all of those doors all around the state—that can be good, and that could be bad..

DePue: And on all those licenses.

Boozell: And on all those licenses, that's right. And on all that mail for renewing everything. So he decided right off the bat that he would get elected if the office was running the way the office should be running. He wasn't going to

⁹ The Centennial Building is now named the Michael J. Howlett Building, in honor of the man who served as Auditor of Public Accounts and Secretary of State, before losing the 1976 gubernatorial election to Jim Thompson.

¹⁰ For Edgar's discussion of the importance of getting off to a fast start and the relationship between his policies and the upcoming 1982 campaign, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 15, 27-63.

get elected just because he was Jim Edgar, because nobody knew who Jim Edgar was. I think it was two things: number one, he wanted to make sure that the office ran well and the people who were running it well should stay and keep running it, even though they weren't Republican; number two, he had a short period of time to become known for something, because you weren't going to vote for Jim Edgar because his name was Jim Edgar, you had to have a reason to vote for the guy. What was it about him? I think he had to think of, What is it that I want to do that's going to make people remember—when they hear "Jim Edgar," they think of something, and it's something that they want to vote for?

Jeanne Flynn was actually Edgar's legislative director. Carter was in the front office staff, over the legislative office. Jeanne Flynn had been Alan Dixon's legislative director—she'd been there for a very long period of time—and she was Jim Edgar's legislative director. But he knew as he was getting ready to run for election, he needed to make a change there; he needed to have somebody associated with Jim Edgar, not Alan Dixon, and somebody who worked with the Republicans as well as the Democrats. Jeanne didn't have that reputation, so he knew he wanted to make a change inside of the office. So while Carter was in the front office overseeing it across the street, he wanted somebody who was going to be over there in the office, running the office. I met with him, and he told me this is what he wanted to do. I said, "So I will be the director of the legislative office?" He said, "Well, couldn't you be co-directors?" (laughs) And I said, "You know, I really don't think so.

DePue: Co-director with Jeanne?

Boozell: With Jeanne Flynn. "Couldn't the two of you run the office?"

DePue: Now this is Edgar?

Boozell: This is Jim Edgar. I said, "I don't think so. Somebody's got to have the final word. Who is the general assembly going to see as your spokesperson? I don't think it could be two people." He hemmed and hawed about it because he didn't want to change things if they really didn't need to be changed. He's not one of those, "If it ain't broke, break it" kind of guys. But he finally decided, "Okay, Jeanne will be your assistant, and you'll be running the office." So that's why I accepted. I was considered front office staff even though I wasn't in the front office, so I was on his cabinet, or whatever you call it, running an agency in the secretary of state's office. It was a director, so the title was Director of Legislative Affairs.

DePue: Jeanne gets a demotion out of the process?

Boozell: Jeanne gets a demotion out of the process. But the answer was, Well, that's politics. You worked for the Democrat; the Democrat's gone. We're going to

keep you—we want to keep you, we want you to keep working with us—but you'll be taking this job and reporting to Mark.

DePue: That makes me very curious of the nature of the relationship that you and Jeanne had when you got there.

Boozell: It wasn't great. The very first day (laughs) I walk into the office—you walk into this little office, and there's a young lady sitting right inside the door like the receptionist, and then there is another lady, an older woman. The woman right inside the door is Carolyn White; the next lady is Peg something-or-another, and Peg is right outside of Jeanne Flynn's office. Jeanne Flynn has her own office here with Peg sitting outside of it. On the other side of the room, there's like a bullpen office, a large office, where there are, I think, two other legislative liaisons. The secretary of state's office had a director and one for the House and one for the Senate. So I walked into the office and I saw these two ladies sitting there. One was a receptionist, and then one was Jeanne Flynn's actual secretary. Jeanne was told that I was going to move into her office and that she would move over into the bullpen area with the other two folks. She had kind of cleaned that all out, and she had moved over, so the office was ready for me to move into.

I walked in, I looked at these two ladies, and I said, "You two, switch desks," because I figured the lady who had been Jeanne Flynn's secretary forever was going to be particularly hostile to me—and she was. The other lady, who I had never met in my life, Carolyn White, became my assistant. Carolyn stayed with me as my secretary/assistant and walked out of the mansion with me when Jim Edgar left the governor's office. She stayed with me the entire sixteen years. (laughter) It's just by chance that she was sitting there the day I walked in—the other lady in the office.

DePue: You called that one right.

Boozell: I think so. (laughs)

DePue: You must have done quite a bit of thinking about, How am I going to deal with the person I'm replacing becoming my assistant?

Boozell: Yes. And I did a lot of talking with the secretary of state about it, and with Carter Hendren about it, too, because I thought that it was a recipe for disaster, her being there at all. I advocated that we move her; Jim Edgar didn't want to move her if he didn't have to move her because he wanted to keep everybody happy. I was concerned about being undercut: number one, not being recognized as the secretary of state's person in the general assembly; number two, I didn't know the lady well enough to know if I could trust her or not—if I could trust what she was saying, how she was representing us out there, or me in particular. So after a short period of time, maybe two months, I went back in to Jim Edgar and told him it just wasn't working out. So he

moved her and put her as the assistant director of the secretary of state's department on senior citizens or something like that. So she stayed in the agency, got kind of a lateral movement in another area of responsibility that she had some interest in, and was gracefully taken out of the legislative office. And Peg moved with her.

DePue: How was working in the secretary of state's office different from working over in DOT? I'm especially interested in secretary of state as a constitutional officer, whereas the DOT is working directly under the governor's office.

Boozell: From the legislative side.

DePue: Yeah.

Boozell: Night and day. A big difference, and it's mainly the way that the access you have to the members changes when you're the representative of a constitutional officer. You do kind of move up on the totem pole. If you're the guy at the Department of Transportation, that's important—that's a big agency, and they want to talk to you about stuff. I can't speak for others, but with Jim Edgar's secretary of state office, if a member wanted to meet with Jim Edgar or if a member wanted to have Jim Edgar come to one of their functions, they were told to call Mark Boozell. So he's the one who gave me that entrée. Why did he do it that way? Probably because he knew he didn't have the time to handle all of these requests and all the stuff going on. Jim Edgar really gave people authority and responsibilities, but he held you to it, too. So if anybody wanted to meet with the secretary, sponsor his legislation or, have him come to an event, they had to give me a call, and the requests came through me.

DePue: Was part of that increased access, visibility, because Edgar was seen as a rising star?

Boozell: Not at the time. I don't think so. Maybe I shouldn't say that for this tape, but at the time, nobody knew who Jim Edgar was. He was a kid who was a state legislator, who lost his first election, then won because he got in on his second try, and Thompson just picked him out of the crowd to become the secretary of state. I think that there was an awful lot of animosity toward him—probably by more people than I knew of—just because of the fact that they were elected, they were sitting in the general assembly; maybe they should have been picked.

DePue: So members in the legislature had animosity, you think?

Boozell: I believe that they did because he was really fast-tracked—for what reason? They'd put in their time and they'd paid their dues, and maybe they should be the one who was picked. Particularly, George Ryan had that opinion of him. That's well known. Edgar tells me that Thompson called him and gave him the first shot and said, "Look, do you want to be the secretary of state or do

you want to run with me as my lieutenant governor when I run for reelection?" Because Dave O'Neal had left that office, right?

DePue: Yeah.

Boozell: Dave O'Neal was Thompson's lieutenant governor who said, "This isn't worth anything, so I'm going to leave." So Jim Edgar has told me that Thompson called him and said, "The choice is yours. Which one do you want?" And Edgar said, "I want the secretary of state's office. I want to run on my own." Then George Ryan had second pick, and I think that probably grated on George Ryan. You know, the guy, the stalwart who had been there forever for Jim Thompson, had been given the second pickings.

I think your question was, "Was it because Jim Edgar was seen as an up and rising star?" A lot of people liked Jim Edgar, and he worked with the members a lot as the governor's legislative director, but he also said "no" a lot. He was a student of government; he was a staffer who now had just moved up. The members of the general assembly didn't necessarily see him as an elected member who went into a senior staff role and then became the secretary of state; they more saw him as, Oh, that staffer who was appointed secretary of state—kind of dismissing that first elected role.

DePue: Arrington's guy, right?

Boozell: Right.

DePue: Where do we go from here, then? Listening to you, it sounds like you got to the secretary of state's office before his first run for election as secretary of state.

Boozell: Right, because he said, "Look, Mark, I can pretty much promise you a year's worth of work because I don't know if I'm going to get reelected or not."

DePue: Did your relationship with the legislators change after he won that election in '82?

Boozell: Oh, yeah, because then he was seen as the rising star. Once you're elected to the secretary of state's office, you either move up or die in office. It's not an office that you're going to lose, is basically the lore here in Illinois. So they know he won—he beat Jerry Cosentino—and he's going to be around for a while now, so he must have put a pretty good staff together, he must have a good team of people, he must have good advisers; he's a smart guy, he's a good-looking guy with a good family; he looks like the kind of person that people would want to have over for a barbecue. And he actually was a guy who lived next door to people. There was a subdivision off of Lake Springfield that he lived in when he was the secretary of state. I'd go over on the weekends—I'd have to drive over to either give him something or check on—and he'd be out mowing the lawn. He'd have his shirt off, shorts on—just

out mowing the lawn. (DePue laughs) He was really somebody's next-door neighbor, who just happened to be the secretary of state.

DePue: As the legislative liaison you're the point man on a lot of these initiatives, and Edgar as secretary of state was pushing a pretty aggressive agenda. I want you to talk about some of those. I know right out of the chute, he was pushing for some significant changes in dealing with drunk drivers.

Boozell: Right, and at this point, I would say that I believe being Jim Edgar's legislative representative in both the secretary of state's office and in the governor's office was **the** most challenging job in the administration because Jim Edgar did that. He was a legislator, he was a legislative director, he was a legislative liaison. He knew exactly how it should be done or how he wanted it done. He knew what he expected, and the expectations were very, very high. So while it was a great job, it was a very challenging job because you got to see all the different sides of Jim Edgar, depending how things went. His legislative agenda, to him, was vitally important to whether or not he would be elected to the office. I think I mentioned earlier, he recognized that people weren't going to vote for Jim Edgar because he was Jim Edgar, because nobody knew what a Jim Edgar was. He was just dropped into the office by somebody else. He had to pick a topic that would get him elected—something that the public would think was important, that the public would support, that he thought was important, that he would support—because he wanted to really believe in it.

Mandatory auto insurance and drunk driving laws were the things that he really became known for and associated with. It was a master stroke of that guy, Jim Edgar, to think of the issue at the time that would be a hot-button issue for the public, but they still had to arm-wrestle the general assembly to get it done. So he was seen by the voting public as a guy who was fighting for them. The legislators didn't necessarily want to go along with these changes to the drunk driving laws. Statutory summary suspension, which is the notion that by signing that driver's license, you're acknowledging that you will not drink and drive and that the license can be taken away from you, with no questions asked, if you get a DUI...

DePue: Without due process.

Boozell: There was some argument to that, right. It was probably a bit of a gamble; I don't know if he did polling or not on the issue. But people drank and drove. They just did. They do today, but back—this is in the '80s—it was much more prevalent. It was just one of those things. You didn't think twice about having a few beers, and Oh, maybe I—and drive home. I remember, when the campaign was going on for this, he would say, "Look, I'm talking about, you don't go out and drink and drink and drink and **drink** and drive," because he had to get past the guy who said, "Look, I'm just going to go and have a beer after work. You're saying I can't drive home?" No. No, that's not it at all. We

always used to kid around to see how many “drink **and** drink and drinks” he could away with, and I don’t know what the record was when he was giving one of his speeches. (laughter) It depends how he was getting into it. But the legislature wasn’t that enamored with the idea, because face it, they’re a bunch of drinkers and drivers, and—

DePue: And speeding between Chicago and Springfield.

Boozell: There you have it—but legally, they can do that if they’re on their way to legislative business.

DePue: I want to separate the two big issues that you just mentioned—the drunk driving issue and then the insurance issue—because the insurance issue came much later in his administration.

Boozell: Um-hm, yes.

DePue: Let’s focus on the drunk driving, which was a series of battles that he had. He started right off the bat and continued to fight to tighten things up. How did the legislature break out in terms of that issue? The four caucuses, if you will.

Boozell: I remember Phil Rock being the most adamant against the tightening of the drunk driving laws.

DePue: The Senate Democratic leader.

Boozell: The president of the Senate, Phil Rock. I remember him being the most vocal against it.

DePue: Because?

Boozell: I think that he just didn’t like the idea. Phil Rock, as president of the Senate, had a glass of whatever he drank right there in the podium. He would—

DePue: In the Senate chamber?

Boozell: Yeah, when he was presiding. This was a guy who enjoyed a beverage. He was dead set against tightening the drunk driving laws.

DePue: And his caucus backed him up on that?

Boozell: His caucus backed him up because the caucuses backed up their leaders much more tightly, I think, back then. Pate Philip would have been the minority leader; Pate was pragmatic enough to know how important it was to elect Jim Edgar secretary of state and not let Jerry Cosentino get the job. Now, I don’t know if Pate Philip was in favor of tightening the drunk driving laws, but Pate Philip and Lee Daniels—they might not have even been great Jim Edgar fans because he leapfrogged them—were pragmatic enough to know that they

wanted a Republican secretary of state. There hadn't been one in quite a while, and there were—whatever it is—four thousand jobs in the secretary of state's office, and patronage was not clamped down as tight then as it is now. So the Republican leaders were much more amenable to doing something to make Jim Edgar look good and get elected than the Democrats were. I think that Speaker Madigan—I will tell you that I had a much better, and I have a much better, relationship with Speaker Madigan than I ever did with Phil Rock. I maintain that Phil Rock didn't really like me because I was Jim Edgar's guy, and he just didn't like Jim Edgar. Mike Madigan liked—

DePue: Because Edgar was a teetotaler?

Boozell: A teetotaling staff guy who became secretary of state. In my opinion, that was the problem with the president of the Senate. Now, when Jim Edgar was the secretary of state, that wasn't such a threat to Madigan. As another constitutional officer, Edgar was going to need Madigan, Madigan was going to need Edgar; he'd probably get something worked out. Mike Madigan's view was more of maintaining a majority, and if this guy picked on something that looked like it was going to be popular with the public, then he was going to be for it because it would help keep his majority in place. Having a Republican secretary of state is one thing; having a Republican House of Representatives was entirely another thing. He wouldn't want to let that happen, so he would rather let the one happen instead of the other.

Edgar, when I was his legislative director in the secretary of state's office, always had a pretty good relationship with three out of the four caucuses. When Emil Jones became the Democrat leader, Edgar had a better relationship with that caucus as well. I think a lot of it was Rock-driven.

DePue: So it was Phil Rock that he had tough times with.

Boozell: I think he had the toughest—in the secretary of state's office—with Phil Rock.

DePue: Where was the pushback or the resistance among other interest groups to the drunk driving legislation, the series of legislative moves?

Boozell: I have to think about this a little bit. At that point, I was much less involved with interest groups than I was with the members in the caucuses themselves. That was more, I think, the campaign staff, the Carter Hendren-type folks with the interest groups out there. I'm sure that they were dealt with—

DePue: But as a legislative liaison, you weren't working with the lobby groups?

Boozell: As the secretary of state's legislative liaison, I worked less with the lobby groups than I did with the members themselves. We had to establish ourselves with the guys who were voting on the legislation; that's how we passed the bills. Now, I'm sure that the beer distributors—well, the beer distributors were always against Edgar, and that was one group that we fought with

consistently. Especially when he was running for governor—that was the group that aligned themselves with Neil Hartigan in a very public way, which I'm sure we'll talk about when we get to those years. I don't remember having a whole lot of interaction with the associations, with the lobbying groups, in the secretary of state's office.

DePue: I wonder if you could give us a sense of what the legislative cycle was like for somebody like yourself, who's a legislative liaison working on some pretty meaty issues. Just the calendar, if you will—how that worked through particular legislative sessions.

Boozell: Yeah. Remember, you're trying to pass high-profile legislation at the same time that you're trying to run for office, too. Jim Edgar went to virtually every single legislative reception held in Springfield during the session. Then, the sessions would start in about January, February, and run through June, July—much longer than they are now.

DePue: July being the beginning of the fiscal year.

Boozell: Right, right, and you'd always seep over a little bit, but probably not more than a couple of weeks. I'm a lobbyist now, and it seems to me that it was a longer timeframe, and a lot more was crammed into it, for some reason. I think it might be because of, as I've mentioned before, more interaction with the members and the membership themselves instead of the concentration on the leadership.

But Secretary of State Edgar liked to travel, and he liked to visit libraries, because that's one way he could travel governmentally and go all around the state and be visible, since he was the state librarian as well. And I think the library side might have interested him more than the driver's license side. He visited every single county; he visited all the driver's license facilities, but he also liked to go visit the libraries and saw that as another opportunity to expand that base he was interested in. But he really did like to be in town if he could—both as secretary of state and governor—when they [the legislators] were in session, because he never trusted them to not try to pull something (laughter) when he wasn't there.

The days were long because you'd have to beat him in, and you had to be here when he was ready to work. You had to keep his office hours plus the general assembly's office hours. I'm telling you, in the '80s and '90s, the legislature was in many more late nights than they are now. They routinely stayed late at night, I think to keep the lobbyists around to take the members all out to dinner afterwards, so there was just somebody around to buy them a meal. There were always receptions for either members or groups afterwards, and Edgar—he really did—was visible at these things; I would accompany him to all of those receptions. Then, of course, you'd start the morning with committees. The committees would meet in the morning, the legislature would

convene in afternoon, early evening, then you'd have receptions late into the night.

DePue: As far as the legislative calendar is concerned, I would think that the budgetary issues would increasingly dominate the legislative calendar when you get into the end of May, June, and that you'd want to do all the other stuff before that time.

Boozell: Right, and the deadlines that the legislature set out are designed to do just that, to get the programmatic issues moved out of the way so that you can deal with the budget.

DePue: And programmatic issues would include the licensing and the drunk driving?

Boozell: Right, right. Anything other than the appropriations process, unless it's a big issue. I'm sure—not knowing for positive—there were late end-of-session votes, like seatbelts, too. There were late end-of-session votes on those because you hold those open to negotiate getting something for your vote—like another one of your bills called, another piece of legislation acted on—if you were going to vote for something a little bit controversial.

DePue: Do you remember much about that '82 election? Were you involved in the campaign itself?

Boozell: I never left the state payroll. My involvement with the campaign was all off state time. I wasn't as heavily involved in that one as I was in the '90. But everybody was involved, of course. My main involvement would have been getting legislators to endorse him. I don't think he had primary opposition when he was the secretary of state. I don't remember; if he did, it wasn't serious. But making sure that we had as much support as we could have, to get Democrats to not say something bad about him, to try to control that message out there. And travel with him and do parade walks with him and things like that.

DePue: Just a couple of the other issues that he made his mark here early on—I don't know when this would have occurred—but the organ donor program. Was that something fairly new that he was pushing?

Boozell: I think what was new about the organ donor program was—I believe it was late in the secretary of state years—where he made it very simple to just sign the back of your driver's license, along with a witness. I had him sign the back of mine as my witness one time. He just made it easy. I'm thinking it was probably big right before the '86 election, so it might have been in that timeframe that he did it as another "thing I did for the public," another big reelection type of issue, on how easily you could become an organ donor. But as I remember, it was mainly the ease of signing up for it, because the program itself, I think, had been in effect for a long time.

DePue: You alluded before, but I wonder if you can talk a little more about any particular stories or incidents that really stick with you in terms of working with Edgar himself and the kind of boss he was.

Boozell: Secretary of state's office, we're talking about?

DePue: In the secretary of state's office.

Boozell: (pause) Maybe something will come to my mind as we go through. I don't want to have to flounder here, either. This will be where your assistants get to cut out parts of the tape, I suppose. (laughter) I remember that he really enjoyed the State Fair. The State Fair is going on right now as we're speaking. He did put a lot of effort into making sure that the secretary of state's tent at the state fair was a big deal, because he wanted to make sure people came through and took away the stuff with his name on it. He had his name all over the State Fair.¹¹

When he was running for governor, when he was secretary of state, I was Pandy the panda bear at one of the state fairs. It was this big, giant panda costume, and it had something to do with children's safety—I don't even know what kind of safety it was. It was this panda bear that walked around the fairgrounds. It was hot, and there was a fan in there—kind of kept you cool. Everybody loved little Pandy the panda bear. I'd walk around the State Fair as the panda bear, and I'd go into Neil Hartigan's—the attorney general's tent and drop off Jim Edgar's secretary of state brochures just so that his name was kind of in there. That was probably a violation of several laws at the time—I don't know. (laughter) Politicking as a panda bear. But I know he really enjoyed the State Fair and spent a lot of time and attention on that kind of stuff. When Joan Walters was the chief of staff—or I suppose the deputy secretary is what she would have been—

DePue: Essentially performing the role of the chief of staff.

Boozell: Essentially performing the role of the chief of staff. I remember she was the one who engaged me more over in the front office activities, so that's when I got to be a little more part of the action. Penny Clifford was his secretary through the entire secretary of state office; I got to know Penny real well doing that, too. But every Monday morning, I think it was, we would have a meeting over in Joan's office, and he'd come by at times just to kind of make sure everything was going on. It's not anecdotal, it's not a story, but he really honestly always wanted to know what was going on. From the very beginning, he always wanted to make sure that he knew too much, that he knew more than he should know instead of less than he should know. I think he was always afraid of being caught not knowing something that was happening.

¹¹ Edgar learned the importance of name recognition early on, in his first campaign for the Illinois House, in 1974. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 29, 2009, 32-34.

DePue: Let's go to a couple of the more specific issues. This is the '85, '86 timeframe. '85, I believe, was when the push was for vehicle title fraud law. I don't know if you remember the specifics on that one. '86 was the statutory summary suspension—which is a lot of S's drawn together. Remember the legislative fight on those? This is all moving towards tightening things up as far as drunk driving.

Boozell: Right. The statutory summary suspension was the one that I mentioned before. That's the one where people thought you were violating their due process, that by accusing them of drunk driving, you could take away their driver's license.

DePue: By being arrested for drunk driving.

Boozell: By being arrested. Yeah. It was a statutory summary suspension, that by statute, by law, you're giving up your rights, by signing the driver's license, to due process; because I promise if I sign this, I'm not going to do anything to get arrested for driving drunk. It may have been the first in the nation—or if not, one of the first in the nation—to try to get that thing passed. Illinois was at the forefront on tightening drunk driving laws.

DePue: Did you say it was?

Boozell: It was. Illinois was at the forefront. If we weren't the first state to pass this law, we were one of the very first. When you're the first at anything, Why are you doing this; what's the point? And once again, the point was something to remember Jim Edgar by—so if this is before the '86 reelect, he's trying to get the additional drunk-driving laws passed—that he's always working for you, to try to get something... But I tell you, he really did believe in this. Remember, he is a teetotaler; he doesn't drink. The evidence was compelling on the amount of drunk driving deaths, what it was causing out there, and putting other people at risk for nothing that they've done wrong themselves. It really was a master stroke of an idea.

Now, we're still talking Madigan as the Speaker when this was happening. Once again, we had a much better relationship with Madigan in the secretary of state days than we did in the beginning of the governor's days, so we had an easier row to hoe in the general assembly to try to get this kind of stuff passed. He [Edgar] had formed a lot of coalitions. When somebody's popular in an area, that person will work with you when they know that their constituents like what they're doing, even if they're of a different party. Jim Edgar would go visit a library or something in an area. We would always notify the legislators that he was going to be coming into the area so they could be with him. He was one of the most popular elected officials in the state, and one of the most well-known as the secretary of state, and people liked to be seen with him all the time.

DePue: Do you think he was doing the drunk driving initiatives primarily for pragmatic political reasons or because it was something he saw that needed to happen?

Boozell: Yes. Both. I would suspect that if you're a statewide elected official, you're not going to do something solely because you think it's the right thing to do. It's going to have to be the right thing to do, which the public is going to agree with you on and vote for you because of it. He saw right off the bat, when he was first appointed to that job, that he had to find one or two things that people would remember him for and know him for, and drunk driving was it. Plus, he just happened to think it was an important idea and believe in it, I think. But if Jim Edgar had not been appointed secretary of state, if he was a state legislator or the governor's legislative director, would he have been out there humping for DUI reforms? I don't think so.

DePue: That suggests it was hard work to get it passed through the legislature.

Boozell: It was, because the trial lawyers were all against us. And anybody who wanted to see a Democrat elected secretary of state was against us because they too saw that the more successes Jim Edgar had, the harder it was going to be down the line. You could look at the guy and think, He's going to be running for governor someday. It's just going to be a matter of time. That was kind of the progression. That was the path that he was on. We've got to stop him somewhere along the line, we've got to dirty him up, we've got to see that he's a failure in some respects. But it was hard to argue against the drunk driving laws. Mandatory auto insurance was easier to argue against, I think, and would have been easier to make him a failure, but that didn't happen.

DePue: The trial lawyers were opposed to it because of what we've talked about before?

Boozell: Yeah, as I remember, the trial lawyers were just not for Jim Edgar for anything. They just wanted to be against Jim Edgar.

DePue: That's a particular spot that normally is Democratic.

Boozell: They're Democrat anyway, and they were really at their heyday then. Especially in the '90 election, the trial lawyers really believed that they controlled Springfield and everything that moved there, because of their relationship with the Speaker, and thought that they had kind of a lock on everything there.

DePue: I would imagine, though, that their argument was essentially that we are violating a person's due process rights.

Boozell: Yeah, we're taking away people's rights, and how dare we take away the rights of people for some kind of legal remedy or recourse.

DePue: That goes right back to our constitutional protection, so how was Edgar countering that argument?

Boozell: It's because of what you're doing to somebody else. Kind of like the motorcycle helmet arguments—if you're only putting yourself at risk, it's a lot harder to put a protection in place to make you protect you. But when you're a drunk driver, it's not just you you're putting at risk; you're putting at risk every single person on that road as well, so you're giving up a little bit of your rights because we have to protect the rights of everybody.

DePue: Was part of the argument that driving wasn't really a right but a privilege?

Boozell: You always would kind of fall back on that. Nobody believed it, I don't think. Everybody said it when they wanted to try to do something, but nobody really believed it because driving had become such a right. But you do have to take a test, you have to pass the test, you've got to prove yourself on occasion, and you actually pay to do it—so it's not like you get to drive because you turn sixteen. The way that our administration really tried to push this thing more was protecting those folks that you were putting in danger because of your actions, not anything that they had done.

DePue: I know that you worked pretty closely with Edgar at this point in time. Did you know what his political aspirations were?

Boozell: Yeah, we all knew that he wanted to be the governor someday. I just think it happened sooner than we thought it was going to happen.

DePue: Did he talk to you about that?

Boozell: No, I don't know that we really sat and talked about running for governor someday. Everybody just kind of figured it, because why would you want to go all in with somebody who was just going to maybe drop out after a while. You wouldn't want to do that. So you got a sense that he not only had some ambitions, but that he could really do it because of the way he was proving himself up to that point in time.

DePue: Who did you see as his closest political confidantes or some of his closest associates during those years in the secretary of state's office?

Boozell: Carter Hendren was clearly, I think, his closest political confidant when it came to purely political decision-making. Joan Walters really separated herself and was strictly governmental. Al Grosboll could straddle the fence and be both because Al could help make political decisions based upon governmental situations. George Fleischli came out of the political environment to be part of the administration, so I think George maintained a relationship with Secretary of State Edgar as a real political advisor as well. Jim Edgar spent an awful lot of time associating with Republican county chairmen. He did that a lot, I think at Carter's behest, so he built a good

relationship with a bunch of folks that he could go to. But in the administration, it would have been Carter. Even when Carter went to work for Pate Philip, I think Pate Philip would wonder if the decisions that Carter was making for the Republican Senate caucus were the best for the caucus or if he was trying to get something done for Edgar. You could never really get that out of the back of your mind as Carter was making those decisions.

DePue: A name you didn't mention, probably because he came into the administration at the secretary of state's office later, was Mike Lawrence.

Boozell: Mike arguably ended up being Governor Edgar's most trusted confidante. That's the category I would put Mike Lawrence in.

DePue: But emphasis on Governor Edgar.

Boozell: Governor Edgar. As secretary of state, he did come in kind of late in the game—I don't remember exactly what year. Mike was hired because Jim Edgar was going to run for governor. I think that if Jim Edgar was just going to run for another term as the secretary of state, I don't think Mike Lawrence would have even come over, because Mike Lawrence was a huge name at the time. Mike Lawrence was known for his ethics and his integrity; and that's what Edgar was known for as well, but he became really known for that when Mike Lawrence joined the team. If Mike Lawrence would join this guy's team, it must be the right guy.¹²

DePue: We should mention here that Mike Lawrence was a journalist, I think for *Quad City Times*.

Boozell: *Quad City Times*. He was the bureau chief, probably when I was going to college over there, but I didn't know him at the time. (laughter)

DePue: And press secretary, then, for Edgar as secretary of state.

Boozell: Right.

DePue: We're probably about the point in time where we need to wrap up the morning session here. I just want to finish off and see if you recall when *U.S. News and World Report* named him as one of the thirty rising stars in politics in 1986—an election year, as well, so good timing for Edgar in that respect.

Boozell: I wonder if Mike had anything to do with that. (laughter) I don't remember that, but that's what I think, yeah.

DePue: But I know that Edgar got a lot of, not just statewide publicity, but nationwide publicity because of what he was doing with drunk driving.

¹² For Mike Lawrence's decision in September 1987 to join Edgar's team in the secretary of state's office, see Lawrence, March 4, 2009, 59-65.

Boozell: Drunk driving. It dawns on me that Mike Lawrence was probably talking to Jim Edgar way before he was hired as his press secretary in the secretary of state's office, because when Jim Edgar appointed me insurance commissioner in 1995, I talked with Mike Lawrence. Mike Lawrence said to me, "Mark, the one thing you have to do is you've got to be known for something. I mean, if this is going to be one of the capstones of your career, you want to do something that you're remembered for in each of those important jobs you have."

That really is the Jim Edgar model of when he became secretary of state; I think the first thing he wanted to do was establish himself as being known for something. Mike, I think, fostered that. I think what Mike tried to do in the secretary of state's office was to keep Jim Edgar focused on those one or two things that you're known for; build on those, let's not be grasping for other stuff, if you're going to be running for governor. So build on the drunk driving laws; build on traffic safety. The mandatory auto insurance—that, too, is a traffic safety issue. It has to somehow work in the secretary of state realm but also be a statewide initiative that shows you're thinking more than just this one office that you have. I think Mike is probably the genius of the administration who could keep Edgar focused, keep going in the right direction and not veering off too much; keep the endgame in mind.

DePue: We've covered quite a bit of territory this morning. It's always fascinating to talk to the insiders about how business is conducted. We're going to pick up after lunch with Edgar's run for reelection in 1986 and spend some more time in that last term he served as secretary of state, and then move into the 1990 election and beyond. So thank you very much, Mark.

Boozell: Thank you.

(end of interview #1 #2 continues)

Interview with Mark Boozell

ISG-A-L-2009-028.2

Interview # 2: August 18, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is August 18, 2009. This is my second session with Mark Boozell. We're still in the library. This morning, we talked about your early life—growing up and getting involved in politics, and getting that job with the Republican House caucus in Springfield, which started your association with not just Republicans in general but Jim Edgar in particular. We've gotten through the first few years of his administration, and you're now the director of his legislative office?

Boozell: Director of the legislative office for the secretary of state.

DePue: I wanted to start this session with a little bit of discussion about Edgar's run for reelection in 1986. Now, this would have been his second time that he ran.

Boozell: Right.

DePue: And if you could reflect on that particular incident for a bit.

Boozell: Just to be honest here, before we turned this on, I was trying to remember who Edgar's opponent was in (laughs) '86. I couldn't remember. As you reminded me, when the LaRouchies took over the Democratic ticket, I think they had trouble finding anybody to run for Secretary of State. Edgar had established himself as a very popular politician in Illinois. People really liked him. I think that the Democrats, much like they view Jesse White today, saw him as unbeatable. Secretaries of state didn't get beat unless they really had some kind of a scandal; the last thing that Jim Edgar would be a part of would have been a scandal. They knew it. So Adlai Stevenson had the LaRouchie problem. Janice Hart was a better ballot name than Jane Spirgel, and so Janice

Hart was all of a sudden running against Jim Edgar for secretary of state. And then Adlai Stevenson formed a third party.¹³

DePue: The other one that was in the mix was the lieutenant governor's position; it was also won by a LaRouchie, and I think it was Fairchild.

Boozell: Mark Fairchild, right. I remember we had a very sophisticated county-by-county election operation in '82, '86, '90, and '94, run by Steve Schnorf. Remember, today, not such a big deal, but in 1986 or in 1982, you didn't have the luxury of having cell phones and computers and Internet capabilities and all that kind of stuff. You dealt with telephone calls, and you dealt with handwritten numbers on pieces of paper.

So Steve Schnorf, at the beginning of our administration, started to... Steve was at that time, I think, director of Driver Services in the secretary of state's office.¹⁴ Steve's other job, his political responsibility, was setting up communications with all of the different county clerks in every county in Illinois so that he built a relationship with somebody there, so we would know in real time what turnout was, what the count was, as the count was going on. Somehow, Steve Schnorf built up these relationships where he would be able to—and he had spreadsheets and a staff of people constantly making phone calls—to try to project what was going to happen so that Jim Edgar would know, prior to it happening, what was going on.

Election nights were always very interesting and long nights in all of the Edgar administrations. As governor, he had primary opposition every time in the primaries. The first election was very close for governor, and then the second one was the Hart scare going on. But Jim Edgar always wanted a group of people around, and he always wanted activity—what was going on, what was happening. He wanted to know what everybody knew all at the same time.

So Steve set up a system where he would get this intelligence from the counties on a regular basis, starting early, knowing exactly what was going on. I don't exactly remember where the campaign headquarters were in '86—hard to tell, but we had it set up in downtown Springfield somewhere. Jim Edgar may have been in Chicago, or he may not have been, for election night. He was probably here in Springfield for the secretary of state ones; I don't recall. But anyway, wherever he was, he was always in constant communication with Steve or whoever Steve had working. I remember that

¹³ In the 1986 Democratic primary, Janice Hart defeated Aurelia Pucinski, 375,405-358,232. On the Republican side, Jim Edgar ran unopposed, picking up 487,842 votes. In the general election, Edgar easily defeated the second-place finisher, Spirgel, by the largest statewide margin ever received to that point—1,574,079 votes. The final vote was Edgar—2,095,489; Spirgel—521,410; Hart—478,361. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 4, 1986*.

¹⁴ Schnorf held two different positions during Edgar's years as secretary of state. He was administrator of the Senior Citizen's Division (1981-1983) and director of Driver Services (1983-1990).

Steve came in fairly early in the evening and said, “Something weird is going on with these LaRouche guys on the ballots. I think one or two of them might actually win.” And everybody just kind of—I think even Edgar said, “You got to be nuts. That’ll never happen.” It was just beyond the pale. Lo and behold, that’s what happened in a couple of the races, one of them being Secretary Edgar’s.

I remember that was quite a shock that evening. When that die was cast, then, of course, Jim Edgar just—“Well, what’s Stevenson going to do? Now what’s going to happen? What’s the next step going to be?” I think he pretty much recognized right then and there, he’s reelected. There’s no way that a LaRouchie candidate is going to win, but what’s Stevenson going to do? How could this affect the entire ticket, the entire party, with whatever was going to happen on the Democratic side? As I recall, Edgar, pretty much right off the bat, indicated he didn’t think that Stevenson would actually run with those folks, that somehow—I think we thought—he would try to get them off the ballot. Then, of course, that didn’t happen. Instead, all the true Democrats actually fell off the ballot and formed their third party and were summarily annihilated in the general election.

So that campaign—you didn’t have to do much. Keep doing what you were doing and be the secretary of state. I don’t even know if Jim Edgar had a debate with Jane Spirgel.¹⁵ I do remember there was a third candidate, too, because Stevenson’s party had a candidate for secretary of state; I think it was a legislator. It was a guy... Do you have that information?

DePue: No, I don’t. But I believe you’re correct that Jane Spirgel didn’t end up running with Stevenson.

Boozell: No, she did not. Somehow they filled out the Democrat ballot, and whatever Stevenson called his party [the Solidarity Party]—oh, the name’s at the tip of my tongue, and I’m sure we’ll remember it—but there was another candidate for secretary of state because Stevenson had to have a full slate for his newly-formed party. [He may mean Hart instead of Spirgel. Pucinski lost in the primary to Hart. Spirgel was then the candidate on Stevenson’s Solidarity ticket.]

DePue: We’ll have to get that in there later because I can’t put my finger on who that is.

Boozell: Oh, I just about had it. There was a guy, a suburban—maybe even a former legislator or a city legislator or somebody in the midterm of Senate or something—there was somebody there. But it wasn’t much of a campaign.

¹⁵ Edgar had one debate with Hart, but they deliberately refused to debate Spirgel. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 22, 2009, 43-51. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

Edgar had high favorables, and now you're running against these nut jobs called the LaRouchies. So there wasn't much to it.

DePue: You mentioned a couple times—this one story you've talked about was an example—where Edgar always wanted to have his finger on all of the information so he wouldn't be surprised by any of this. Is that to suggest that he was something of a micromanager?

Boozell: Yes, and I say that with no hesitation. I think that the public perception of Jim Edgar is, What a nice guy; what an easygoing guy; man, wouldn't it be great to work for him? In reality, it was great to work for him, but Jim Edgar was a very demanding boss. He always wanted to know what was going on; he always expected that the information he got was right the first time; and he always pretty much understood that he could probably do the job better than you were doing it, and so you better keep on your toes. (laughter) But it fostered a work ethic unlike any other, because you really wanted to prove that I'm doing this job and I'm doing it right, and I'm going to get you the best information. Also, I think it probably caused some real healthy competition on the staff, of everybody wanting to make sure that they were the one who maybe got the information first to the secretary, that maybe they were the one that had the inside scoop. They kept their ear to the ground and they paid attention; they knew what was going on. Just like any political junkie, Jim Edgar loved to know what was happening, and especially if he could know it before it happened, it was even better.

DePue: How could you tell when he was upset with you?

Boozell: I'd say he would get upset at situations, he would get upset at outcomes of situations, but I never really felt that he was upset or mad at me for something, personally. He was a really good guy in that respect; he wouldn't personally blame you for something going wrong. He'd want to know why. He would want to know if there was anything else we could have done. Did we do everything that was possible to try to get the outcome we wanted? Did we talk with every member to pass this legislation, or is there some angle that we could do better next time in discussing something? I would even say, Mark, more than mad, he would show frustration at situations. Let's say that mandatory auto insurance didn't pass the first time that it came up for a vote. He wouldn't be mad at me because a bill failed, but he would be frustrated that maybe we didn't get our point across, that maybe we didn't understand as well as we could have made them understand, or that they didn't pay attention, or... You know what I'm saying? It wasn't anger; it was more frustration or disappointment. Then really want to make sure that you built on any mistakes that we might have made so that it didn't happen again.

DePue: How receptive was he when you or somebody else had opposing ideas on a particular issue of substance? Was he responsive to that?

Boozell: Yes. Many times, both in the secretary of state's office and in the governor's office, I took a role of bringing up opposing points of view even if I didn't believe them. But I would bring them as if I did, because I thought that it was important. I think I learned from Mike Lawrence, once again, how important it is to evaluate that opposing point of view, and, as far as what I learned from Jim Edgar, to make sure that we understood the opposing point of view so that we could beat it or embrace it—whichever. But you had to understand it well enough instead of just brushing it off. I would, all the time, play devil's advocate with him. Sometimes it was devil's advocate; sometimes I really did disagree with him on some issues and would go at him strong. He would always listen.

I think he enjoyed playing the staff a little bit off each other, to get that going at times, because I think he felt he got his best information if he had opposing points of view flying around the room from a bunch of people he respected. You could tell at times, he would throw in a controversial comment; you'd wonder if he really believed it or if he was just trying to get something going.¹⁶

I certainly think that he appreciated opposing points of view more than he appreciated yes men just agreeing with everything he said. There are times you could persuade him, but it would take an awful lot. Because I will tell you, the one thing that Jim Edgar was, and the one thing that the public really clicked on with him, was that he knew what he believed. You might not always agree with the guy, but at least you knew where he stood. He didn't have to poll somebody to find out what he thought. He really did give that air of being confident and knowing what he believed and knowing what he thought. You could have a conversation with him; you could discuss with him. He was very strong in his opinions, but it didn't mean that he wouldn't listen to you and consider what you might have to say about something.

DePue: Did you get positive feedback from him when you were doing a good job?

Boozell: Yes. On the legislative side, if something went really right, really well, he would always thank me; he'd call me and say, "Good job." He'd stop up in two and a half and tell the liaisons he appreciated what they were doing. So he did give positive feedback on occasion. Not a lot, but when you got it, you knew that you must have done something really spectacular because you got some positive feedback from the guy. (laughter)

But back to this public perception thing about him and how he was. I say it was a pleasure to work for him—I worked for him for sixteen years—but he was tough to work for because he expected perfection. It was: you should expect to give perfection and all the time it took to get there. So he

¹⁶ For an especially thoughtful analysis of Edgar's management style, see Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, June 4, 2009, 38-46.

didn't suffer mistakes well if he thought they were mistakes that should have been avoided. He would expect you to learn from your mistakes every single time. Those are the types of people he liked to keep around him.

DePue: We've gotten through most of his administration as the secretary of state. He's got four more years to go here. I would suspect that all four of those years, he and probably a lot of other folks were kind of looking at the prize of the governorship somewhere down the road. But I want to talk about those other initiatives those last four years; the one that comes to the forefront is mandatory auto insurance.

Boozell: It may have been the biggest surprise of our lives that that actually passed, because, as I recall, it passed toward the end of the term, when everybody pretty much figured that Thompson was not going to run for another term. Everybody pretty much figured that Jim Edgar would be running for governor through the whole four years. You figured that was the case—that this guy was setting himself up to be the next Republican nominee.

We had talked about jumping on the mandatory insurance bandwagon. We didn't create that bandwagon. Bill Laurino, a former state representative from the Chicago area—I think Bill might have been the very first person to talk about mandatory auto insurance. He had been pushing it for several years, never been able to get it done. You would have thought that the insurance companies would have supported something like that, but they did not, because they didn't want to take those folks who they saw as higher risk and have to insure them. Because clearly, if you were going to mandate that everybody in the state carry a certain level of car insurance, you're probably going to get some government aspect of telling the industry how they were going to have to cover all these folks, if they were folks they didn't normally want to cover.

DePue: At least minimum coverage levels, things like that.

Boozell: Right, and this was only a minimum. We even said—the legislation said—Look, you don't have to cover yourself. You've got to be covered for the other guy. So your insurance covers somebody that you harm and their automobile; cover your own or not if you want to. Once again—kind of like the drunk driver—we're saying, Look, you can do whatever you want to yourself, but when you start harming somebody else, some innocent bystander, somebody who didn't drink an awful lot that night and get behind a wheel, or somebody who didn't run into you in a parking lot and not have insurance—we're talking about that other guy we're watching out for.

So we teamed up with Bill Laurino because this seemed to be a pretty popular issue with the public. We thought that this would be quite a feather in our cap in a run for governor, if we could get this thing passed. We thought for sure that Madigan would just keep stalling the thing, keep killing the thing,

and he didn't. Once the Speaker allowed the bill to be heard in committee and not stack a committee against it—tell them how to vote to kill the bill—the thing passed.

DePue: What were the constituency groups that were opposed to it?

Boozell: The insurance companies. The insurance companies were not in favor of this legislation because they didn't want to have to insure the folks that—

DePue: So normally they would line up their support for Republicans.

Boozell: Normally they would, and this was a Democrat. Bill Laurino was a Democrat, and they were used to killing Bill's bill. But now that a popular Republican had jumped on this idea, it became a little harder for them because the insurance industry were big supporters of Jim Edgar's as a Republican. We also got all of the safety groups that he had cultivated over the years—the anti-DUI groups, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and all these safety coalitions and councils—all onto the mandatory auto insurance.

DePue: How about some of the representatives, especially the Democrats coming from poorer districts where people were saying, I don't have the money to get this insurance?

Boozell: Right, and that was a big issue. If you're going to tell somebody what to buy, how are you going to make sure that they can afford it? That's where we had to work with the insurance companies to make sure that the minimum coverages were minimum coverages. But the argument remained the same. The argument turned out to be, Look, if you can't afford insurance, then maybe you can't afford to drive. Back to the right and privilege kind of argument again. If you're going to drive a car, you're not going to drink because you could hurt somebody; if you're going to drive a car, you have to afford to insure any damage it would cause to somebody. It's a cost of doing business for driving a car.

DePue: I hadn't asked you about this before. There were other people, the main players in the legislature, but one of the main players in the legislature is a guy or a woman who's not there, necessarily, and that's the mayor of Chicago. In your role as legislative liaison, did you have to factor that into the equation, especially something like mandatory auto insurance?

Boozell: You always factored in talking with the city folks. Now, when you talked with Madigan, you figured you were talking with the city folks. As interesting as this will sound, Bill Luking is still representing the city of Chicago today, (laughs) and he was back in the eighties. When Harold Washington was the mayor... I wonder who the mayor would have been during this point in time.

DePue: '87, I think, is when Washington died. Yeah, he died in November of '87, so Eugene Sawyer was there for a bit.

Boozell: There was a lady by the name of Kappy Laing. Kappy Laing and Bill Luking were the folks who were the representatives that I recall of those mayors. Which mayor they worked with, I might not be right on. I think Kappy was with Washington, and Bill has just been with everybody all along the time.

In this instance, though, I think what happened was that Madigan once again saw that Jim Edgar had hooked onto an issue that was so popular that it might transcend party lines. I think what he had to weigh was, Okay, do I give him this big issue that he can run on for governor, or are the Democrats responsible for stopping it? I'll remind you again of what I said about the Speaker before, and I'll say it every time we talk: his interest—if it comes between what's more important, electing a statewide officer or maintaining the majority, it's maintaining the majority. He's the Speaker of the House, so I think he saw that this, and a Democrat sponsor to the legislation, was an issue that could help keep his party in control of the House of Representatives, even though it might elect another Republican governor.

These legislative leaders certainly become more important in their own party when the chief executive is of a different party than they are. I maintain that Mike Madigan has more power as the Speaker of the House when there's a Republican governor than when there's a Democrat governor, because when there's a Republican governor, he's calling the shots on behalf of the Democrats. When there's a Democrat governor, he's kind of supposed to go along with what the leader of his party is saying and doing, which hasn't quite worked out the way that they might have wanted it to (laughter) with Governor Blagojevich. But that's just kind of the fact of the matter, and we'll talk about it: when the Republicans had control of both houses of the general assembly and the governor's office, it was terrible. It was not a great love fest.

DePue: Yeah, that was coming out after the '94 election.

Boozell: Yeah. It was a very hard two years, working with Republican leaders in the House and the Senate instead of the Democratic leaders in the House and the Senate.

DePue: Well, we still have a little bit of time before we get to that point. Another issue that came up, and this was one that I think was near and dear to the heart of Jim Edgar—though some people might be surprised that it was one of the highlights of his years as secretary of state—the construction of the Illinois State Library.

Boozell: Yeah. He's a history major, and the man loves to read. Whenever I traveled with him as governor—doing bill signings and stuff—whenever he had time to stop and relax for a minute, it would be in a bookstore. He would just browse bookstores for a couple of hours to relax. When he was State Librarian as the Secretary of State, all of a sudden he kind of has some authority and responsibility over something he loves. He took this construction project for

the state library very seriously. He was involved, I think, in every single design aspect of the thing. I had hoped that the General Assembly would name that building after him when he left office. I kind of thought that's what they might do, instead of Site M. He put an awful lot of time and energy into the state library, getting that thing accomplished, and I think he's very proud of it.¹⁷

DePue: Did you have any role to play in that one?

Boozell: No, no, I had nothing to do with it. The funding was through a capital project that he evidently convinced Governor Thompson of putting into place.

DePue: Was that part of Build Illinois?

Boozell: That may have been part of the Build Illinois scheme.

DePue: But that wasn't any kind of legislative issue as far as secretary of state's concerned?

Boozell: No, because once the project was approved, the appropriations just followed. Our budget office in the secretary of state's office probably put together the budget for it. We probably put it into our plan as to what we would need for this and that, but it was nothing controversial, nothing you had to lobby, nothing you had to work on.

DePue: Mandatory auto insurance passed in June 1988 if my dates are correct here. We've still got two years to go in terms of his tenure as secretary of state. Anything else that really stands out for those last couple of years?

Boozell: No. What we wanted to make sure is that we didn't make any mistakes. He had built a reputation as an honest, serious man in this job. He had concentrated on several high-profile issues to benefit the public. If you're going to run for governor and you've got two years left, probably the most important thing on his mind was making sure that some kind of a scandal didn't erupt from somewhere—some fundraising scandal or a contractual thing—and making sure that all those driver's license facilities actually were working right, that the lines weren't too long. He was always concerned that people didn't have to stand and wait in line a long time, or there wasn't some rude person at a facility that would tell you off or do something. As I remember, it was more a couple of years of maintenance, making sure that nothing went wrong, because it had all been kind of set up on the platter pretty well.

¹⁷ Site M was a large parcel of ecologically significant land the state acquired from Commonwealth Edison in order to create a park. The park was named Jim Edgar Panther Creek. Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, October 22, 2009, 71-79; George Fleischli, interview by Mark DePue, January 27, 2010, 38-40. Edgar talks about the process of building the new state library, especially the importance he placed on a particular aesthetic vision, in his interview with Mark DePue, June 22, 2009, 69-75.

DePue: It wasn't about a year after the time that the auto insurance bill passed, August of 1989, that Governor Thompson gave him a call and said, "I'm not running for reelection," and if the story is correct, essentially said, "It's your turn."¹⁸

Boozell: It's yours.

DePue: You remember when that happened?

Boozell: I do remember it happening. It's not one of those moments where I remember where I was. (laughter) I remember where I was when I got the call about his heart condition. But I remember we got the word that Thompson wasn't running and that he had let Edgar know. I remember Edgar called a group together, and he was ready to go. There was no question; nobody had to think about it; nobody had to wonder what his decision was going to be. The only question was how he was going to make the announcement and how that was going to be done. Things started moving in the direction of a grand announcement in his hometown and a statewide fly-around to announce for governor.

DePue: Was there any restructuring or realignment of the key personnel on his senior staff?

Boozell: Not that I remember. There may have been some folks who left the state payroll and went completely on a political payroll. The one thing that he was very concerned about was making sure that he wasn't paying somebody to do the wrong job. If left to our own devices, maybe some of us on the staff would have tried to slip through this or that, or try to run over to the campaign office or be a little sloppy about it, but he was—

DePue: Do campaign things on the state time?

Boozell: Right. But he was so concerned about maintaining that level of integrity and trust, that it was all just hammered into us constantly how important it was to make sure that we weren't screwing up on that. We were told, "Anybody gets a DUI—resign. Don't wait for me to fire you." Everybody knew that that was the way it was; there were no questions asked. There were some things that you just did the Edgar way because that's what he expected of you.

DePue: Did you have a conversation with him separately after he announced, during that timeframe, about what your specific job was, now that he was in campaign mode? Any changes in your job?

Boozell: No. There were no changes in my state job. I maintained that legislative director's position. We just wanted to make sure that nobody did anything to us once we found out who the Democratic candidate was. You just want to

¹⁸ Edgar recounts the phone call, and the events leading up to it, in his interview with Mark DePue, June 10, 2009, 95-106.

make sure that nothing happens to you to make you look bad when the legislature would hand you a big problem. Those of us who had been around him for such a long time—we just knew we were working on the campaign when we weren't in the office, so we'd do whatever we needed to do. We'd go over to the campaign office and see what needed to be done. You'd walk a parade, or you'd make some phone calls. It was no real big change in what I did. It was busier a lot more because you were trying to help out wherever you could.

DePue: So 1990, then, was a busy, full year for you.

Boozell: Yeah.

DePue: You were basically wearing two hats?

Boozell: You've got the guy running for governor, and the attorney general's running for governor against him—this was the year of really ramping up the political fundraisers and attending everybody's receptions in Springfield. The man didn't miss a reception in Springfield; go to every single one of them to make sure he saw everybody that he could. I told you he loved to travel, so it was a little harder to keep him in Springfield. Even as secretary of state, he liked to be in Springfield on session days because that's what he did for so long. He was out more, so there was a lot more checking in to see what was going on—this I-like-to-know-everything-that's-happening kind of Jim Edgar out there, so I suspect I probably spent more time just talking to him than seeing him. He wasn't visible in Springfield as much. During those days, when the trial lawyers would have their big reception or the beer distributors would have their big event. I still attended every one of them with him; but the ones I loved to take him to were the ones that he wasn't expected to go to, like the two I just mentioned. Who would think that the Republican candidate for governor, who had been fighting these guys, would show up? But he did.

DePue: Just show up where again?

Boozell: The trial lawyers' association or the beer distributors' reception. He had no qualms about going in because he was talking to legislators and talking to other folks that he wouldn't normally meet, and the folks who had come down who were parts of these associations.

DePue: Why were you so often traveling with him to these events?

Boozell: Because they were legislative events. From the day I started doing his legislative work in the secretary of state's office, one of my responsibilities was either representing him, or attending with him, all of these Springfield legislative receptions; or if there were other ones that he went to, there was a legislator involved, do that. When his mother died, whatever year that was—I believe he was the secretary of state when his mother passed away, or he had just become governor.

DePue: I think it was when he was governor.

Boozell: I think he had just become governor. Everything on his mind when that happened, he called me at home. This is just a time when you would suspect that you really don't want to bother somebody, you really want to leave them alone; they've got other things on their mind. He called me up at home and asked if I would please come to the funeral and tend to the legislators who were there and make sure that they got seated where they were supposed to be. He said, "I know Mayor Daley's coming, so if you could please make sure he's taken care of. I might not be able to get to everybody; could you do that for me?" He was pretty attentive on that and relied upon me to do that for him. And those receptions: if he wasn't there, I was there so that they knew Edgar was represented at these things.

DePue: The primary, then. He does have a serious primary opponent in 1990.

Boozell: This one was Steve Baer, is that right?

DePue: Yeah.

Boozell: Yeah. We were kind of surprised. As I recall, nobody knew much about the guy. He was an ultra-right-wing conservative. Remember, Jim Edgar is a pro-choice Republican; Jim Thompson was a pro-choice Republican. I might say that I don't know so much as I'd say he is a pro-choice Republican, because I remember hearing him one time explain his position on abortion as, "You know what? I can't think of many circumstances where I would ever recommend that a woman get an abortion, but I really don't think it's any of government's business; if that makes me pro-choice, then I'm pro-choice." While I believe Mrs. Edgar is very—well, I shouldn't talk for Mrs. Edgar—but I think being a pro-choice Republican, you kind of invite some primary opposition. As I remember, Steve Baer was pretty well funded by Jack Roeser, unless—Jack Roeser might have run against us one year too. There are a couple of Roesers. There's Jack Roeser, who was a wealthy businessman.

DePue: Chicago area.

Boozell: Chicago area. And then Tom Roeser, who was a political commentator type guy—both conservative-wing-of-the party folks. Roeser might have even run against us once, but in any event, raised money for Steve Baer. So we were disappointed that there was primary opposition, and kind of concerned about it.

DePue: One thing we haven't mentioned yet: we're into the election campaign, and the dominant issue going into the election campaign was what to do with this surcharge that Thompson passed at the end of his administration.

Boozell: Yeah. Thompson put on this quarter-cent income tax surcharge; I think at the insistence of the House Republicans, Lee Daniels. It was a temporary surcharge.

DePue: It was two years. It was from 2.5 to 3 percent for the personal income tax and from 4 to 4.8 percent for the corporate income tax.

Boozell: Oh, so it was a half percent?

DePue: And half of that half percent went to education, and the other half went to local governments.

Boozell: Maybe that's where I was thinking—yeah, because then subsequently we even talked about taking the local government share for state services. The governing side of Jim Edgar prevailed, and he campaigned on we'll make that permanent. He, in his mind, justified that with the fact that he wasn't actually raising taxes; he was just keeping the status quo. (laughs)

DePue: But that provides Steve Baer with two red-meat Republican issues: you've got abortion and you've got, He's going to raise taxes.

Boozell: Right, right. That is exactly right. And that's where he went after them.

DePue: How was Edgar on law and order issues?

Boozell: Law and order came into effect more in the second run for governor, when we pretty much ran on the death penalty issue, against Dawn Clark Netsch. But he was pro-death penalty, law-and-order; by golly, as Secretary of State he had his own police force, you know? (laughs) His Republican credentials were fine except on the abortion issue, I think. He was very fiscally conservative. I think privately I've described him as tighter than bark on a tree. He really was careful with money, and that's what I think he's best known for as governor.

DePue: And yet he's for retaining the surcharge on the income tax.

Boozell: I think he knew that the state wasn't in the best financial situation, even though we didn't really know what we knew until we got there; you opened the books and found out that the state was actually worse off than we thought it was, because nobody likes to tout that. And I don't think he was thinking, It's going to be worse than I think it's going to be, so we better keep it just in case it's really bad. I think he was probably thinking, It's already in place, the grief has already been taken for raising it; keeping it, you're not going to get as much grief because you're really... I think I may have (laughs) argued with him on this one because I saw it as a tax increase: It's going to go away unless you do something. You have to go in and change it to do it. And he would always say, "No, no, no, it's there. I mean, it's there. We're not raising the tax; it's already been raised." So he thought the damage had been done

You do things as governor by spending the money on the things you want to spend the money on, so if you have some cash there, you want to be able to spend it. It turns out that the only thing, I think, that kept the state afloat, was making that surcharge permanent after he became governor. But yeah, you're right. You pretty much couldn't have built a better recipe for inviting the right wing of the party to come on in and take all the potshots that you would like to take. "Here, let me tee up that ball for you" kind of thing.

DePue: Did Edgar then have to devote a lot more attention—and money and time—to defeating his primary candidate than he wanted to?

Boozell: Yes. As I remember, at first we thought, Oh, this isn't going to be a big deal. Nobody knows this guy, he's not going to raise any money, let's not worry about it, no big deal. But he started gaining some traction; he did TV ads, and he was getting money, and he started gaining some traction. You might know the numbers. I don't know what the numbers were, but I think that it was more than we ever anticipated it would be for Steve Baer.

DePue: The numbers at the end, in the March twentieth primary, were 60 percent for Edgar, which is certainly substantial, and 34 percent for Baer.¹⁹

Boozell: You got 60 percent of the vote—great. But I think it's alarming that the incumbent secretary of state—thank God that we built up on the issues we built up on and that he was known for those things—to have some upstart, who nobody had ever heard of before, get a third of the vote, is kind of alarming.

DePue: Illinois, after all, is a state that has had its surprising primary victories from the upstarts—Dan Walker being the prime example of that, against Paul Simon.

Boozell: Sure. And we talked about the LaRouchies in the Democrat primary. The scary thing about primaries is that you're trying to get the base out to vote, and it's a hard line to walk. So if you're Jim Edgar and you got this guy named Steve Baer, who nobody's heard of, running, if you're a party guy, you're probably thinking, Yeah, that's not a big deal. I don't need to kill people to get them out to vote, because it's just this guy. But if you're Jim Edgar, you're thinking, If we don't get enough people out to vote, there could be a surprise here because it's a very small number of votes, regardless of what the percentages are. The vote totals are miniscule compared to the general election.

DePue: But constituents who are hard-over on issues like abortion are going to come out.

¹⁹ In the 1990 primary, Edgar defeated Baer 482,441 (62.8 percent)-256,889 (33.5 percent), a margin of 225,552 votes. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 6, 1990*.

Boozell: They'll vote. They always vote. In my view, that's the problem with the Republican Party in Illinois right now, and maybe the Republican Party nationally. You have the far right wing of the party, who **always** vote. They'll never miss an election. But then when you get to the general election, that's not where the general electorate is when it comes to electing a candidate in the general [election] We're seeing it today in 2009. I think you're going to see this in the Republican primary, where we've got a half dozen guys running right now for governor. Abortion politics is preeminent in this discussion, when, if you think about it, governors really don't have much to say about abortion politics. It's a federal issue; it's been decided. But you've got this piece of the party that thinks, if you're not a true believer, then you don't deserve to call yourself a Republican; that's a problem. It's a problem that Jim Edgar got over in part due to the fact that Jim Thompson was a pro-choice Republican and people really liked him too; he seemed to do a good job, and nobody knew that the state was a million dollars or so in the hole.

DePue: Let's get to the general election, and, I think as Edgar himself would describe, his worthy opponent, Neil Hartigan.

Boozell: Neil Hartigan. Neil Hartigan had spent many years in public office, too. Here's where I think, in my mind, the biggest difference—I remember we did a poll on this: when you hear the name "Jim Edgar," what do you think of? And it was drunk driving, mandatory auto insurance. Hair. That was also, (laughter) because of his really nice-looking hair.

DePue: I've seen the cartoons where they got a little price tag on his hair.

Boozell: Yeah. I asked the guy that—is it [Chris] Britt?

DePue: No, Britt's the current one.

Boozell: No, he's the current one. Who was the guy?

DePue: McDonald or Mc...

Boozell: MacNelly. I met him once, and I asked him, "I just always wanted to ask you why you put that thing on the hair?" He said, "Well, his hair's just always so perfect, it looks like it could be a wig, like he just bought it and put it on."²⁰ (DePue laughs) I said, "Oh, okay." I never really got it, but it was always there for all those years.

When you hear the name Jim Edgar, what do you think of? There were really two or three things that they thought of. When you hear the name "Neil

²⁰ Boozell and DePue are thinking of *Chicago Tribune* cartoonist Jeff MacNelly. The price tag in Edgar's hair, however, was invented by Mike Thompson, editorial cartoonist for the *Springfield State Journal-Register*. Thompson explains why he created the price tag, in Mike Cramer, "Poison Pen Pals," *Illinois Issues* (August 1994), 15.

Hartigan,” what do you think of? And nothing got more than 3 or 4 percent of the vote. “Um, senior citizens; um, law enforcement”—people didn’t know what he stood for. That takes us all the way back to the beginning and to Mike Lawrence and to the advice that he probably gave Jim Edgar but that I know he gave me: pick the one thing you want to be remembered for. Jim Edgar did that right at the beginning, and it turned out to be very successful for him.

DePue: But that’s not to say that Neil Hartigan was not a household name in Illinois.

Boozell: He was a household name, and he was especially a household name with senior citizens. That was his big deal. The history that I like to believe (laughs) is, if you remember, Neil Hartigan didn’t support Harold Washington in his run for mayor of Chicago, and the African-American community never forgot that. I think if you look at the vote totals, you’ll see that the African-American vote in Cook County, in that gubernatorial election, was very low. The African Americans didn’t come out and vote for Jim Edgar; they just didn’t come out and vote.²¹ That took away a big piece of the voting block for Neil Hartigan. Jim Edgar wasn’t supposed to win the election. The governor will tell you the stories. When he got the final polls in that last week or two, we were just kind of on autopilot, because the polls indicated that he couldn’t win the election, that it was pretty much over that last two weeks.²²

DePue: What were the issues that Hartigan was pounding him on?

Boozell: Neil Hartigan was against extending the surcharge. His slogan was “Two percent—Marge and I did it.” Neil Hartigan maintained, that by cutting 2 percent of the budget across the board, we could eliminate the income tax surcharge.

DePue: Marge being his wife?

Boozell: Marge was his wife, yeah. He went around the state saying, “It’s only 2 percent—Marge and I did it.” That was his little slogan out there, hammering Jim Edgar on the income tax surcharge. Now, there was also kind of a shadow campaign going with the beer distributors, which I alluded to earlier. The Illinois beer distributors’ association was dead set against Jim Edgar because of all the drunk driving laws, and they felt that he had been ruining their business. The guy who was running the association at the time—Mark Kolaz, I think was his name, or at least he was associated with them—taverns all across Illinois had an offer that if you brought in a Jim Edgar yard sign, they’d

²¹ Although depressed turnout was a critical factor in Hartigan’s defeat, Edgar’s first chief counsel, Arnold Kanter, stressed the importance of Edgar’s outreach to and organizational efforts in the black community. Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 17, 2009, 63-87.

²² On the psychological impact of the polls, particularly the poll done by Champaign’s Channel 3, see Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, April 1, 2009, 40-42. Also see, Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, May 7, 2009, 42.

give you a six pack of beer.²³ It was catching on all over the place, and our yard signs were disappearing in droves. They were just gone because people were taking them in and trading them in for beer at the taverns.

DePue: Just the kind of voters that would turn out on the election day, right?

Boozell: You just hoped that they would drink that all on November fourth, right (laughter)—early in the morning so they couldn't make it to the polls. That was a big thing. Of course, Hartigan disavowed all knowledge of anything. We would keep trying to tie him to that, and he would keep trying to untie himself from it. Part of it too, I remember—the first debate that Edgar had, the first televised debate, was a disaster. He'll tell you he was up all night trying to cram for the issues on this first televised debate. He thought he was the underdog, and he probably was, because Neil Hartigan was a statesman who had been around forever. I think what Jim Edgar did was he tried to wear contact lenses instead of his glasses for one of the first times ever, at this debate, and he kind of blinked through the whole thing. It was terrible. It was not—

DePue: It's one of those Nixon moments.²⁴

Boozell: It was not good. It was not good. We went up to Chicago to watch it, and we were sitting there watching it, just going, (laughs) Oh, no, and shaking our heads. He was tired and his eyes were kind of baggy, and he was blinking through these contact lenses—which I don't think he ever wore again. So it wasn't a good first televised debate.

I went to a debate here in Springfield that he had in front of some group with Hartigan, and one of the first questions was, "What book are you reading right now?" It was a tailor-made-to-Jim-Edgar question, because Jim Edgar—Well, I'm reading the history of the blah-blah-blah, the something-something, and he would have started going into it. And Hartigan—you could see him trying to think of the name of a book. (DePue laughs) It was a terrible answer. What a difference between these two guys—and I think it goes back to you've got the guy who is really going to be serious about governing and pays attention to those things, and the guy who has been the politician his entire life and slapped more backs than anybody, and maybe he should win the election because of that. It really was an election between the perfect politician, who was Neil Hartigan, and this guy I think that people finally thought would be a better governor.

²³ Mark Kolaz had been a former member of Speaker Madigan's staff. He left his post in 1989 to become a lobbyist for the Associated Beer Distributors of Illinois. Wen Huang, "Public Service Reform in Illinois: Recommendations a la Volcker Commission," *Illinois Issues* (May 1991), 17.

²⁴ DePue is referencing the televised debates between Richard Nixon and John Kennedy during the 1960 presidential campaign. Before the first debate, which was the first presidential debate ever televised, a tired Nixon refused to wear makeup. This decision resulted in a dramatically unfavorable contrast with Kennedy in the eyes of the television audience.

DePue: Did Hartigan play on the fact that Thompson had been governor for fourteen years and that Edgar, of course, had been very part and parcel to that, that there really wasn't much difference?

Boozell: Yeah, "just extending the Thompson term" is what I think they referred to it as. That had some validity, because remember, Jim Edgar was a hand-picked Thompson guy. Jim Edgar at one point said that none of the cabinet directors, none of the agency directors of Thompson's would be agency directors in his administration. That was one of those good news-bad news days. He thought it was really good for the campaign to say, "We're going to start fresh; we're not going to have all these Thompson folks running things." Yet all the Thompson folks—who were the political establishment, who were helping us—were looking, going, So I don't have my job? Now what? (laughter) So it was interesting that he made that big, giant public announcement about it. In the end, I guess it worked out. Some of those folks were put into different jobs, and of course, everybody wasn't just fired wholesale.

DePue: Since Hartigan is saying there's really not a lick of difference between these two men, it gives you the opportunity to compare and contrast the two men as political candidates on the campaign trail—Thompson and Edgar.

Boozell: I never traveled with Jim Thompson on the campaign trail, but I can tell you that they were night and day, I think, as campaigners. Jim Edgar is the walk-down-the-road-on-the-middle-of-the-yellow-line-and-wave-at-the-side parade kind of guy, where Jim Thompson would be bodysurfing (DePue laughs) around with the crowds on the sides. They were very different that way. I've said before, campaigning wasn't what Jim Edgar liked to do. I think if he could have gotten away with letting somebody else campaign for him (laughs) he would have done that. He enjoyed visiting with people and he enjoyed going to events and he enjoyed doing stuff, but I think he just thought that he probably had more important things to be doing, especially when he was already the governor. He did tons of parades; when he had his first heart episode he was marching in a parade. So he did all the stuff. He had been the secretary of state with the drunk driving laws, and I remember several parades in particular where he'd get some not-too-nice stuff yelled at him from the folks sitting outside of a tavern on the state fair parade route, for example, or some other parade route. A guy's sitting out there having a few drinks and yelling not really good things to him. So it wasn't always a love fest.

DePue: How was he as a stump speaker? He's expressed that when he was early into politics, that was not his strong suit.

Boozell: As the secretary of state, he was kind of a reading-speech thing, and he did note cards an awful lot. By the time he was running for governor, though, I think he was pretty comfortable with his own skin. I don't remember him really having any trouble expressing himself. It goes to those couple of things: he always wanted to know everything, and I think as long as he was

comfortable that he had all the facts, he could talk about it. The second thing is, as I've said, he knew what he believed in. Jim Edgar knew what he thought, and he didn't have to be told what to think. Not that Neil Hartigan did, but Jim Edgar didn't have to be told what to think and what his views were on something. He knew, and he would tell you that. I think that combination of this voracious appetite for always wanting to make sure he had as much information as possible and being comfortable knowing that he had a set of beliefs and had a set of principles and that's where he was—he was pretty comfortable by 1990 talking about what he thought about stuff.

Now, not that he wasn't careful of maybe making sure he knew who the audience was and bringing up what was appropriate in that setting with that audience. I would categorize him as a good off-the-cuff speaker. Matter of fact, I think he was probably better in informal conversations than in the formal ones.²⁵ Sometimes when he was giving a State of the State address or a budget address or something, he used the teleprompters, and you could kind of tell. He practiced them an awful lot, too, with the teleprompters in the office. We would have lots of practice sessions for all of his important speeches. But he was reading a speech. When you got one-on-one or in the leaders' meetings with him, and he was going from his core and talking about what was supposed to be happening or what he wanted to happen or how things were being done, that's when he was at his best and his most persuasive.

DePue: You mentioned that he understood his audience as any good politician would, and the kind of message or the way the message was delivered. Did the message vary from audience to audience?

Boozell: The part he was very careful about was making sure that the message did not vary from region of the state to region of the state. That's what people were watching for and trying to catch him on. He was the first downstater elected governor in a long, long time, and reviewing *Meeting the Challenge*, I saw he was the first-ever elected governor of Illinois who attended a public university. That must mean there was some appointed governor, or governor who became governor when a governor died, who might have gone to a public university—but the first elected governor who graduated from a public university.²⁶ I thought that was interesting.

The first downstate governor in thirty or forty years, or whatever that was—he was particularly concerned about that because that's not where the votes are unless you do it exceedingly right. He knew exactly how much of Cook County he had to take, how much of the vote he needed out of Cook County with the normal suburban vote, and then figuring he'd get a bulk of the downstate vote because he was a downstater. But you had to be careful

²⁵ Others echo this sentiment. Kanter, December 17, 2009, 62; Fred Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, April 22, 2009, 63.

²⁶ Samuel H. Shapiro, who served the remainder of Otto Kerner's term as governor after President Johnson elevated Kerner to the federal bench in 1968, graduated from the University of Illinois College of Law.

touting that you were a downstater too much, because statewide press picks that stuff up and follows you around with it. So he was very careful that he didn't say different things to different parts of the state and different audiences. He tried to be very consistent.

DePue: Again, I know you were a legislative liaison for all this time, so your focus is elsewhere, but do you know the nature of the campaigning he did in the Chicago area? Did he go into those traditionally Democratic districts?

Boozell: Yes, he did. Our administration had a very good relationship with lots of Democrat legislators, because in the secretary of state's office, you can help people out an awful lot. There are a lot of jobs in the secretary of state's office, and there were license plates in the secretary of state's office, and you could do favors for people and help them out. Part of my responsibility was making sure that the legislators were happy with the services that they were getting, or helping somebody out who was having a problem. We really fostered Democrats in the general assembly who were our very good friends. He did visit ethnic neighborhoods in Chicago quite a bit; he'd ride the train into Chicago. So he was doing that kind of stuff, to show he was a normal guy who could do those things.

This just made me remember something. When we were in the secretary of state's office, everybody wanted a two-digit or a three-digit license plate, so you had to be very careful that you didn't mess around with that kind of stuff. Everybody knew that there's a secretary hold on certain license plates, and they rarely come up—the one-digit, two-digit plates and stuff like that. I had a legislator call me up on the phone, and he said, "Hey, I got a constituent who wants a three-digit license plate, and we'll give you ten grand for it." (laughter) I think this was right after he was elected the first time, so we'd been in office for a while. I hadn't been there that long, but he had just been elected to the office. [Mark, I'd like to clarify the previous two sentences. First, the "he was elected"—is this referring to Edgar or to the legislator calling you? Second, which election/office? Is it right after Edgar's election in 1982, or are you talking about 1990, after the election but during the transition period(??)] This guy called. You know how a thousand things can go through your mind all at the same time; you're thinking, What am I going to do? What, what, what, what? What I did was, I hung up the phone. I didn't say a word; I just hung up the phone, because I didn't know what to do. I don't think we had an inspector general at the time. We had a guy in charge of the police guys, and I didn't know if that was the right person to call. I called whoever our chief of staff was at the time—it probably was Joan, if she was our first one.

DePue: Yeah, it was.

Boozell: I called whoever our chief of staff was, or the deputy secretary, told them, and said, "I just want it on the record that this is who called me, this is what they

wanted, this is what they asked for, and this is what I did, so there's no question." They said okay. And the guy never called back. So I don't know if that was a big test, but that was one of those threshold moments about, Boy, that could have really changed the way things went down the line for both me and the administration.

DePue: That's an important story.

Boozell: It was very interesting. It was a sitting legislator.

DePue: Your instinct, however you'd arrived at the answer, was the right one to do.

Boozell: Which was none at all; just hung up the phone. (laughs)

DePue: Yeah. You hung up on me! Let's go back to the 1990—

Boozell: How did I get to that?

DePue: Oh, I don't know. The 1990 election, and how the press dealt with both of the candidates.

Boozell: Jim Edgar always made sure that he had a whole bunch of press people. He had a big press staff; he took folks out of different parts of the state where they had been a part of the press. He always knew that it was important to have somebody who knew somebody, who could call somebody. I don't know that I can actually address how the press treated Jim Edgar or represented Jim Edgar, but I do know that he was not the guy who was going to win the race. I believe that in the press, and in pretty much all circles, it was pretty much a foregone conclusion that once the race started between Hartigan and Edgar, Hartigan was going to win because Thompson had been governor for so long; it was time for a change—which I think was the slogan. That's just the way it was. As a matter of fact, on election night in Chicago, the whole drive up on the radio and when we got up there, on TV, was that Jim Edgar can't win the race; it looks like the thing has been decided. Neil Hartigan is going to be the next governor. It was a late-night surprise when the city votes started coming in the way I mentioned. I think it surprised all of us that he actually won the race.

DePue: Did Edgar have an antagonistic relationship with the press, as so many politicians sometimes do?

Boozell: I think he had an antagonistic relationship with some in the press. I can think of one guy in particular, who I think is still in the press, who was always trying to find something wrong, a problem—one of those guys who are always trying to needle you. I can't think of the guy's name and don't know if I'd say it if I thought of it. But in general, I don't think he had a real antagonistic relationship. He was pretty accessible to the press pretty much all

the time; especially when he became governor, he had them in all the time to his office. I don't think it was particularly bad. What did Mike Lawrence say?

DePue: I don't think he portrayed it that way either. I'm not supposed to be doing this too much, but Edgar's selection of Mike Lawrence certainly was the right move to at least keep the press honest about how they would portray Edgar.

Boozell: Gary Mack maybe came from radio, and he was in there. I know Dan Egler came later. He was with—I think it was the *Tribune*; I'm not sure. He was later. Tom Hardy was with the other paper, whichever one, and he came later. He did recognize bringing in folks that folks knew. Mike Lawrence is a perfect example of that. As maybe the dean of the state house, if that guy's going to be for you, people figure, He must be a decent guy anyway, and so you're going to give him a little bit of benefit of the doubt.

DePue: We had talked a little bit about this during lunch, but I want to hear your reflections on some of the campaign ads that Edgar was running.

Boozell: One of the ads (laughs) that we talked about was this professor—what was his name?

DePue: Irwin Corey.

Boozell: Irwin Corey, this kind of nut guy. This was one of those Carter Hendren strokes of genius, and now that I'm thinking about it, the commercial may never have run. Either it never ran or it ran one time.

DePue: There were three or four commercials. Carter has given me these commercials, so we're going to put those up on the Internet for everybody to see later on, but the essence of the Irwin Corey ads was about flip-flops.

Boozell: At that point of the campaign, the whole thing they were trying get across about Neil Hartigan was that he changed his mind all the time, and you never knew what he was going to be talking about; he had flip-flopped on all of these different issues. When you see it on the Internet, you'll remember the guy if you're at least forty years old, I suppose. It's Professor Irwin Corey, who was this guy with the wild hair and the pointer and the board, and "This is a flip-flop." It didn't say anything, and the message, while it was supposed to be about flip-flopping, probably wasn't even the message that people remembered; it was just that Edgar had this funny commercial. Edgar had a funny commercial out there with this guy. I think it may have been the only funny commercial of the campaign (laughs); I'm not quite sure. Did you see the other ads? Refresh my memory.

DePue: Yeah, the other ads were much more conventional. Some of them could be characterized as attack ads. It was certainly aggressive, going after what I'm sure Edgar thought were legitimate issues with Hartigan. A lot of them were defining Edgar as strong in education, drunk driving—those issues.

Boozell: Yeah. As much as we tried and tried and tried by supporting the extension of the surcharge to help fund education, we could still never get the IEA [Illinois Education Association] to do anything for us. I would think it would be a big disappointment, that you could never really get the education community behind him, for whatever reason, after all that he and Mrs. Edgar both did for education in the state of Illinois. I mean, really. Of course, it was the second term, but [despite] getting that threshold dollar amount per-pupil funding from the state of Illinois, we could never really get the IEA behind us, which was interesting. Jim Edgar has often told me, too, “The party can’t really help you as much as they can hurt you.” I think that he knew that the grassroots support, the county chairman support, the state party support—that’s all very important because it could hurt you if you didn’t have it, but you can’t depend on that. You can’t just think that the party’s going to elect you to the office. So it was making sure that he went the extra mile and did all the other stuff.

Jim Edgar did more radio and TV commercials for legislators that... If you think back and if somebody did a search on TV and radio stations for the years that Jim Edgar ran for governor—I’d spent tons of time with him in recording studios doing ads for members. Everybody wanted Jim Edgar to do a radio ad for them, but he wouldn’t do them for everybody. He wanted to make sure that he actually meant what he said (laughs) about somebody, that it was a legislator who had supported him and that he had supported and that it was making some sense what he was saying. He didn’t want to have said something bad about legislator A and then have a campaign commercial for him. He did tons of radio, especially, and a bunch of TV ads, for members of the general assembly.

DePue: I want to go back to this comment you made, Edgar stating the role of the Republican Party in the campaign, that it can hurt you just as much or more so than it can help you. I’m not sure that was the Democratic approach to running for office in Illinois.

Boozell: No, and that may be why (laughs) Edgar ended up winning the thing, especially if it’s true. In the African-American community, that part of the Democratic Party abandoned the nominee.

DePue: You already discussed the dynamics of Hartigan not endorsing Washington, and that would have been back in ’87, I would think. So the black community is remembering that to a certain extent. But otherwise, you’ve got that incredibly powerful and reliable Democratic machine in Chicago that’s always going to turn out the vote because that’s what they’re trained and disciplined to do.

Boozell: As I mentioned, Jim Edgar—I think he referred to them as “thinking Democrats,” those who would actually vote for him—either “thinking” or “thoughtful” (laughs) or something like that. Ted Lechowicz—he’s a former state rep and a former state senator—comes to mind as a guy that Jim Edgar

just liked, but he was a Democratic ward committeeman. But they got along because they loved to talk politics. It was especially the members who could come in; they could sit and they wouldn't have to talk about House Bill 435, they wouldn't have to talk about this piece of legislation or that; they could sit and talk maybe about the history of politics or what had happened, or maybe analyze why something took place or why something happened. Ted Lechowicz just comes to mind as an example of one of those guys who really was a part of a lot of politics and liked to analyze it and talk about it. That's what Jim Edgar liked to do. So those are the folks that would come in, and they would just get together and talk about stuff. That's how you build the relationships where you don't need to go bang on somebody for a vote; they're going to be with you because they know that they trust you, they like you and you're probably doing the right thing—unless they really have to go the other way on it.

Ted Lechowicz is a guy in '90, who—when Governor Edgar called me up and told me that we won but we needed to watch and make sure nothing untoward (laughter) happened, he said, “Call Ted. Call Teddy. Make sure that he's watching out for us.” I called Senator Lechowicz to make sure that he could help us make sure that nothing got stolen that already wasn't up there, because we knew that we'd won the race. As you may know, it was hours—hours—before Neil Hartigan would concede.

DePue: I want to have you go a little bit more in describing what it was like that night, maybe before you actually knew. Because you'd already said that going into it, conventional wisdom was—

Boozell: This is a great story that I think I've shared with you already, but I'll share it here for the tape. Sue and I and the kids lived in Chatham. For the record, Kari, Lindsay, and Michael are my kids. (laughs) There was this radio show; it was Greta Alexander, a psychic. She'd be on at lunchtime or something. We'd listen, and we would just crack up listening to these people who would call in to the psychic and give her questions, and she would give these psychic impressions of the answer. It was silly, it was foolish, and it was stupid, but it was a riot to listen to. So a week before the election—not looking good, things aren't where they're supposed to be, the numbers are bad—we're in the office one day. I think Phil Lackman in the secretary of state's office, a deputy, was there.

We're sitting there, and Greta Alexander comes on. I said, “I'm going to call her.” I called the number, and I got through to Greta Alexander on the radio, which was hard enough to do anyway because everybody... I said, “Hey.” She said, “Okay, what's your question?” I said, “How am I going to be feeling one week from today?” She said, “I see you... I see you kicking a can, and then I see you jumping up and down saying, ‘We won, we won.’” I said, “Okay, thank you,” and I hung up the phone. (laughter) I thought, That's a good answer. Then on the radio, she said, “I wonder what that was all about.

The election's in a week. I wonder if it had something to do with the election." And then she went on to the next person.

Fast forward a week. Phil and Mary Kay Lackman drove up with Sue and I to the Hyatt in Chicago where the event was; we're driving up that afternoon—early evening, actually—together in the car. We're listening to the radio, and it's giving all this, Oh, it's not—blah, blah, blah, blah. It doesn't look like there's any way Jim Edgar can pull this out; it looks like Neil Hartigan... We get up and check into the hotel; Sue and I go into our room and Phil and Mary Kay check into their room. We walk into the room and turn on the TV, then Phil and Mary Kay come over. We're going to go out for dinner. So we turn on the TV, we're looking, and the TV broadcaster comes on and says the same thing: "The polls are closing very soon, but it looks like there's no way Jim Edgar can catch up on this thing; our next governor will be Neil Hartigan."

We're watching this, and we're all kind of getting depressed. I look, and there's a garbage can in the room. So I walked over, and I kicked the garbage can. (laughs) Sue and Mary Kay looked at me and said, "What are you doing?" Phil and I just laughed, and I told them the story. They said, "Okay, we'll see if that works." Lo and behold, it did. So I kicked the can; we went out to dinner, and none of us could eat because we were just depressed. We came back to the room, we're sitting there watching TV again, and nothing's happening; it's getting late, and the phone rings in the room. It's Carter Hendren. He said, "Get up here; the governor wants to see you right now in his suite." Click.

DePue: The governor?

Boozell: No, I'm sorry, that's wrong. "Jim Edgar wants to see you." He probably said, "Jim." That's a very good point. He was one of the few people who could call Jim Edgar, Jim. I never got to that point. He probably said, "Jim wants to see you; get up here right now." Click. I thought, "This is it; we're conceding; we're done; it's late"—it's probably, I don't know, eight, nine o'clock at night—"the thing's over." Mark, it was slow motion. There was a mirror right inside the door of this room. I walked over to the mirror, I buttoned my top button, and I pulled up my tie. It was like it was in slow motion, like this was my last act. (laughs) I put on my coat. I said goodbye to everybody, talk with you later. We're all depressed.

I went out to the elevator, I got up to whatever floor it was, I got off, I was walking back toward the room, and Jim Edgar came out; he hugged me. He said, "We won." I said, "No, I just saw on the news we didn't." (laughter) He said, "We've done it. We've won. I want you to call Teddy Lechowicz, make sure nothing happens out there; we got to make sure things are under control." Then Carter came in and started giving everybody orders on who to call and who to get a hold of and all this kind of stuff. I thought, Oh my God,

we actually won. I called down to the room, and said, “Sue, everybody come on up to the Monarch Suites; we won.” She said, “No, they just said...” I said, “I’m telling you, ignore the TV; we won the election.” So they came up. The Monarch Suites is where the whoop-de-doop was going to happen after it was all over. I got a hold of Ted Lechowicz and everybody did their thing.

I believe that Jim Edgar announced a victory before Neil Hartigan even called him. You might have to verify that. (laughs) To this day—even though he’s dead now—but to this day, Jerry Cosentino never called and conceded the election to Jim Edgar. He’ll tell you that; it’s something he likes to point out. I think that Hartigan was very, very late; I think they thought that a miracle could occur or something was wrong. He just didn’t concede for the longest time. I don’t even know if Jim Edgar waited for the balloon drop.

DePue: What did Carter and Edgar and the other numbers-crunchers on the Edgar staff know that the press didn’t?

Boozell: Steve Schnorf was in the room. He had made the calls to everybody, and he knew what trends were coming in. Steve was very careful. Look, Steve Schnorf never said it unless he knew it was going to be true. He may have been one of the guys that went to school with Jim Edgar, but he knew that you didn’t give the guy an answer and then have to take it back a little later on.²⁷ Steve waited until he said, “This is an irreversible trend,” It was Steve’s contacts out in the counties that gave us the heads up on it. I believe that Carter was on the phone with Hartigan’s chief of staff and trying to give him the information; they wouldn’t listen to it because they were watching TV, and they weren’t going to concede the race for the longest time.

Mike Belletire was one of the top folks in the Edgar administration at the time, or top advisors. Whenever we talk about the election, Sue says, “I will just never forget, Mike Belletire walked up and kissed you on the lips, right on the lips, when you walked into...” the Monarch Suite when we left the other area.

DePue: Let me make sure I got this straight: Mike kissed you on the lips?

Boozell: Mike Belletire kissed me, Mark Boozell, on the lips. (laughter)

DePue: Oh, my.

Boozell: To celebrate. That’s something that I have repressed in my memory for (laughter) twenty years now.

²⁷ Despite growing up in Charleston and attending Eastern Illinois University, Schnorf was not especially close to Edgar in their early years. He was closer to Fred Edgar. See Schnorf interview [Need to work on this footnote more, once the Schnorf transcript comes in(??). Can’t remember if Schnorf, who is a year or two older than Edgar, knew Fred better, or if he was actually part of his social circle.]

DePue: I won't pursue that any farther, no.

Boozell: Redact, redact. (laughter) So it was an exciting night.

DePue: I don't know that you get a better high than something like that, but do you remember anything about the inauguration?

Boozell: Not necessarily. I remember all of the inaugural events, because that was very exciting. The first inauguration, I know I was there, I know he gave a speech, blah-blah-blah, and it was a big production. I know that an awful lot of time and energy went into that. I spent an awful lot of time; I headed up the transportation transition team going into the first administration because I'd had the background at the Department of Transportation. The governor-elect—

DePue: Were you no longer on the secretary of state—

Boozell: I was on staff. In addition to those duties, I was unpaid. He had transition teams set up in all different programmatic areas of government, where we had advisors come in, interview the directors and the appropriate high-level staff folks at each of the agencies; try to cull information as to what was going on in the agency, what he needed to know right off the bat, what the top issues were, what the budgetary issues were, what the secondary issues were. This team of people would interview these folks and draft a report for them. I headed up the transportation team, the folks that were big in transportation. Contractors were represented on the group; there were union folks on the group. We pulled together everybody we could to help advise if there was anything we needed to do as we transitioned into governing.

DePue: The role of the transition teams for any political office, the executive offices that you're going into, is absolutely crucial. But I'm curious, if you're still on the payroll of the secretary of state, are you doing any of these things on secretary of state time?

Boozell: I think I was. I don't know that it was a big issue, because that's not a political assignment. I don't know the mechanics of when we switched over to governor's office payroll as opposed to secretary of state's office payroll. I don't know that anybody was paid separately on the transition team. I had no change in my work status; I did that job, as well as that job.

DePue: At what point in this whole process did Edgar come up to you and say, "This is what I want you to do in the new administration"?

Boozell: I was called into the secretary of state's office. He had, right off the bat, announced Kirk Dillard as his chief of staff. That was his first announcement. Kirk had been Governor Thompson's legislative director. Governor Edgar wanted to make sure he had a careful transition from the prior administration to this one—make sure that everything happened right, that we just didn't

drop folks in and have problems with stuff not happening—kind of like when he took over the secretary of state's office and didn't wholesale ask you to leave if you were a Democrat.

So he announced Kirk as the chief of staff. Shortly thereafter, Kirk called me over to his office; he had a kind of a temporary office set up over in the secretary of state's office. He said, "What do you want to do in the new administration." This is Kirk Dillard. I said, "I would like to be the legislative director." This was my biggest disappointment in my whole sixteen years. Kirk said, "Okay, that's what you're going to be; you're going to be the legislative director. You've really worked hard to get to that point..." Ta-da! I was very excited and went home and told Sue; it was a great thing. Maybe a week later, Jim Edgar called me into the office, and he said, "I'd like you to be my House liaison." I said, "Well, what happened to legislative director?" He said, "What do you mean?" Kirk Dillard is sitting right there. I said, "Kirk told me I'm going to be the legislative director." He looked at Kirk, and Kirk looked away; it was one of those very awkward moments. That was about it. I said, "Kirk told me I was going to be the legislative director, and now you're telling me I'm going to be the House liaison?"

There's the legislative director, and then there is the Senate liaison and the House liaison. Normally the Senate liaison is the deputy director. So I'm thinking, Not only am I not going to be the director of the legislative office, I'm not even going to be the deputy director of the legislative office; I'm going to be the House liaison. He said, "Well, Mark, you've got the most important relationships in the House and with the Speaker. That's where I need to get things done." Blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. I said, "Who's going to be the director of the legislative office?" "Steve Selcke." "Steve Selcke is there right now as Jim Thompson's legislative director." Jim Edgar said, "I've asked him to stay for one more session to transition it. I will make you the House liaison and the deputy director, and you will be the legislative director once this session's over. But this is very important..." and he gave me this big, long lecture about how important it is and what a serious job it is and unless you've done it, you don't really know it. I said, "Well, have you ever done being governor before?" "That's different." (DePue laughs) I mean, it wasn't a very good conversation.

He asked if I would do that. I said, "I'll think about it," and I left, because I wasn't quite so sure that I hadn't been double-crossed. I went home and talked with Sue about it, and I was very disappointed in what was happening to me. And really did pray about it. I went back and told him that I wanted to continue in the administration, I understood what he considered the difficulties would be; that I would over-perform and prove that his decision was wrong, but that I would abide by his decision. I said, "I will maintain forever: Kirk Dillard told me I was going to get that job." He said, "I'm sorry about that, but..." blah-blah-blah.

DePue: Did Kirk say that in the meeting itself?

Boozell: Oh, no, no. I told that again to Governor Edgar. No, when this came down in front of the governor-elect, Kirk Dillard didn't say a word. Didn't say a word. So, I don't know. He either misinterpreted something, overstepped his bounds maybe...whatever. Let bygones be bygones there, but that's just the way that was. So I took the job. I will tell you, though, to Jim Edgar's credit and to Kirk Dillard's credit, they made it perfectly clear from the very beginning that Mark Boozell is the House liaison and deputy director and will be the director of the office; Steve is going to transition Mark into the lead role as legislative director. So they made it clear that Mark's going to be the guy in six months, just not right now.

DePue: The way you described this, obviously you were very disappointed. Was there one of those two gentlemen that you especially were disappointed in? Was it Dillard, or was it Edgar, or was there a little bit of disappointment in them both?

Boozell: Oh, there's a lot of disappointment with both. Yeah, not even a little bit.

DePue: Put some strain in the relationship upfront?

Boozell: It did, maybe more with Kirk than with Jim Edgar. Sue told me, "Look, if Jim Edgar didn't tell you that, how can you blame him for not following through on what somebody else said?" I talked with Mike Lawrence about it; I think he was probably my confidant back then on that type of an issue. But in retrospect, it was probably the right decision for the new chief executive—to make sure that he had some experience in that position in getting his guy trained up. He obviously felt that I just wasn't up to speed enough in that area. He was probably right. I might have floundered; I might have failed; I might have screwed up the entire first legislative session had I just been dropped into that job. I don't think I would have, but if he thought I could have, he's the one who had to take the rap on it if something would have happened. It's much better than, I guess, having failed; just put off that dream job for a time period.

DePue: This is the second time that you've been put into this kind of a situation where there is some desire by Edgar to have this transition with people in the former administration still being retained while he's kind of training up the new guy.

Boozell: Oh, with Jane Flynn. That's right. That's exactly right. I hadn't thought of it that way. Now, that one, I talked him out of, didn't I? (laughs)

DePue: Yeah, you did. Maybe that's why it was different.

Boozell: Maybe that's why it was different. But you're right. Gosh, I hope it's not a reflection on me—maybe it was—but I think that it's a reflection on just how careful he was to make sure that things went right. It's like having a double

safety, I guess. But that's how that went down. True to his word, though, at the end of that session, Steve Selcke was appointed insurance director, and I was appointed legislative director; I stayed in that job for five years.

DePue: We're going to go back to the campaign only for this purpose: in the midst of the campaign, did either candidate have a sense of how serious the looming budget problem was in the state?

Boozell: No, I do not believe so. I only say that because I wouldn't know about the internal workings of the Hartigan campaign except just the offhanded "2 percent—Marge and I have done it" would seem to indicate that they had a dollar amount in mind. Whatever that dollar amount was, that's what it was, and that's how we would take care of that problem—just an across-the-board swipe. I know that Jim Edgar felt that extending the surcharge would take care of the problem; that's why he put his neck out on extending the surcharge, so he didn't have to talk about cutting services and how you would do all this cutting. You don't want to get into that in a campaign because then you'd have to talk about what you'd cut, right? I think that he felt, Extend the surcharge; we're just fine.

I don't believe that he had any indication of how serious the problem was. Our budget guy in the secretary of state's office was a gentleman by the name of Tom Herndon. During the [gubernatorial] administration, he was not. He wasn't even in the budget office. I think Tom stayed in the secretary of state's office, to tell you the truth, because then he came over with George Ryan and was one of his budget people. He wouldn't have even understood it if somebody had told him, and so I don't think that Tom was really involved in the campaign. I'm not sure we had a real budget person who was looking at the numbers. Joan might have been taking a look at that since she became the budget director then, but I don't think—

DePue: But she was coming out from Seattle, and she was fairly new to the state again.

Boozell: I don't remember her being involved in the campaign much at all, so it's not something that she would have looked at. I think that Jim Edgar probably just took the word of the Thompson folks at face value, that we're fine.

DePue: See, I would have to think that that would cause some hard feelings: at the end of Thompson's term, he hands over this significant problem to Edgar.

Boozell: "Oh, and by the way," yeah. Jim Edgar did talk about "the Thompson excesses" and all that kind of stuff subsequently; he wasn't bashful about that afterwards. But remember, Thompson was a very popular governor, too; people thought he might even run for another term. You don't want to tick off all those people who have a good feeling about the guy, even if you would

know there was something that was wrong there. But I don't think we knew that it was a serious, serious problem like that.

DePue: How quickly, then, after the inauguration did all this come to the forefront?

Boozell: It didn't take long. The transition team, I think, started to uncover some of what was going on out there, and maybe what wasn't being reported up from the agencies. I think that our transition team was a real, honest-to-goodness group of people that met in small groups and then in large groups, and published reports. We did written reports on budgets and programmatic issues going on in each of the different areas. I'm thinking that the transition team started to uncover some of this, and then that got people with their calculators out, working on the numbers. It was pretty quick that we knew that there was a serious problem.

Because remember, you come in, you're inaugurated in January. You've got six months left; you're halfway through the fiscal year. You're in a budget that a guy not running for office put together, a general assembly passed—they're all up for election too, and they don't really care. They just did what they were told and kind of zipped the budget through. So really, I'm sure not a lot of attention went into even putting that budget together. You say it's a balanced budget and it looks good, and you go for it. So looking to see how you can change the priorities, get the priorities rolling right off the bat, halfway through a budget that's already in place, that's when you start being able to identify where the problems are and what doesn't add up. It was pretty quick. I think that he was very surprised at the depth of the hole. I know that the leadership in the general assembly was surprised; I think that they had a hard time believing that the state was in as much of a fiscal problem as it was, because it took a lot of convincing to get anything done, as you know.

DePue: We're getting close to the time we need to finish up, so I want to just go through that legislative battle for the first budget. This would have been spring of 1991, so you would have been proposing the 1992 budget. Just walk through that one, because I know this was long and painful. I would have to imagine that that was the overwhelming focus of your job as the legislative liaison in the House, to work through that budget issue.

Boozell: Yeah. I've got to get my timeframe set here, too. I may have been the House liaison, deputy director. This is before I became the director of the legislative office, trying to get this first one through. I believe for the first time in the history of Illinois, the budget was introduced to the level below the prior year's appropriation. You might want to confirm that with Joan or somebody. It was a very austere budget. Now, in this first round, I was not privy to the leaders' meetings.

DePue: The leaders, meaning the Four Tops?

Boozell: Right. When the governor and the four legislative leaders met, back then, they each brought one person with them. Normally, the four leaders brought their chiefs of staff with them. Jim Edgar would have his chief of staff and his legislative director with him.

DePue: How about the budget director?

Boozell: Depended on the topic. Remember, everything that they meet on is not budget-related. Governor Edgar would bring Joan into those meetings when it was necessary, or other people as required. But he liked to keep the meetings low on attendance. He didn't like to have a lot of people; I think he was afraid that if all of a sudden one of the leaders said, "Well, you've got three people in here; I need a couple more people in here." You don't want to start that because then it just turns into a problem. As a matter of fact, we did start having meetings; they would bring in their budget negotiators. Each of the leaders had a point person on the budget, who would kind of sit down with all of their members to talk about priorities and what they could do and what they couldn't do, and count noses. So at times you'd have the leader and their budget negotiator come into the leaders' meetings as well. That's just one of those things.

That first budget, I had less to do, I guess, with the leadership side of it, because that was Steve Selcke in that first one. The next one wasn't much better; we came in low on that one, too. The hard part on the first one was convincing anybody that it was real, because they had been told so many times, over and over again, that everything was just fine and that the temporary surcharge was going to take care of everything, and that it would only need to be temporary; it wouldn't need to be permanent. Having not been in those leaders' meetings, I believe that a majority of the time was spent proving what was going on to the leaders so they could take that and represent it to their members. I know that Joan was made available to the caucuses; I think everybody took advantage of that—to have her come in and talk about what exactly was going on with the budget and why.

DePue: So she would testify in front of the entire Republican or Democratic caucus in each one of the houses?

Boozell: Right. It's not actually testimony because it's not a public hearing or anything. When I was a legislative director, I would do that routinely. The caucus would say, What are you guys thinking about this? And if the governor didn't want to go in, he'd send me. The governor rarely went into those things, especially at the end, but that's a whole different story—the Senate Republican caucus.

The budget battle, that first one, was a couple of things. It was establishing the credibility of the Edgar administration, and that what was being told about the numbers was actually the truth about the numbers. I think a lot of it was about trying to come to terms with the fact that they weren't

sitting across from Neil Hartigan. In my own mind, I equate this in many ways to how Republicans treated Bill Clinton when he became president. I think Republicans didn't really want to believe that he actually beat George Bush and that he was the president, and they kind of treated him like Jim Edgar was treated. I saw that; it was almost like he wasn't supposed to be there, so they weren't going to treat him like a governor, or they weren't going to acknowledge that he actually (laughs) was in there making the decisions. They were going to challenge him every single moment that they could, especially Mike Madigan. I think he had this sense that something had been taken from him—his own governor sitting there in front of him—and he wasn't quite prepared for how he was supposed to be working with this guy, because this guy wasn't supposed to be here.

So I think that establishing credibility was job number one for the Edgar administration, that this is all the right stuff. But then it was that thing that there's really nothing you could do about it other than have him just get over it. He won, and he's the governor, believe it or not; so now you've got to deal with this guy. Even though it's kind of that mental thing, it's, Now this staff guy's the governor; from staff guy to governor—it just doesn't seem right. I think that's how a lot of them thought. It wasn't only Democrats. There were Republicans who had that thought too and had a little trouble—they wanted to feel him out, see if he was a pushover. He didn't have that much legislative history with him; he kind of popped up, until he became the secretary of state.

DePue: Well, he had plenty of legislative experience pushing important issues as secretary of state.

Boozell: Yes, but not voting on them. He wasn't one of them.

DePue: Refresh my memory here. His relationship with Philip Rock, who was Senate president, you characterize as being somewhat problematic?

Boozell: Yes.

DePue: During his secretary of state years.

Boozell: During the secretary of state years, especially on the drunk driving legislation, and in his first—was it the first two years as governor that he was there?

DePue: First two years as governor, Rock was still president.

Boozell: We really never got much cooperation from the Senate Democrats, even as governor. It was just an extension of that... I just don't think it was a very good relationship, at least not from what I saw. Bill Holland, who is now the auditor general, was his chief of staff, and Bill would just prefer not even to give us the time of day. We wouldn't necessarily have any heads up on what was happening in the general assembly. We were going to get no

overextended courtesies from those guys on what was going on. This was especially problematic—especially on the budget, where they’re voting on these things—if you don’t know when they’re going to be voting or what they’re going to be voting on, or if they’re going to slip some kind of an amendment in, or if they’re going to put their own budget together.

One of our biggest battles on the budget, every single year starting with the first one, was—and this will sound silly, but it’s really not—who’s going to draft the bill? Jim Edgar, from the very first day, insisted that the governor’s office would draft the bill. The legislature would always insist that they were going to draft the bill, because there are so many numbers and so much goes into those budgets, and it was a budget bill, that it was very easy to slip stuff around in there; which is why Edgar wanted to draft the budget bill, and which is why they wanted to draft the budget bill. We won that battle every single time. We always drafted the bill. As a matter of fact, it might have been just after that first one—and you might want to check with Joan on this—but we started breaking the bill up into many bills. We would have a public safety bill, a transportation budget bill, a human services budget bill, so that it was more manageable.

DePue: That were acted on separately?

Boozell: Yes, voted on separately instead of “the budget.” That first year, it may not have worked so well, and we might not have even done it the second year. We might have waited till the third year, because when you start doing that, you can have some people drop off one or the other. Republicans can drop off a human services bill, and you might have a problem getting something passed in there, as opposed to the state police bill or something like that—which was the beauty of having one big vote. But Edgar’s point was, How can anybody know what they’re doing—once again, the government side of him going out. How can they have any idea what they’re voting on? Shouldn’t they be able to make more changes to what they want to do, in smaller bites than that huge bite. But if we would have done that in the beginning, we may still be sitting there in overtime session.

DePue: It did go, at that point in time, for a pretty historic length of the overtime session. I think it was July eighteenth or in that neighborhood, when we finally had a budget, and they had already missed a payroll, which I’m sure you recall.

Boozell: Right. I think we called it June forty-ninth. (DePue laughs) Missing the payroll was a big deal, because that was the first time in a long time that a payroll had been missed. It was one of those things that I think the Democrats probably believed: this kid will blink. He’s not going to have a payless payday for his state employees. He’s the governor; he’ll wear the jacket for that one, and so we’ll run right up to it, and we’ll make him blink. He just never did.

- DePue: When you say “We’ll make him blink,” what were the Democrats trying to squeeze out? How was this bill going to be different?
- Boozell: The Democrats wanted more money appropriated, [even] if it had to come out of something else, and it was probably for human service–type areas that they wanted more money, because we did all of the Medicaid savings. Over the years—and I don’t know what all happened in the first year—managed care and all that kind of stuff was happening, which they don’t like to see cuts in. The Republicans were less likely to care about the cuts happening. So I think that they wanted a reprioritization. I think what surprised the most, Speaker Madigan in particular, from the very beginning, was Jim Edgar’s tenacity. When he believed that he was right and he was doing the right thing, there was no reason for him to alter. You could probably call him stubborn even, to a point.
- DePue: It depends on which side of the political fence you’re on.
- Boozell: That is exactly right. Are you being stubborn or obstinate? My impression is that the Speaker finally decided, You know what? This guy is showing some leadership; he’s an admirable adversary to me; he’s going to have to wear the jacket for what he does, and maybe it’ll all go wrong.
- DePue: You’re saying that from the perspective of what Mike Madigan was thinking.
- Boozell: What Mike Madigan may have been thinking, why he would actually let the thing go.
- DePue: I want to go back to a couple of constitutional issues, just to make sure I understand this. The 1970 constitution—didn’t that document basically give the governor’s office the lead in developing the budget?
- Boozell: Um-hm. Now, I’m talking about drafting. Are you talking about that?
- DePue: Yeah.
- Boozell: Of course, the governor’s office would always draft the bill and have it introduced. I’m talking about the final budget that actually passes, the one that you actually vote on, the one that you made all the changes. The question was always, who is going to draft that legislation line-by-line for everybody else to review? That was always the battle.
- DePue: How was it done in Thompson’s era?
- Boozell: More and more, I believe, especially toward the end of the Thompson era, the legislature would come in, and they would draft up all the amendments. They would draft the bill; they would put the bill together and say, Here it is; give the governor’s office three thousand pages of numbers to review and say, “We’re going to vote on this, oh, by the way, at eight o’clock.” Edgar had

seen those tricks before. That's when you kind of slip stuff in, you get stuff that you wouldn't necessarily get in there, and he wasn't going to stand for that. He'd seen that happen before. So he wanted to be in charge; he wanted to control the flow of that information and the delivery of that information at every step.

DePue: The constitution also requires, does it not, that the annual budget be a balanced budget?²⁸

Boozell: It does. That requirement is satisfied by somebody in the legislature—they did it this year. It's a procedure where somebody stands up and says, In accordance with Article Blank, Section Whatever, of the Illinois constitution, this budget is balanced. One legislator stands up and declares that the budget that we're about to pass is balanced.

DePue: (laughs) Whether it is or not?

Boozell: Clearly, because where are we today? How could this general assembly have followed the constitution if everybody who works in the building acknowledges that there's an eleven and a half billion-dollar deficit? Right? So yeah.

DePue: It doesn't give you great faith in the legislative process when you reflect on that.

Boozell: Sometimes it doesn't give you great faith when you reflect. In the end, though, I think the real test on that balanced budget requirement is, remember, you're selling bonds and financial instruments that the state owns, which you have to prove you have the wherewithal to be able to handle. That's what we were always worried about—a downgrade in the state's bond rating. I think the state has received a downgrade recently, as a matter of fact, because of the shenanigans. But other than the constitutional requirement—which is really just a statement of fact—from the executive's perspective, you have to be careful about the real financial implications to the state if in fact you're not [balanced]. The governor does have some authority to release funds or not release funds. Just because they're appropriated and he signs an appropriation, doesn't necessarily mean that he has to have all the funds released or spent. There are some ways to do that, or to get around that requirement as well.

DePue: One other reference to the 1970 constitution, which significantly, in my perspective, strengthened the hand of the chief executive because it gave the governor a line-item veto and also gave him an amendatory veto. So all those things that legislators can try to sneak into the bill at the end of the session, could end up being crossed out by a line-item veto, I would think.

²⁸ Article VIII, Section 2 of the Illinois Constitution.

Boozell: That's true. However, when you're nineteen days overdue on a state budget and you have one bill, it's either got to be signed or not, if you want that payroll. Now, that's not exactly true, because a line-item veto is gone until the general assembly acts on it; an amendatory veto, the reduced amount does go into effect until the general assembly acts on it. So if they appropriated a dollar and the governor amendatory vetoed that, dropped the number down to a lower number, the number he signed would go into effect until they had a chance to override him or accept that change. You could reduce some stuff that way, but there's a point where you've got to just make a decision, too. But you're right, you can get some of that stuff out. They do have the opportunity to override you, so you can still be out of balance and whacked out there, too. Remember, too, the other constitutional oddity in the state of Illinois is this pocket signature. The governor doesn't have a pocket veto in Illinois; the governor has sixty days from the date he receives a bill on his desk to act on that legislation. On the sixty-first day, it becomes a law.

DePue: So just the opposite of federal.

Boozell: Right, right. We have a pocket signature instead of a pocket veto.

DePue: How was Edgar in terms of applying those tools?

Boozell: He never did a pocket signature. He said that wouldn't be honest, so he never let a bill become law by not signing it. We amendatory vetoed, and line-item vetoed, lots of legislation. As a matter of fact, Speaker Madigan instituted a new procedure in the general assembly because of Jim Edgar, where he would determine whether or not a governor's amendatory veto was appropriate. He felt that in the beginning of the administration, Governor Edgar overstepped his bounds in rewriting legislation and was legislating through the executive branch. So he instituted a rule in the House, where he could declare that the governor had exceeded his amendatory veto authority, and therefore the amendatory veto failed. There was some argument about Jim Edgar and how much he amendatory vetoed bills, and it made us watch out about that a little bit more. It was an awful lot of work. My first full legislative session after that first year, when I became the director—no, actually, I take that back, because the first session, when it got done, Steve Selcke left.

DePue: So that would have been August 1991?

Boozell: Right. We had sixty days to act on 939 pieces of legislation, and Steve said, (laughter) "On my way to the Department of Insurance—see you later!" So I did take over—I'm sure that will be a long discussion—the bill analysis and the advice procedure to the governor on what to do on those bills. But 939 pieces of legislation—I'll never forget that number—passed that first year, and every one of those file folders was stacked in my office, just floor to ceiling.

DePue: This is probably a good time, then, to end our discussion for today and pick it up next time. That natural break—you're moving into real authority.

Boozell: Perfect.

DePue: We'll have some more fun in a couple weeks, then. Thank you, Mark.

Boozell: Okay, thank you.

(end of interview #2 #3continues)

Interview with Mark Boozell

ISG-A-L-2009-028.3

Interview # 3: September 9, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, September 9, 2009. My name is Mark DePue, Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. We have the privilege of being with Mark Boozell this morning. Good morning, Mark.

Boozell: Good morning, Mark.

DePue: (laughs) Sounds kind of weird.

Boozell: Happy oh-nine oh-nine oh-nine.

DePue: Yeah, how about that? I was listening to your story before, preparing for this, about the psychic and the election, so there you go.

Boozell: That's right.

DePue: Had a very good interview the last couple times. We have already covered your experiences while Edgar was secretary of state, doing legislative liaison work, and discussed the election. You've gone through the first year, and the

budget battles especially, but we're about at the point where we are ready to start talking about your role as the director of legislative affairs. Is that the appropriate title?

Boozell: Director of legislative affairs for the governor is the appropriate title, right.

DePue: We might have talked about that a little bit, but talk again about how you finally got that position, because I know you were backup for Selcke for the first year.

Boozell: Right. One of Governor Edgar's biggest concerns, I think, coming into the governor's office was to make sure that he had a blend of both old and new. He knew that he had to actually govern. He had to run a government; he didn't just have to get elected—which I think is very different than many people today at both the state and federal levels. He had been a staff person for many different elected officials for some time, and he understood the importance of being able to govern once you were actually elected to the office. So even though during the election he actually had to make the statement that none of Thompson's agency directors would stay in the same role in an Edgar administration—because he was being criticized for the fourth term of Jim Thompson, or something like that. He might have them in a different area, but they wouldn't stay there. But he wanted to make sure that he had a blend of old and new—folks who knew what was going on, who had helped run a government—so there could be some continuity where it was important, and yet at the same time, bring in new people, bring in his people who were loyal to him and had supported him throughout the years. Kirk Dillard, for example, had been Governor Thompson's director of legislative affairs and had come over to be the first chief of staff for Jim Edgar.

The legislative process, the governor knew, was going to be very important because we had a big budget problem, which we knew partially going in and then found out the rest when we got in there. It was important to have good legislative contacts. So he asked Steve Selcke, who had been in Governor Thompson's legislative office, to move into the director's position for the first legislative session, and asked me to be the deputy director, one of the House liaisons, for that first session and work into the role. The day the general assembly adjourned that year, Steve Selcke went over to become director of insurance, and I took over the unenviable task, I think, of having to act on all of the legislation that had passed that first year—which is a big part of what a legislative director does. As I mentioned in our last meeting, I'll never forget the number: 939 bills passed (DePue laughs) that first year, and there were stacks and stacks and stacks of files in the office when I took over.

DePue: We are going to jump way back to 1982, because after our last interview, you mentioned that you recall rather vividly the experiences in 1982 with the Equal Rights Amendment fight.

- Boozell: Yes, Mark. I think there are three things that I really remember. One of them was being on the floor of the House as a staff member; I would have been the legislative liaison for the Department of Transportation, I believe, when this occurred. I was on the floor of the House at that time. In those days, the legislative liaisons for the agencies each had access to the floor of the House. There were also 177 members of the House of Representatives. The Cutback Amendment—
- DePue: The vote had been in 1980, so it hadn't gone into effect yet.
- Boozell: —hadn't gone into effect as I remember, because it was a crowded place. Somehow, the Equal Rights Amendment supporters had gotten onto the floor. Several of them had gained access to the floor. Sometimes members could bring people in with them. A switch—once, during maybe Jim Edgar's very first budget address, when he was talking about cutting the state budget and cutting a lot of human service programs, a Democrat legislator had brought a guest on the floor who was an activist against all of the budget cuts, and she stormed the podium while Jim Edgar was giving the address.
- DePue: Jim Edgar?
- Boozell: Jim Edgar, yes. Of course, he had two bodyguards standing on either side of the podium, hanging out. He was just giving a budget address on the floor of the House. You would never think that anything would happen.
- DePue: This is 1982?
- Boozell: No, this is later. I said I jumped. It reminded me of getting people on the floor.
- DePue: I'm sorry to interrupt.
- Boozell: That's okay. We can talk about that later. Anyway, somebody had let people on the floor back in 1982. I think probably members let them on. So a whole group of women who supported the Equal Rights Amendment laid down in front of the Speaker's podium, on the floor of the House—just laid down all over the floor. You could barely move around in the chamber anyway because there were so many people, and these women were lying all over the floor. George Ryan was the Speaker at the time; he came in from the side to walk up to the podium, he was trying to step around these women, and he stepped on one of them. Now, I don't believe for a minute that he would have stepped on anyone on purpose, but of course that caused a whole big brouhaha about how he was abusing these women on the floor, stepping on them and trampling them and blah-blah-blah. So that was one thing I remember about it; that was a big deal. Of course, he had people brought in to physically remove the women from the floor, which caused another whole big scene.

I also remember the women who staged the hunger strike; it could have been the same women. They camped out on the third floor. Right outside

of the House chambers, there's kind of a well area where the elevator goes up and down. They would spend a lot of time there, but at night I think they slept on the first floor, kind of in that same well area. I remember them having to bring in cots for these women because they were starting to get dehydrated and not feel well—and caused a bunch of problems. So I remember the women on cots all over the place, lying around there, causing a big stir.

Once again, I just happened to be standing at the third floor brass rail, just hanging out one day, when the women came and threw the blood at the Senate chambers, the pig's blood. That was quite a scene to see, too, because you didn't exactly know what they were hurling at the door at first; you just saw this stuff going, and then it turned out to be this blood. The big issue then was that it hit the American flag, so they actually arrested the women for defacing federal property and took them downstairs and handcuffed them and hauled them away for that incident. Those are the Equal Rights Amendment memories—(laughs) all great memories.

DePue: We'll put you on the spot here, Mark. What was your personal view on the subject at the time?

Boozell: I think my personal view was that it wasn't necessary, that it wasn't needed.

DePue: Has that changed any, since that time?

Boozell: We don't have it, and things seem to be fine, so I guess I was right. (laughs)

DePue: Let's jump up a decade now and get back in—

Boozell: Was that a fair question, Mark? (laughter)

DePue: No, but, you know.

Boozell: I've never been elected to anything, just so you know.

DePue: Nor do you intend to run.

Boozell: Nor do I intend to run, right.

DePue: Let's jump ahead a decade and get you back into the director of legislative affairs in 1992. We're still on some pretty tough budget battles at that time, when you assumed the role. You'd already talked about having the stack of bills that had already been passed in that particular timeframe. Talk about going into the next phase of the budgetary battles and your role in that.

Boozell: I'm probably going to get mixed up on timeframes. If I do, you can correct me, because it's been a while. It seemed as though, because of the situation that we were put in, it was always budget battle mode. Remember, we had Democrats controlling both the House and the Senate, and a Republican in the

governor's office. While there had been fourteen years of spending, and really unfettered spending—nobody really cared too much about it—all of a sudden there was this concern that we were really overspending and had to cut back. Much like now, it's just a very hard decision to make once you start looking at the budget.

So I stayed as involved as I possibly could with the budget director, the budget office, and the folks—I don't remember what we called them, but we had these programmatic directors. We had people in charge of the human services area of government or the public safety area of government.²⁹ The director of legislative affairs was considered a cabinet-level office under Jim Edgar, so I made sure to keep in touch with everybody, because ultimately, the general assembly had to vote on any cuts that we made. You really had to make sure that you knew a little bit about everything. You didn't have to be an expert on anything, but you had to know a little about everything. I made sure to stay in those meetings and close contact with those folks about what was going on with the budget.

Come to learn—most of the state budget—you can't cut most of it. I don't know what the percentage is, but it's probably approaching 90 percent of the budget. There are certain levels of education and human services and public safety and prisons and road construction—federal entitlement programs, or state matches to federal funds for highway funds and human services funds. The vast majority of the state budget, you really cannot cut into; it's there, and it has to be there. So what you're looking at is either eliminating the entire workforce of state government and having nobody to do any of the jobs, or making real systemic changes that require not just cutting the budget, but passing legislation and changing the way things are done in Illinois. That's what we ended up having to do.

The governor cut employees—he had to. He let the agency directors have a big say in what they could and could not live with. Once again, back to making sure that you were able to govern. Since he had to make the commitment that all the agency directors had to change, he at least made sure that there was somebody in every agency, who had been there for quite some time, in a secondary role to advise the new director on what they could and could not do when it came to headcount reductions and things like that.

Then once again, we had to work with the legislators and their staffs. Everybody has somebody somewhere that they want to make sure they protect. Everybody has a program somewhere, a pet project to them, that they want to make sure is funded at an appropriate level. Every legislative leader seems to have a wife on the Illinois Arts Council (DePue laughs), or

²⁹ Boozell is referring to a distinctive feature of Edgar's first gubernatorial administration, his assignment of broadly related policy areas to "executive assistants," who constituted a "super-cabinet." The first six executive assistants were Michael Belletire, George Fleischli, Felicia Norwood, Allen Grosboll, Erhard Chorle, and Mary Ann Louderback.

somewhere tucked away, so you have to make sure that you don't do what, for example, Rod Blagojevich did, and inflame everybody. We weren't into that. We had to make some changes they didn't like, probably, but Jim Edgar, having been a member of the legislature, understood that they were an integral part of getting anything accomplished.

DePue: Do you remember any particular agencies or directors of agencies that pushed back harder, which were problematic in terms of relations?

Boozell: Budgetary relations or other relations?

DePue: Budgetary.

Boozell: Just budgetary? No, I don't. Remember, all of the agency directors were his folks, his team of people. He had regular cabinet meetings. He would have meetings of the entire cabinet over in the ballroom at the mansion to make sure that everybody was on the same page. He made it perfectly clear through his budget director, Joan Walters, that we were all in this together, and we had to come together to form a solution. So I don't remember anybody in the budget battles who had big animosities or really... Everybody wanted to make sure that they fought to keep as much as they could. If you say you can take whatever you need out of my agency—personnel-wise, for example—and we'll make do, then all of a sudden something happens and you've got a crisis; then you're in the front page of the paper and the governor looks bad. That's even worse than having let some employees go.

DePue: You mentioned Joan Walters, the budget director. Probably one of the least desirable positions in the government at that time.

Boozell: Well, sure.

DePue: Your impression of her as the budget director.

Boozell: Oh, I loved Joan. As a budget director, she was very capable, because Joan always kept her eye on the ball. She knew what the endgame was. While there were hundreds of people over in that building across the street trying to get her on a different path or move some other way, she kept her eye on the ball. She knew exactly where she was going. She knew who her boss was, understood that; she had a single purpose, and she accomplished it. A lot of people could, and I think have—in not just the budget director's position but in other positions—you either have friendships or you start relying on other outside groups or interest groups or something like that, and you get your eye off the ball and try to help somebody out or do this or that. But that wasn't Joan. And she told it like it was, too; she didn't sugarcoat it.

Dr. [Robert] Mandeville, who was before Joan—in my opinion, he was more the kind of guy who wanted to be the expert and be able to tell everybody how they were right and everything was good and everything was

going fine. He could explain that all to you on an intellectual basis; that everything was good, even when it wasn't. The legislative leadership and the legislators themselves weren't used to having the budget director look them in the eye and say, "No, this is terrible. This whole place is going to collapse, and in no time, if we don't do something—and here's what we have to do." "Well, we can't do that." "Then here's the options. Here's what we can do, but this is even more stringent." She was very direct.

Now remember, Joan had served in two and a half and the governor's legislative office [under Thompson] with Jim Edgar. I don't know her background prior to that, but she wasn't a stranger to the legislative process or the legislators. But when she got in the budget role, she knew she had a very important position, she knew what the endgame was, she knew who she reported to; she switched over from this buddy-buddy legislative person to, This is the way it is, friends, and this is what we have to do. And they didn't like it. They didn't like her because they didn't like the message.

DePue: Was she something of a lightning rod for criticism that maybe Edgar didn't get quite as much?

Boozell: I hadn't thought of that, but that could have been the case, plus the fact that she was a woman; you hadn't had any women in those real high, important roles. Governor Thompson had some women on his program staff; Paula Wolff, I think, was a program staff person, front office staff.

DePue: Paula?

Boozell: Paula Wolff. But Joan may have been one of the very first female cabinet officials for a governor. If not, at least one of the highest-ranking ones who were making real serious decisions that affected everybody's everyday lives. For Pate Philip, she wasn't conservative enough. For Phil Rock, how dare she touch these human services things... So she really was in a no-win situation.³⁰

DePue: You mentioned two of the four. How about the other two? Mike Madigan?

Boozell: Mike Madigan—let's do him last. Who was...

DePue: Lee Daniels would have been.

Boozell: In my estimation, Lee wanted to look like he was maybe the closest person to the governor that there was, even though he wasn't. Appearances were very important to him, so he wanted to look like he was Jim Edgar's best friend. He wanted to go jogging with Jim Edgar, who didn't jog—stuff like that. He kept

³⁰ For her extensive discussion of budgetary politics under Governor Edgar, see Joan Walters, interview by Mark DePue, July 29, 2009, beginning at 12. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

pushing, doing things like that to make it look like he was really very close to him. That never worked out.

It was a rough relationship with all of them in the beginning because you're this guy who had served one term in the House, was a staffer, became governor. Even though he was the secretary of state and got the most votes, I just think it was hard for these guys to think that some staffer had become the governor. I think it boiled down to that in many cases—the kind of relationship thing. With Phil Rock, it was the DUI laws. He hated them; he didn't like them when Jim Edgar did them, and he held that against him, I think, forever. Pate Philip—it was because Jim Edgar wasn't conservative enough, didn't come up through the ranks; he wasn't a precinct committeeman, he didn't walk precincts in DuPage County, and so, by God, he wasn't the right guy to be there. For Lee Daniels, he wanted to be the best friend, the best buddy, but he wasn't, and so he took shots when he probably shouldn't have and worked around us when he shouldn't have. Speaker Madigan—I think he always had in his mind, along with Phil Rock, that this is wrong; Jim Edgar's not supposed to be the governor; it's supposed to be Neil Hartigan; he's not legitimate because we don't believe he should be there. And he wouldn't treat him like a governor. If he treated him like anything, it was like a peer, not like someone who was superior to him, in a different branch of government. So it was all dicey for the longest time. That all worked itself out, but in the beginning, it was all dicey.

DePue: But it's curious, the relationships you're talking about here, because obviously the predecessor is Jim Thompson. Jim Thompson, when he came into office as the governor, had a lot less to be talking about in terms of his personal experience than Jim Edgar did. Thompson had no experience in the legislature. So was there something personality-wise about Jim Edgar as well?

Boozell: Jim Edgar probably wasn't as big a back-slapper as Jim Thompson was, clearly. Once he was elected governor, he thought he should be governing. I think he probably did. If we could have done something differently, maybe it would have been to pay more attention in the beginning to the legislature, give them a little more recognition. We didn't bring them over to the mansion enough. We started that later on, I think once we determined that maybe we needed a better relationship with the legislature. When I got in there, we did start doing some different things. The governor and Mrs. Edgar and the kids moved into the mansion, and you can really use that place; we didn't in the beginning. Then of course, when we did, he decided not to serve alcohol. (laughter)

DePue: They weren't smoking there either, were they?

Boozell: No. Oh, no. There's no smoking and no drinking. (laughter) So you invite a bunch of legislators over for hot cider and... That didn't go over that well either, in the beginning.

DePue: But to go back to what we were talking about at our last session as well, Governor Edgar did push through a budget that first year. He had to wait them out for eighteen days and it got ugly, but I have heard that people like Madigan had a grudging respect because the guy held his guns, so to speak.

Boozell: That is absolutely true. That's what changed the relationship, I think, with the Speaker, because he probably figured he could push this guy over, he could wait him out, he could make him change his priorities, he could make him cave to do what he wanted to do because he was this rookie governor who really shouldn't be there, this little staff guy—you know, the whole thing. But Jim Edgar held his guns, because he knew he had to govern. These guys all got to go home, go back to their districts, but he knew he had to stay here and manage this government. That's what kept him so focused on making the changes that he wanted to have made.

Plus, I will tell you—back to Joan Walters—Joan really knew her stuff; she became an expert on everything, unlike me. I thought it was more important that I be general; I had to know something about everything. Joan felt that she had to know everything about everything, and she really spent a lot of time doing that. So Governor Edgar really did take her word for it on budget issues; she was an expert in all the areas. As I remember, she did have some background in human services, which is where we had to go for a lot of the money—it's where a lot of the money is at. He did have a great respect for Joan, and he stuck with her.

DePue: We've been talking about the governor quite a bit here, but let's kind of take a step back. I would ask you to describe Edgar at this phase in his career. Put some adjectives, if you will, to the man.

Boozell: Stubborn, committed, I think a little thin-skinned, aloof. Maybe because he was a little bit insecure in having become the governor when—as we mentioned before—we all thought in that last couple of weeks he was going to lose. He'd have to speak for himself, but I'll bet you... If I was him, I would have been scared to death. (laughs) He knew that there were budget problems but, as I'm sure he's told you, wasn't privy to how big the problems were. He came in committed to changing things.

At the same time, he was very confident, because this is a guy... This is one thing about him that I've always admired; it's a quality that I don't have. This might be one of the reasons he had some rough patches with the legislative leaders: he always knew that he was right; he always knew that the decisions he made were the right decisions. You could talk till you were blue in the face. He always wanted to hear opposing points of view. I think I've mentioned to you before, I kind of took that as far as I could. I thought that it was very important, at least on legislative matters, before you sign legislation, to get every side of an issue. I'd take the other side on purpose even if I didn't believe it, and fight for it just to make sure we were doing the right thing at

times. But this man—99.9 percent of the time, he just knew that his decision was the right decision.

That went over very well with the public, I think, more than the general assembly. The general assembly, of course, all thought they were right all the time, too. They are (DePue laughs) all elected officials, and the planets revolve around them. But the public—I think they liked having somebody in charge who knew themselves. They were comfortable making decisions; they had senses of responsibility, and they knew what they were. I know of many, many times, you would hear people say, “I might not always agree with the guy, but at least you know where he stands.” That was a great quality that helped us through the budget battles, because he just knew that he was making the right decision for the time, and he really stuck to it.

So he was stubborn, but it was a good stubborn, and he was confident. I think he was a little bit scared; at times, I think he might have second-guessed himself, but he’d never show it, and he’d always come back. He liked to hear all the circular arguments to get right back to where you got, how you made that first decision. He enjoyed the staff arguing among themselves over topics; I think he liked that because then he could get some different perspectives, kind of make sure he knew what he was doing.

DePue: Who were the people involved in those discussions?

Boozell: Some of the biggest arguers, I remember, were Mike Belletire. Mike could create a problem where none was ever contemplated; he was always good at finding a little problem or what could be a problem somewhere.

DePue: Is he one of the assistant chiefs of staff at the time? Let me look real quick. Mike might have been one of the programmatic guys. Deputy chief of staff, yeah.

Boozell: Oh, okay. Was he for Kirk Dillard?

DePue: I’m not sure what deputy chief of staff meant at that time for the Edgar administration because I knew, like you said, that Edgar had set up these people who were in programmatic areas.

Boozell: Right. It was called the super-cabinet. Mike was in there. So you had Mike Belletire and George Fleischli and Mike Lawrence, Joan Walters, Felicia Norwood, and Al Grosboll. These were people who were passionate about the areas they were involved in—and they weren’t bashful to let it be known—and whose opinions Jim Edgar really took to heart.

DePue: You had mentioned something very interesting before, and again, keep the focus on your impressions of Jim Edgar at this time. Was it more important, at this point in his career, that he’s winning elections or that he’s a good governor?

Boozell: Oh, there's no question in my mind that if somebody said, "Look, Jim, if you make this decision, you might think it's the right decision, but you're going to lose the election over it," he'd say, "I'm going to make that decision." There's no question in my mind that once he was elected, he knew that he had a big job, and he was going to damn well do that job; he was going to do it right, the way he thought it should be done. There's no question in my mind.

DePue: We've talked before about the challenges of trying to balance the budget to make the cuts in places, and you get to the programmatic areas. I want to ask you a question; I might be asking for too much detail here—I apologize upfront for putting you on the spot. Welfare reform is one area that you can find some saving, but it's awfully difficult to do that. Was that one of the areas that he was focusing on?

Boozell: Yes, it was. The whole point was to take people off the welfare rolls who didn't need to be there. The thought was that as things go unchecked for long periods of time, things happen where there are people on the Medicaid rolls who don't need to be there. As a matter of fact, that's an argument in the gubernatorial election today, in 2009. It's now a matter of fact that folks who do not qualify in Indiana for Medicaid come over to Illinois and qualify. They don't even have to be a resident. So yes, we looked at human service reforms. I recall looking at reforms in hospitals. There was a bed tax that hospitals were asked to implement. Many of these things were done to maximize the acquisition of federal funds. You could only cut your way so far, so you had to add revenues as well as cutting. Being able to maximize federal funding was one huge way to do that. The human services side of things is where we looked at how we could maximize the acquisition of federal funding. I think we did a pretty good job of that. As I remember, we instituted a bed tax that all the hospitals to this day are utilizing.³¹ I know that we knocked people off of the welfare rolls, which might have been when the lady stormed the podium that one time. That probably had something to do with something like that.

DePue: What timeframe would that have been?

Boozell: I'm trying to think, but it might have been the second budget. It may have been the second budget, because we certainly weren't adding money into anything yet. As I recall, one of the African-American legislators had had this woman come in as his guest, and she was somebody who was a known antagonist on the budget stuff. The governor had just started his speech. If you're looking at the podium, I was sitting on the right-hand side in front of that first row of legislators. The whole cabinet sat up there then. The cabinet was sitting up in the front of the legislators, in chairs, along with the other constitutional officers peppered around. There were two state police security

³¹ The "bed tax" is most likely the Hospital Assessment Program. See Arnold Kanter, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 29, 2009, 34-38, for discussion of his work creating this program, which significantly boosted the amount of federal Medicaid payments Illinois received.

guys standing back by those two doors behind the podium. He's giving his speech, and all of a sudden you hear this commotion; this woman started screaming at him, running down the Democrat aisle toward the governor; she's charging the podium. And (claps) it happened in a split second. Terry Gainer, who was the director of the state police, was sitting on the Democrat side. She's running down the aisle—he just stood up and grabbed her (laughter) and took her away. I remember the governor joked many, many times about how great it was to have all the security around him when one of his agency directors had to grab the woman storming the podium.

DePue: It's interesting you mention the name, because every time you see the president of the United States give an address to Congress, he's always leading the president in now.

Boozell: Right. Now he's the Director of the Capitol police force, so he'll be on TV tonight.

DePue: He would be, wouldn't he?

Boozell: I think that the human services community came up with the name "Edgar Scissorhands" for Governor Edgar—I think that was when that was all happening—because *Edward Scissorhands* was a movie at the time.

DePue: Again, going back to my discussion with Joan Walters about the series of budget cuts, you have that first big battle in 1991. You've got a budget for 1992; you go into 1992, and you realize the revenues just aren't coming in. So in January or sometime, you've got to go back and make more cuts to the current budget while you're still looking ahead and trying to develop the package for the next calendar year. It had to be incredibly challenging during that time.

Boozell: It was incredibly challenging, and this is when the governor brought me, not into the budgeting process, but enough into the process, because I was his contact with the legislative leadership and many of the key legislators on the approp staff, where I had worked. So I started becoming more involved in the budget meetings, and became a little more active there. When we had that record overtime session, my job every morning was to go to the Speaker's office and just kind of say, "Are we ready yet?" "No." "All right." He'd go in and convene the House and adjourn it, and I'd go back and tell the governor we had nothing, or call him at the mansion or whatever was going on. Maybe that's the other adjective to use for the governor at the time. Disappointed—is that an adjective?

DePue: Now you're putting me on the spot.

Boozell: I don't know. Because when you run for office, you expect that you're going to be able to do proactive things, and you have an idea of things you'd like to accomplish. All of a sudden, through no fault of this man's own, he's not

getting to do things; he's having to be the bad guy. He doesn't get to come in and proactively accomplish new programs, get a lot of stuff done right off the bat. He's spending all of his time on the budget.

Now, the good part of that is, if that first year hadn't happened that way and then the next budget hadn't happened that way, he might not have been as immersed in the budget details as he had to become. From that point on, in every single leaders' meeting, Jim Edgar was the guy who didn't need to have a staff guy with him when they were talking about budget issues at the end of session. He knew exactly what was in that budget, and what he wanted in the budget and where it was, and all of the different ramifications if one thing or another happened. He knew the stuff, and he gained an awful lot of respect from these legislative leaders for being such an expert in so many different areas. I think they were possibly used to a governor who would just turn it over to a staffer; this wasn't the way Jim Edgar acted. So it probably was because of those first couple of years of such terrible budgets that he had to learn the details.

DePue: To get back to defining who Edgar is, one way of defining that, and what you were just talking about, is a hands-on governor.

Boozell: I'd say a micro-manager. (laughs)

DePue: That was my other term I was going to throw out there.

Boozell: I would say that. The one thing about Jim Edgar is he also knew that he could do your job better than you could, and he wanted to make sure you knew that too.

DePue: You had the unenviable position of doing the job he had done.

Boozell: In my case, it was just a foregone conclusion. (laughter) But as long as you understood that and acknowledged it, then you could move forward. I told you earlier, he's a great guy to work for, but he was not an easy man to work for either, because he expected perfection. He just expected perfection and didn't tolerate mistakes. You could make a mistake the first time and he'd understand how it could be a mistake, but the second time was inexcusable. So he was a taskmaster when it came to that. The public never saw that side of him; he was very good at keeping that at the staff level. He never lost his temper, I don't think, in public when he was out in a parade or something like that, or a meeting. He just didn't do that. He was very controlled. He had built his reputation as the kind of guy you would like to have as your next-door neighbor.

DePue: But what happened when he did lose his temper in a staff meeting or a discussion?

Boozell: He could lose his temper. If things got to the point where there were screw-ups or where there were problems, or something happened that really should not have happened, he'd raise his voice and he'd slam a hand on the table, he'd slam a door—make it perfectly clear that he wasn't happy with what was going on.

DePue: But the language never got salty?

Boozell: No, he was not a salty language kind of guy. No. If he was, I certainly wouldn't say it here. (laughter)

DePue: You were the point man for Joan Walters and for the governor himself. Were you also the liaison between the legislature and all of the directors?

Boozell: No, not with respect to the budget. Joan did handle that.

DePue: But other programmatic issues?

Boozell: For all legislative issues. The director of legislative affairs, under Jim Edgar, was responsible for putting together the administration's legislative agenda. What that included were regular meetings with every agency director and their legislative liaisons to discuss their legislative priorities. Back then, the session ended on June thirtieth. Really, the programmatic stuff, the substantive issues, were all handled fairly early, and the budgets became what you spent the last twenty, thirty days on—and sometimes over-session. Then I would get involved with directors on some of the budget issues, but never between Joan and the governor, and never between Joan and a director, unless that's what she wanted. On the legislative issues, yes. On the larger programmatic issues, that was the chief of staff's job.

But this was a team of people; if you could help somewhere, you would help, but you'd be careful not to do it unless they wanted you to do it. You didn't need to prove to Jim Edgar that you were better than somebody else or that you could do more than somebody else or that you could do their job maybe better than they were doing it. You didn't need to do that with Governor Edgar. He knew why he had you there, he knew what else you could do, and he knew you'd step in and do it when you needed to do it. So it wasn't a big competition among staff members, at least in the senior staff. It wasn't a competition, because I believe we all were very comfortable in our own skin, doing what we did for the governor, and we knew that he knew that.

DePue: Did you have any direct relations with the administration up in Chicago, with Daley himself? And this would be Richard M. Daley.

Boozell: Yeah, my relationship was with Forrest Claypool, who was Mayor Daley's chief of staff when I was the governor's chief of staff. I had that relationship when I was chief of staff. When I was legislative director [in the secretary of state's office], I maintained a relationship with a lady by the name of Kappy

Laing. Kappy Laing is still around; she's a lobbyist. Kappy was Mayor Washington's legislative director. Had a very good relationship, working relationship, with Kappy. Mayor Daley had a team of people, and the person who headed his team was Bill Luking. Bill is a contract lobbyist today, but he's still over in the Capitol building and has worked for the city. Bill was the mayor's guy in Springfield; I had a fine relationship with him. I don't think that the mayor and the governor got along as well as they could have, and I tried to change that when I was chief of staff at the end there for that short period of time, to at least go out with a level of respect. So I'd maybe spend a little more time with Forrest than other folks had spent with him.

DePue: But I always understood that Daley's man in the legislature was Mike Madigan. Would you say that would be correct? Maybe that was earlier in the timeframe.

Boozell: They served together in the legislature. Madigan's out of the 13th Ward. I know Madigan watched out for the city, obviously, but I don't know that I would say he was Daley's guy. Tim Degnan might have been more of Daley's guy in the legislature. There were so many of them, but ultimately everything was up to Madigan. I wouldn't have characterized him as Daley's guy.

DePue: How about your relations, the governor's relations, with the press?

Boozell: We all stayed away from the press as staff people unless we were told to engage with the staff.

DePue: Except for Mike Lawrence, I would assume.

Boozell: Except Mike. Of course, Mike Lawrence, Dan Egler—at different stages, Tom Hardy, Eric Robinson—all of these folks who were his press people. Mike, of course, was the guy in charge of all the press, and you didn't dare talk with press people. They always tried to get stuff out of you, but you always really left that up to Mike and his group.

When I was the legislative director, the political reporter here's name was Mark Randall. Mark Randall would take real cheap shots at Governor Edgar on occasion. So for some reason, I developed a relationship with Mark Randall—he probably sought me out, knowing that I was the legislative director. We talked, but I was always off the record and never told him anything that I shouldn't be telling him—probably had a beer together on occasion. So after a while there, Mike would ask me to do on-camera interviews with Mark Randall. I did lots of those. If something big was going to happen—the budget was going to pop, or whatever the big thing of the day was, or the end-of-session roundup—he'd come and set up the camera in my office on two and a half and sit there and do an interview. I'd be on TV half a dozen times in a legislative session. I think maybe Mike didn't want to be on camera. He wanted to make sure the governor was on camera, but at times you

don't want the governor out there talking about everything, so they had me doing that on occasion, which was kind of fun. It was a little bit cool.

DePue: Was the governor sensitive about the criticism he got through the press?

Boozell: Oh yeah. "Thin-skinned" I think was one of the adjectives I gave you.³² I wasn't Jim Edgar, but there were times I thought something was funny, and he certainly didn't think it was funny. Some of the shots they would take, or maybe the editorial cartoons. Was there a guy named Thompson who used to do all those cartoons?

DePue: Mike Thompson, I believe, and he always had a price tag on Edgar's hair.

Boozell: On the governor's hair, yeah. He did one one time where—I can't quite remember all of the details about what the issues were—but the thrust of it was that horse racing was more important to Edgar than anything else. He had some cartoon with horse races and the governor, and it was a very funny cartoon.

DePue: We should probably mention that horse racing was one of his pleasures.³³

Boozell: It still is one of his pleasures to this day. So this cartoon—it maybe had something to do with education funding, which I was working on, and horse racing—it was a really funny cartoon. So I asked Mike Lawrence, "Do you think that I could get the original of that cartoon? You know this Thompson guy; could you get it for me? I would just love to have it because I think it was the funniest one I've ever seen in twenty years." Mike said, "Yes, I probably could get it for you, but I don't recommend that you should have that cartoon. I think the governor's pretty sensitive about that." I said, "Okay, forget it." (DePue laughs) And didn't get the cartoon.

During the legislative director days, I think I mentioned to you, Governor Edgar had decided that unlike Jim Thompson—Jim Thompson would have a team of people tell him about the bills and what they all did, and they would make recommendations on whether he should sign them, amendatory veto, veto—whatever he should do to a bill. Jim Edgar said my job was to assimilate all that information on every single piece of legislation and sit down with him one-on-one and present every single piece of legislation to him: all of the pros, all of the cons, who's for it, who's against it, and a recommendation on what to do with it. I was the last person for five

³² For Edgar's view on press criticism, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 15, 2009, 104-106.

³³ Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 64-66.

years on every piece of legislation that this governor acted on; I got to make the final argument.³⁴

That was very heady for me because you were having a real part in policymaking; clearly you could skew things or not, or make sure that he knew stuff he should know on these. If you do something wrong, it's going to be found out because this is going to become a law. You had to always make sure that you were really 100 percent accurate. I worked my tail off learning—this is also where I had to know a little bit about everything. I had to know everything about that piece of legislation when I was talking with him, because he'd have a thousand questions. If I didn't have the answers and we had to go back and do something—we got close to drop dates on all of these things, so you didn't have much time after you presented it. It was a pretty intense time period. The legislature has thirty days to send you a piece of legislation after they act on it—and they acted on virtually everything mid- to end of June—then you had sixty days after they sent it to you, to act on it.

I would travel with the governor for sixty days, no matter where he went, no matter what he was doing. I could pretty much learn and memorize and remember the details on about two of those big bankers boxes full of bills at a time. Maybe about forty to fifty pieces of legislation at a time—I could keep in my brain and know what I had to know. Then I'd clear my mind out for the next forty or fifty. (DePue laughs) We reviewed bills in helicopters, in airplanes, in cars, and we did a fair amount of them at the racetracks. So at that time of the year, he'd like to do the county fair circuit and follow the ponies at the county fair circuit, so when they got to the state fairs, he'd know who to bet on because he'd watched them through the county fair circuit. I learned how to keep the little scorecard things for him (laughter) in between reviewing legislation, and learned quite a bit about the ponies. That was the bill review process that we would go through.

DePue: You said just a couple minutes ago that you would make recommendations on which way he should be voting or not voting on this. Was that based on discussions you'd had with directors and other people involved with developing the bills?

Boozell: Yes.

DePue: That's not your personal views on it?

Boozell: When I gave my personal views, which I did very rarely, I would tell him they were my personal views. But no, we had a pretty strict checklist. He wanted to know, for example, any agency that it would impact, what the director's recommendation was, what was his super-staff or policy staff

³⁴ This model actually mirrored Edgar's work as Thompson's legislative liaison, when he would "sit down with Thompson on every bill." Edgar also credited this work with shaping his view of the significance of signing a bill. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 10, 2009, 17 and 55.

recommendation, and what was the recommendation of any interest group that was affected by the legislation; then he would want to know exactly how many letters did he receive—letters and phone calls—pro and con on a bill. You'd give him all that information.

For example, one time when I gave my personal opinion was: It is law in Illinois today that if your windshield wipers are on, you have to have your lights on. That was a piece of legislation that Jim Edgar signed into law. If it's raining and your windshield wipers are on, you're required to have your lights on, or you could get a ticket. This thing passed and it got to his desk—it passed just about unanimously, I think; it was this big public safety issue—and got there for the final bill review and everybody's for it. I said, "But I have to tell you, I think you ought to veto this thing." He said, "Why? Why? Why?" I said, "How stupid do you think people are? Why should government have to tell somebody, 'If your windshield wipers are on, you better turn on your lights'? I think you're selling people short, you're telling them they're stupid, you're telling them what they have to do; I think it's a real intrusion of government into people's lives and what they should be able to figure out for themselves." He said, "You know what? You're absolutely right, but I've built my entire career on public safety. If I vetoed this bill, I'd get laughed out of the building." I said, "All right," so we signed the bill.

DePue: (laughs) You knew to stop arguing the point at that time.

Boozell: Oh yeah. You didn't argue a lot.

DePue: You were the legislative liaison director '92 to '95, so in that timeframe: the flood of '93. How much were you involved in the actions during the flood of '93?

Boozell: Not much at all. I traveled with him because we were doing bill reviews, and so I did get to view the flood from above. I did do some sandbagging stuff with him because I traveled extensively with him. I had no programmatic involvement in that. That was really pretty much all Al Grosboll—that was what he lived for—and the director of emergency services, I don't recall who it was at the time.³⁵

DePue: How about educational issues during the timeframe? That's really going to come to the forefront in his second administration.

Boozell: Right, when I was insurance director and he brought me back in for that topic. But during that timeframe, no. Education—I don't recall that being the big issue. It was budgets and building relationships with the general assembly.

³⁵ John Plunk was the director of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency. Discussion of the flood by Edgar's key responders is in Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, October 22, 2009, 1-25; Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009, 74-87; Howard Peters, interview by Mark DePue, January 21, 2010, 4-6; George Fleischli, January 27, 2010, interview by Mark DePue, 40-43.

DePue: Here's another issue; this might also put you on the spot, be something that you didn't deal with much. I know one of the other problems that Edgar inherited when he became governor was a big problem in DCFS [Department of Children and Family Services]. In 1988, DCFS, because of overloaded case loads and some real embarrassing situations, was placed under court supervision. Edgar turned a lot of attention to fixing that. But you also had, if you might recall, Joseph Wallace, this kid who was hung by his mother in 1993, and some other issues that really came to the forefront, which I'm sure caused the governor some great concern.

Boozell: Once again, on the legislative side—didn't have much to do with that. I do remember Jess McDonald was the director of the department at the time. The best thing that Jim Edgar had going for him when all of the DCFS abuse issues came up, was Jess McDonald at the agency, because he was highly respected by the legislature as somebody who was a very compassionate man. He wasn't just a bureaucrat kind of a guy who would address things from a fifty thousand-foot view. The legislature really liked him, so I think that was one of the big pluses there, but I didn't deal with those issues in that capacity.

DePue: I want to talk about the 1994 election, but in those first couple years, is there anything else that you'd want to address that really sticks out to you?

Boozell: If I think of it later...

DePue: Okay, then go back.

Boozell: Yeah, not right now.

DePue: So the 1994 election, he runs for reelection. Was there ever any doubt in your mind that he would want to run for reelection?

Boozell: Not at all.

DePue: Was it something that he'd discussed with you?

Boozell: No, but it was clear that he was going to run for reelection. He loved the job; he loved what he was doing; he felt he was having an impact; he felt he wasn't done with it. I think he felt that he could do more. Did I tell the story about Dawn Clark Netsch and the airplane last time?

DePue: No, and I definitely want to cover that.

Boozell: This is when he knew that he was going to run again. He had primary opposition because he always did. Steve Baer ran against him the first time in the primary—was the right-wing candidate. This time, I think it might have been Tom Roeser who was his right-wing opponent. (pause)

DePue: Go ahead.

Boozell: That wasn't such a big deal because he was a pretty popular governor and things seemed to be going well, but who was going to run against him? I think Glenn Poshard might have talked about it a little bit. There were people in and out who might run against him, who might not.

I'm on a state plane one day, flying from Chicago back to Springfield, having done something, and the only other person on the airplane with me was the comptroller, Dawn Clark Netsch. We were flying back together. I knew her; I'd known her from my legislative working, and we were just sitting there talking. I said, "So, we hear your name every once in a while, running for governor or not. What are you thinking? Can you say anything to me?" She said, "Mark, up or out." I said, "What did you just say?" She said, "I'm running for governor. It's up or out for me as far as I'm concerned." I said, "Really? Why is that?" We talked about it for a while, and she was just to the point where she wanted to move on with her career. She thought that she would make a great governor, and she wanted to run for governor.

We got back to Springfield, I hobnobbed it over to the governor (laughs)—I don't know if he was in his office or the mansion, wherever he was—and I found him. I said, "Dawn Clark Netsch is running against you for governor." He said, "You're nuts. She's not going to run against me. She wouldn't do it. She knows she'd lose," blah-blah-blah. I said, "I'm telling you, I was just on an airplane with her; I sat with her. She told me up or out; she's running for governor." He said, "I don't believe you." Within about thirty days, she announced, and he called me back in and told me that I was a great oracle. (laughter) I don't think so. But that was kind of interesting, that she became the nominee, then she started right off the bat. Carter was running the campaign again.

DePue: Let's back up a little bit, because she was in a contested primary, and a couple familiar names here: Richard Phelan and Roland Burris.

Boozell: Dick Phelan. He ended up running for something else, didn't he?

DePue: Roland Burris is the name that's really recognized.

Boozell: Dick Phelan was the Cook County Board president at the time. Roland Burris, (laughs) yeah...

DePue: Do you remember her commercial that seemed to cinch it for her?

Boozell: I absolutely do. It's when she had the straight shooter, the pool shot. Everybody says that she made that shot herself the first try. That's the legend.

DePue: Then she's spent some time in pool halls, apparently.

Boozell: That's the legend. (laughs) Are you going to get to talk to her?

DePue: I hope so.

Boozell: Oh, good.

DePue: Absolutely. That's the plan.

Boozell: Yeah, I don't remember much about—what was Roland Burris at the time? He must have been the attorney general.³⁶ I really don't remember too much about him. He was Roland Burris; he's pretty much the same as he is today, kind of a puffed-up version of himself. I don't think anybody thought he had much of a chance.

I think most people thought Dawn Clark Netsch would make a fine governor, but then she came out with the big income tax increase proposal to fund education, which kind of sunk her. I remember a commercial she had against us—it might have only run one time—but it had guys in state police uniforms driving riding lawnmowers with lights on them, because it had been discovered that one of the state troopers had been mowing the governor's lawn at his house out in Sherman. That was a big whoop-de-doop around here for a while. She ran that commercial maybe one time; I think it was even beneath her to run that type of a commercial.

DePue: Did you have much of a role in the campaign?

Boozell: No, I really didn't. Like I think I told you before, I never left the state payroll; I was never on the campaign staff. I would, of course, go over to the campaign headquarters and I would pitch in when I could and do stuff. My government role, as it pertained to a governor running for reelection, had a lot to do with making sure that the Republican legislators were all with us; that they were all getting the information that we wanted to get out, so that they knew what the message was going to be or what the commercials were going to look like. Governor Edgar would do radio and TV commercials for legislators. I would coordinate that activity to see who wanted to have something done, get him in the studio to do it, and make sure that we did as much of that as possible; because then he was out not just campaigning for himself but campaigning for other people on radio and TV, and they're paying for those ads.

DePue: This is an interesting election in one respect, I'm sure you remember. July, they were just about finishing up the budget, and the governor had a massive heart attack.

Boozell: He did not have a heart attack; I can't believe that you're going to get away with saying those words. He had—

DePue: Heart bypass.

³⁶ Phelan was Cook County Board President, Netsch was comptroller, and Burris was Attorney General. [[Track down vote totals for the 1994 gubernatorial primary\(??\)](#)]

Boozell: —an incident, and to this day he will tell you he never actually had a heart attack. He had an incident where he had to have a stent put in; I'm sure it's a distinction without cause or something. I will never forget, I was getting up, getting ready to go into work. I lived in Chatham. I was getting dressed, and the phone rang. My wife Sue had answered the phone, and she said, "Hey, Mark, Mike Belletire is on the phone. Says he has to talk to you." So I grabbed the phone upstairs. It's one of those moments like 9/11—

DePue: July 7, 1994, was the specific day.³⁷

Boozell: (laughs) I'm sitting on the bed with the phone to my ear, and Mike Belletire says, "The governor's been admitted to the hospital. He's had a"—I think he probably said, "He had a heart attack" or something like that—"We need you to get into the office right away." I said, "I'll be right there." I remember thinking, we're done; this is it. It was a good run. There's no way we can win this election now; I guess we just go wrap it up. Of course, that's not what happened. Dawn Clark Netsch was good enough to suspend campaigning for a period of time. We were in the middle of this budget mess. This time, Emil Jones was the leader in the Senate, so it was Emil Jones, Pate Philip—am I right? I know I'm right.

DePue: Um-hm, yeah.

Boozell: It was Emil Jones, Pate Philip, Lee Daniels, Mike Madigan; the chief of staff was Jim Reilly, and the lieutenant governor was Bob Kustra. We all decided to call a leaders' meeting in Chicago; I believe it was just the day after the governor had had his heart surgery. We're in the governor's Chicago office around this long table. Bob Kustra is at one end of the table, Jim Reilly is at the other end of the table; then you've got the Senate leaders at the head and the House leaders were at the bottom of it there. I was over on the side because we had Governor Edgar calling in on the speakerphone. They didn't know that when they came to the meeting. We told them that we wanted to have a budget meeting, and they of course were curious as to what was happening with the governor.

So we get in there, we get the call put through and hit the speakerphone; Jim Edgar comes on the phone, and he's got this raspy voice. I don't remember exactly what he said, but in essence, he asked the legislative leaders to come to a resolution and to pass the budget because this was something that he just needed them to do now. It was great theatre, if he had planned it. The one thing about that meeting I will never forget is that Emil

³⁷ On July 7-8, 1994, Governor Edgar, then 47, had emergency quadruple-bypass surgery at Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove, Illinois. *Chicago Tribune*, July 8, 1994. See Edgar interview, [cite rest when available(??)]; Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, July 2, 2009, 24-27; Al Grosboll, October 22, 2009, 41-43; Jim Reilly, interview by Mark DePue, August 11, 2009, 44-46; and Brent Manning, interview by Mark DePue, February 18, 2010, 82-84.

Jones started crying. These guys said, “We’ll do it for you.” We wrapped it up there, and within no time at all, passed a budget.

DePue: Would it have happened had the governor not been in the hospital and this emotional setting that you painted?

Boozell: Who knows? Not in that timeframe, absolutely not. Even more unbelievable than that was then they passed the budget and delivered it for the governor’s signature. The budget was one bill that year; it was a stack of papers at least a foot and a half, two feet tall. That’s the bill. You signed the last page. In something like that, you’d take the last page out, set it on top, and the governor would sign it. I get a call: the governor wants to sign the bill in the hospital, with the legislative leadership. I think, Holy cow. So we take the bill up to the hospital—

DePue: The hospital is where, again?

Boozell: The hospital in Downers Grove. We go up to the hospital, and I’ve got this bill with me, the real bill, because he’s going to sign the bill. When he does this, you don’t autopen it; he actually signs it. I got the stamps and the pens and all that kind of stuff. I’m sitting there in the waiting room, waiting—what are we going to do? How are we going to... The four leaders come in, and they’re all there. (laughs) I think we met Dr. Dove, his heart surgeon. We met the heart surgeon; he was a very nice guy. I believe that Sherry Struck was there, his administrative assistant, and probably Kustra was there.

Anyway, we’re sitting out there, and the state trooper came out, and he said, “Mark, the governor wants to see you—but just you—for a moment.” I said, “Okay,” so I took all my stuff in with me. I will tell you, this is one of those things you just never forget. Jim Edgar was sitting in a chair behind a little TV tray thing that you would roll up to eat on, and he looked like a hundred-year-old man. He was just this little man sitting there in a hospital gown pulled around him. He had a microphone on him already and one camera. The Illinois Information Service was going to film it; we weren’t going to have the press come in. He’s sitting there behind this little table, and he just looked—it didn’t look like Jim Edgar at all; it just looked like this little old man. I went over and said, “Governor, how you doing?” “Oh, you know, I’ve been better” or whatever. (laughter) He said, “You want to see my scar?” He undoes his thing and shows me this big scar on his chest. It was just terrible. I’m sure that I had tears in my eyes. He said, “Can we set it up here, and can we put the thing over here so I can sign it?” We got the whole thing set up. He just wanted it to be right.

He said, “Okay, let them in.” It was just the leaders. I went over, and I said, “You guys can come on in now.” They all had the same exact reaction that I did when they walked in the room. You could just see it on their faces, like, “Oh, my God, this poor man. What is he doing this for? Why isn’t he in

bed?” They all come over and shake his hand and say hello to him and stand behind him. He said, “I think you should stand behind me”—of course, still telling people what to do. He stands up, and I thought, this is going to be terrible. Why does he have a TV camera here? Why couldn’t they have just taken a picture? I mean, he looks terrible.

So we give him the pen and all that kind of stuff, and he says, “Okay.” Gary Mack was probably in there, the press secretary, who did kind of traveling around with that stuff. I’m guessing Gary Mack was up there, but it could have been Mike Lawrence. I will tell you, Mark, the second that the TV camera light came on, he became Jim Edgar. It was almost like magic. He was this little old man who had just had heart surgery sitting there, and when that light came on, he popped up, he (snaps) became Jim Edgar, he talked into the camera, he thanked the legislature, he signed the legislation; camera and the light went off, and he slumped back down in the chair. I’m sure it took every bit of energy out of him for a week, to sign that piece of legislation that day.

DePue: It does strike me that it’s amazing the camera was there, because I know he’s conscious about how he appears in public, how he appears on camera.

Boozell: Yeah, yeah, but I think this is one of those things. He’s the governor, and he wants people to know he’s okay. If I’m not wrong, I think he even did the little wave thing from the balcony from the hospital, *à la* Reagan. I think he came and kind of waved out of the thing. I’m sure that Mrs. Edgar probably advised him against doing all of this. She was very protective of trying to keep him—

DePue: Was she there that day?

Boozell: I’m sure she was there. I don’t remember her being there, but I’m sure she was there. She wouldn’t have left his side.

DePue: The big issue during that campaign—you already mentioned this—was Netsch coming out in favor of raising the state income tax. Her specific proposal was from 3 percent to 4.25 percent, and I know that she also talked about conversely reducing property tax rates, especially in the collar counties where it was always an issue. Do you remember how that played out?

Boozell: I remember we had stickers and buttons that said, “42 percent.” We put them everywhere we could, because it was a 42 percent increase in the income tax, and we were against it. We beat her to death with it. Then proactively—she had voted to the effect that she was against the death penalty. Who knows what all was in this legislation, but there was a piece of legislation that she had not voted for that gave the death penalty to something unbelievable like child rapists and police officers—one of those things. So we painted her as being soft on the death penalty, as well as a big tax-and-spender. The one big commercial that I remember of ours, which I will bring you—we just showed

the desk in the governor's office and Jim Edgar's nameplate on it; it started out and zoomed in, and it talked about the death penalty for child rapists and prison guard murderers, and who would you trust to sit in this desk? So we took her on hard on the death penalty as well.

We were accused and have been accused for a long time of opposing the Dawn Clark Netsch legislation, then right after the election, flipping over and actually endorsing the same thing to try to put more money into education. In effect, we did, but the big difference was the property tax relief; I think that we pushed a little bit harder on the property tax side. I don't remember her being real big on property taxes. Our big selling job was to say that we would do our best to get a dollar-for-dollar swap, so on a regional basis or a county-by-county basis or a school-district-by-school-district basis, you're going to pay five dollars more in income taxes; you're going to pay five dollars less in property taxes.

DePue: But that discussion from the Edgar side came much later; it came after—

Boozell: That came much later—effectively came much later. But she was spending more money. Our point was it's not a swap if you're spending more money, and she was spending more money. That was a big thing, too—the reason we had all the buttons, the stuff, made up with “42 percent” is because everybody said, “Well, it's a 1.25 percent increase in the income tax. That doesn't sound too bad.” But it wasn't 1.25 percent, it was one and a quarter point, which is 42 percent.

DePue: You had mentioned already that the election back in 1990 was a real nail-biter—

Boozell: Yes, it was.

DePue: —and in fact, Secretary of State Edgar thought the last couple of weeks, I lost it, yet has that amazing victory that night. What was the mood around his team leading up the last couple months into this election?

Boozell: Confidence. As I remember this one, there was never a question once the heart scare was over with. Like I said, I think Netsch was the gentleman and took her ads off the air, and that probably lost her the election. If she had kept hammering away and talked about health issues or something like that, she might have been able to swing the thing.

DePue: Was there another candidate out there early on during the primary race that Edgar was more fearful of facing in the general election?

Boozell: Not that I'm aware of. I was trying to think of who else was talking about it. I think that Glenn Poshard might have talked—well, he ended up running against Ryan, so I don't know if he was talking at that time or not.

- DePue: Hartigan was never part of the mix?
- Boozell: No, he had kind of vanished. This was all Republicans all the time back then, remember. There wasn't a big farm team of Democrats out there. Neither Roland Burris nor Dawn Clark Netsch were considered to be heavyweight politicians, so there really wasn't a big scare.
- DePue: On the presidential side, this is an off-year election; but it's a very important off-year election for the Republicans, because they practically swept everything. The Republicans at the national level gained the House of Representatives for the first time in something like forty years. This is the Contract with America.
- Boozell: Contract with America, right.
- DePue: Did that factor into your race, do you think? Into Edgar's race?
- Boozell: No, I don't think so. I think that the big federal sweep was a result of Jim Edgar's popularity in Illinois. (pauses) That was a joke. (laughter)
- DePue: I was going to say, what does he really mean?
- Boozell: How does that work? Oh, it probably had something to do with it, but Jim Edgar was immensely popular at the time.
- DePue: The election results: Edgar pulls 60 percent and Netsch got 34 percent.³⁸
- Boozell: Edgar only lost one county as I remember. Right? The only county he lost in Illinois was Massac County, the one at the very southern tip of Illinois. I think he even won Cook County.
- DePue: By virtue of the suburbs in Cook County, I'm sure.
- Boozell: Right.
- DePue: So not only is this a huge sweep at the United States level, but for the first time, and only two years, while Edgar is going to be governor, the Republicans controlled both the Illinois House and the Illinois Senate.
- Boozell: Right. I had been the legislative director; we had already talked prior to the election about what I wanted to do after the election, and I wanted to be the insurance director. He called me in, and said, "I want you to stay legislative director for one more session, please, because we want to get some stuff done." We had this opportunity that we didn't think that we would have. So I

³⁸ Edgar defeated Netsch by a margin of 914,468 votes, 1,984,318-1,069,850. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 8, 1994*.

agreed to stay, which I think in the history books might make me the longest-serving governor's legislative director ever, or at least that's what he told me.

We spent an awful lot of time with Pate Philip and his staff, Lee Daniels and his staff, to come up with our kind of Contract with Illinois. We did all the things that Republicans had wanted to do for a long time, like tort reform, the Structural Work Act. We did those things that we could push through, and did, and we did them in like a hundred days. We modeled ourselves after the federal government where, Look, we're going to do the hundred days, we're going to do this big, giant push, and we're going to get all this stuff done right away. Which was fine with me, because once it was done, I got to leave and go to the Department of Insurance. So we did that, and we were very successful in it.

DePue: The Structural Work Act—can you explain—

Boozell: We repealed the Structural Work Act, which was a big union initiative that had been in effect in Illinois for a long, long time.

DePue: What does that mean specifically?

Boozell: I wish I could tell you. I don't know. It had to do with what your insurance covers under certain circumstances. I could find out for you, but I'm not aware of the details at this point.

DePue: Before we move on to your timeframe as the insurance director, I do want to mention a couple more names here that we really haven't asked your opinion and get your reflection on who they were and their importance to Edgar. The first one is Kirk Dillard, who of course is chief of staff for the first few years, and now running for governor himself. What role did he play as chief of staff for Edgar? How effective was he?

Boozell: He was the governor's first chief of staff. I think that the thought process was, as I've mentioned, having someone from the prior administration come in so there's some level of continuity moving forward. Kirk seemed to be more of a figurehead-type chief of staff because Jim Edgar still wanted to make all the decisions at that point. He was new, and he wanted to make all the decisions but he knew he couldn't. How much authority he gave to Kirk? I'm not quite sure that Kirk had all of the authority that maybe the next chief of staff, Jim Reilly, did. But he served that very important role of showing the legislature, in particular, and the world of bureaucracy and of lobbyists and association folks, that this was an administration where, We're going to keep moving forward; we know who you are, we recognize that; we want to maintain relationships wherever we can, so we've got some continuity built in here. The detail he got in with the agencies and stuff, I'm just not aware of. With me and the legislative office, he didn't interfere. He wasn't real picky, hands-on; it was more of a kind of report-up buffer so that the governor didn't need

to do stuff he didn't need to do. I would suspect that Kirk probably had more direct interaction with all of the agency directors to kind of make sure all of that was going real smooth in the beginning.

DePue: The role of the chief of staff in American politics oftentimes is the taskmaster, the guy who's imposing discipline or structure, making things happen—the tough guy, the guy who—

Boozell: The guy who says no.

DePue: Yeah. Was that Kirk Dillard?

Boozell: No.

DePue: Or was that just not something that Edgar wanted him to be playing?

Boozell: That's not the way Kirk Dillard was or is today. Kirk Dillard is not a guy who—he likes to agree with you, and he did that as the chief of staff. I think it was perceived more as the continuity: this guy proves that we have continuity between administrations. You had a real long administration, then this new guy coming in who was accused of being nothing but an extension, so we're going to have some continuity but be different.

DePue: In 1994, Dillard gets an opportunity to run for the Illinois Senate himself, so he steps out of the picture; that's the election year that Jim Reilly comes into the forefront as chief of staff. Tell me a little bit about Jim Reilly as chief of staff.

Boozell: Jim is a former legislator, who I worked with when I was on staff and he was in the legislature, so I knew him from there. Then I think he had gone to the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority. Is that right?

DePue: He'd been Thompson's chief of staff for several years as well, then he went to the Metropolitan Pier Authority.

Boozell: Right. Jim was a man that everybody feared. He was a guy who was always mad, and he was always mean. He was truly the hard guy in the administration; he played that role very well. I think he enjoyed it. Kirk Dillard really enjoyed the big picture of everything. Jim Reilly was more of a down-and-dirty, getting-into-the-details, nothing's-going-to-get-by-him kind of guy that you really didn't want to screw up with, because you were afraid he'd fire you right on the spot or throw you out the window.

DePue: I think he's told me himself that one of his roles was to make sure that nothing embarrassing happened to the governor while he was running for reelection.³⁹

³⁹ Reilly, August 11, 2009, 36-37.

- Boozell: That's exactly right. You need a different kind of guy probably from when you're putting together an administration than when you're running for reelection. You're right, anything governmental that happens, which could make the government look bad—that's a problem.
- DePue: And the third name that you talked about a little bit, but I wanted you to flesh out his personality in the role of administration, was the lieutenant governor, Bob Kustra.
- Boozell: He was a state senator when I was a staff person, so I knew Bob from there. His area of expertise was education. Bob made a point of—even if he wasn't invited—always being at a meeting. (laughs) So he would always want to be around, because Governor Thompson's first lieutenant governor, Dave O'Neal, resigned because he had nothing to do. I remember that when Jim Edgar was interviewing potential candidates for lieutenant governor, I was in the room for those meetings because they were all legislators. I would bring them in, then sit through the meeting—when he was secretary of state but was running for governor. Who would I like to run with? Even though you run separately, who do I want to run with? Who would I want to be the lieutenant governor? A lot of people came in and interviewed for the position.
- Bob was a real solid guy who knew a lot about education, which Jim Edgar thought was something that he was going to need some help with, and he was well-respected in the Senate. He was from the suburbs, and Jim Edgar's a downstater; that seemed to be a good match. He was very calm. He was always under control—of course, maybe that's because he didn't have any real big, giant responsibilities—but he was always very loose and easy, very accessible, and just really a nice guy.
- DePue: One final name here, and obviously she's not part of the formal administration, the governor's wife, Brenda.
- Boozell: To this day, she's a very good friend of mine. I always told her she should have run for office because I think that she was the secret sauce for getting Jim Edgar elected. Everybody loved Brenda Edgar. I don't know anybody who just didn't love the woman. She had this kind of sense about her of really—I think it's because it's true—she just cares about stuff. She cared about kids, she cared that stuff was done right, and she was just this very nice lady who happened to become the first lady. I just can't say enough good about her. Have I mentioned she traveled to Honduras with me?
- DePue: No.
- Boozell: I do mission work in Honduras. I've gone on mission trips in Honduras for the past seven or eight years with an organization called World Gospel Outreach, where I serve on the board of directors, now and for the past four or five years. I got into this after the administration, after we were all done and we

moved up to Naperville. Our church participated in this one-week, short-term mission trip to Honduras. Honduras is the second-poorest country in the world—average annual income of about three hundred dollars, no water purification system in the country. It is truly third world. It's just filthy; it's dirty. This organization was formed to take abandoned children off the street, put them in a home with a husband and a wife and raise them in a family atmosphere, and make them the next generation of leaders in Honduras. This organization is now twenty-five years old; it's been going on for quite a while. It's a good short-term mission trip for people, to get them involved in something like that. I just got hook, line, and sinker on this thing. I'm on the board of directors now, so I've been going for several years. I always talk about it to people. I was talking with Brenda about it one day and asked her if she'd think about going along sometime. Lo and behold, she called up and said, "I want to go."

Now, when you go to Honduras—I warned her—you live in a mission house. The water is parasite-ridden, so you can't drink it. You get one shower a day, but it's a military shower: you get wet, you turn off the water, you soap up, you rinse off. Some days there is no water, so you're not guaranteed a shower every day. There's no septic system, so the toilets—you don't put paper down them. It's not a very good system there. You go out on the sites, and it's filthy. It's a lot of hard work. It's a medical brigade, so you help pull teeth or you help clean out somebody's sores or you wash the lice out of kids' hair, or we give eyeglasses to people. Spread the gospel is the other part. It's a Christian organization, so you spread the gospel as well. She's not a member of our church—it's Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Naperville—but she wanted to go along. I asked the pastor, and he said, "Yeah, that'll be fine"—get somebody else involved.

DePue: What year would this have been? During the administration?

Boozell: No, not during the administration. After the administration, so maybe about three or four years ago. But I asked the team, "Look, former first lady. Would anybody have a problem with that?" Nope, not at all. And she came. You wouldn't have known she was anybody but this lady named Brenda Edgar. She came just like everybody else; she pitched in, she washed the lice out of kids' hair, she cleaned stuff up, she hauled trunks around and worked her rear end off with us for a week in Honduras, and has been a contributor to that thing since. So I can't say enough good about Brenda. She ought to run for governor. I talked with her maybe two weeks ago and told her that she ought to be running for governor.

DePue: What was her reaction?

Boozell: She said, "Why don't you?" (laughter)

DePue: This is kind of a related question, then: what was her view about politics in general, about her husband being a politician and running for office?

Boozell: I think she knew that that was who Jim Edgar was, so she supported him in that way.⁴⁰ I think she might have wished that he had done something else, because she wasn't real comfortable in the public eye and didn't want to draw attention to herself ever—was really kind of a quiet person. That's when she was at her best, I think, and maybe that's why—because she wasn't trying to show off. So I think that she would have preferred just to be Mrs. Jim Edgar, not the first lady, but I think she may have been one of the best first ladies we've had because of that. It just kind of came naturally, even though she would never admit that, I think. Now, of course, she's dedicated to her grandkids. That's her number-one goal in life, to make sure that they get everything that they don't need. (laughter)

DePue: We've been at this for a little over an hour and a half, and this might be a good time to take a break, and for you and I to talk about how we wrap this thing up, perhaps.

Boozell: Okay.

(end of interview #3 #4 continues)

⁴⁰ On their first date, Jim Edgar told Brenda about his political plans, the seriousness of which she didn't immediately realize. Edgar counts her as his most valuable supporter. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 22, 2009, 27-29.

Interview with Mark Boozell

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Interview # 4: September 9, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Wednesday, September 9, 2009. We're still here with Mark Boozell. I think, Mark, this is going to be our last session.

Boozell: Yes, still here. (laughter) Last session, okay.

DePue: I say that, and you responded, of course, with a sense that it's with deep regret we're going to have to wrap this up, I'm afraid.

Boozell: That's right.

DePue: It has been fun. It's always interesting to hear the stories from people who were directly involved. We finished off with your time as a legislative liaison, and we're ready now to talk about your role as the insurance director. What exactly is the insurance director for the state of Illinois?

Boozell: The director of the Illinois Department of Insurance is the chief regulator for the insurance industry. Insurance is the only industry left in the United States that is regulated on a state-by-state basis. It is not regulated at the federal level, only on a state-by-state basis. So state insurance regulators are very important to the industry because every single state is a little bit different in its regulatory environment.

DePue: This deals with all aspects of insurance?

Boozell: Yes. Illinois is one of the top insurance states in the country; it was at the time and still is. At the time, the top three property casualty underwriters in the state—Allstate, State Farm, and CNA—were headquartered in Illinois. Illinois is also the entry state for Lloyd's of London into the United States—Illinois and Kentucky. It's a vital part of the tax base and industry in the state of Illinois. There are ninety-three thousand, ninety-five thousand insurance

agents registered in the state of Illinois. You're responsible for the licensing of the companies, for all of the agents, to watch the financials for the companies, to handle consumer complaints and issues that they have with the companies—just the overall regulatory environment.

The governor asked me—after he was reelected—what I wanted to do. I told him I wanted to be appointed insurance director. He said, “Why is that?” I said, “Because I think it's probably the best get-out-of-government government job in the state of Illinois.” There are opportunities for employment, after state government life, from the insurance department. I stayed on one more session in the legislative office, due to the Republican blowout that year—acquiring the House of Representatives and the speakership for the first time in a long time—then went to become director of the Department of Insurance.⁴¹ You have an office in Springfield; you have an office in Chicago. You're also the special deputy receiver, which means if an insurance company goes out of business and the assets of the company have to be liquidated, that's turned over to that office—which is a not-for-profit agency run by the insurance director in his capacity as special deputy receiver. So there's an office in the Merchandise Mart in Chicago as well.

The one biggest thing that I did as insurance director—I was there for three years—was in this special deputy receiver's office and in the business of liquidating insurance companies' assets. So what that means is if a company goes out of business and there are outstanding claims—say that you're owed a thousand dollars in claims from your company but it goes out of business, and you haven't been paid back for anything yet—you liquidate all of the assets of the company through this organization in Chicago, the special deputy receiver's office, and then apportion the funds received to the policyholders on a proportionate basis. If the total that's owed everybody is a hundred dollars and you've been able to retrieve a dollar back from selling off all of the assets, then everybody gets one—one hundredth of what their claim was. It's just apportioned in that way. These liquidations take anywhere from ten to fifteen years to get done because you're selling everything that a company owns. They own everything from golf courses to—when I was there, one company that we were liquidating owned the Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory—all of this stuff that you then sell to the benefit of the consumers who are owed money from claims.

DePue: So after the courts work through the bankruptcy proceedings, then they declare this is the property of the state, for people like yourself to manage and distribute?

⁴¹ Republicans gained control of the Illinois House and Senate in 1994. The last time Republicans controlled the House had been 1981-1983, when George Ryan served as Speaker. The last time Republicans controlled both houses had been 1973-1975.

Boozell: It is actually the Insurance Department that handles all of the liquidation and bankruptcy issues for those companies. We go to court on behalf of the taxpayers and go through all of those court proceedings, so it's a whole bunch of lawyers in Chicago, really, who you work with.

While I was insurance director, the Reserve estate, which ten or fifteen years prior to that went out of business, was ready to be settled, and the payments were ready to be made. They said, "We have one issue, though." One of the claimants, the IRS, was owed money from this company, and the IRS declared super priority status. Since they were a federal agency, they claimed that federal law gave them the opportunity to get 100 percent back of what they were owed—not on a proportion basis like everyone else, but 100 percent—and then go ahead and apportion everybody else with that money taken out.

It was the opinion of my lawyers at the time, and many other lawyers throughout history, that it was settled law. The McCarran-Ferguson Act says that the business of insurance is done by the states, and that state laws override any federal laws that they conflict with when it comes to insurance matters. The lawyers came in, and they said, "For years, this has been discussed, whether or not the process of liquidation is the business of insurance; this is perfectly exemplified in the Reserve estate here." So the federal government was saying, "Liquidation—that's not the business of insurance. You're just liquidating an insurance company; you're selling off its assets, and that's not the business of insurance. So super priority status of federal law comes in, so we get our money." The lawyers said, "You could take them to court. People have wanted to do it for years, but nobody has really taken them on." After several meetings, we decided to go ahead and file suit against the IRS, their claim of super priority status for the Reserve liquidation funds. *Boozell v. the United States of America* is the name of the suit, (DePue laughs) which caused a little bit of angst in the household for a while. We won. It took three years, and we actually won the case.⁴²

DePue: Were you there during the entire time?

Boozell: Yes. The National Association of Insurance Commissioners is the meeting—they meet four times a week⁴³—of all of the insurance directors from around the country. Fifty insurance directors get together, and two thousand people show up to have meetings around them. The next meeting after that case was settled and we won the case, I walked into the commissioners' meeting and got a standing ovation; because this is something that they wanted settled for a long time, but nobody had just really done it. To this day, that may be my only claim to fame from all of those years of government service—that law schools

⁴² *Boozell v. United States*, 979 F. Supp. 670 (N.D. Ill. 1997). "Reserve estate" refers to the Reserve Insurance Company liquidation estate. The order declaring the company insolvent had been issued May 29, 1979. *Stamp v. Insurance Company of North America*, 908 F.2d 1375 (1990).

⁴³ [Editor's note: He may have meant four times a month.]

all around the United States lecture and teach the Boozell decision on the regulation of insurance being at the state level, and that the liquidation of insurance companies is actually the business of insurance; settled law, in *Boozell v. the United States of America*. So there you have it.

DePue: Would you say that's one of your proudest accomplishments, then?

Boozell: It really was, because it was something that a lot of people had talked about but nobody had taken any action to do. It was something that we did.

DePue: You had to start that right at the beginning of your tenure.

Boozell: I did. Two things happened about the first ten days that I walked into office. One of them, because it was ready to go; instead, we put it on hold and went with the lawsuit. The other one—and this is also something I'm very proud of—also had to do with the liquidation office. The Insurance Department, the 120 employees or so, really did run as a well-oiled machine, and it still does to this day. They came in and they said that they were ready to sell a piece of property. It was in another estate, and they had a judge declare the property abandoned or unsafe; they were going to have it torn down, demolished. All I needed to do was sign the paperwork; they'd already gone through all the court proceedings, but we were switching directors in the meantime. So I came in, and if I just signed this paperwork, they could go ahead and tear down the Supreme Life Building in Chicago.

I said, "Boy, the Supreme Life Building—that sounds familiar." It just so happens that in one of the many leaders' meetings I'd had with the governor and four legislative leaders as a legislative director, Senator Jones, who was the minority leader of the Senate at the time, had talked an awful lot about the Bronzeville area on the South Side of Chicago and the revitalization efforts that were taking place. He was always trying to get state funding for it. I know that he had mentioned the Supreme Life Building as being a cornerstone of this revitalization effort in Bronzeville. So they came in and told me, if you sign this paper, we can go ahead and tear this building down. I think that the plan was to sell it to Dominick's, to put a Dominick's⁴⁴ up in the area. So I said, "Let's hold off on that for a minute." I got a hold of Senator Jones; I sat down with him and said, "Look, here's what's going on. Is this the area we're talking about? Is this what you've been mentioning in these meetings for years?" He said, "This is exactly what I've been unable to get anybody's attention on."

So I went over with him and the *Chicago Defender*, the African-American magazine in the city, and we toured the site. We looked at the building; the building was not in good shape, and it had lots of back taxes owed on it. Supreme Life was the last surviving African-American-owned life

⁴⁴ A large grocery store chain.

insurance company in the United States of America and it was out of business now. So it was a great pride to the community that it was an Illinois-based company. We toured the building, went through there with the newspaper and with Senator Jones, and determined that the building could be saved; it was just that the folks at the liquidation office wanted to sell it to get more money for it from Dominick's for the policyholders in the liquidation. Remember the percentage back on claims?

There was one wall, though, at the very back of the building, that was bowed out—a brick wall that was ready to blow out. So I authorized them to take that wall down. Then I met with the folks who were working on the revitalization efforts in Bronzeville—it was a not-for-profit organization that had been formed—and offered to sell them the building for the back taxes so that they could use this as the centerpiece to their revitalization efforts. The lawyers all advised against it, because they could get more money back by selling it to Dominick's than by letting somebody have the building for the back taxes and saving it for something else. The question was, what was my main responsibility here? Was my number-one role as the special deputy receiver to get as much money as I could for the former policyholders, or could I use my authority to save the building for something more than just the dollars and cents? The lawyers told me it was within my discretion to do whatever I wanted to do with it, that I owned the building as the special deputy receiver. So I made the decision to save the building. I was very proud of that decision. I saved one of the bricks from the wall that they blew out; I've always had that brick sitting on my desk in every office that I've had since then.

DePue: What's the building being used for now?

Boozell: It's the entryway to a museum area for the Bronzeville area.

DePue: So preserving the history of the Bronzeville neighborhood?

Boozell: Yes. I made the front page of the *Chicago Defender*—this white guy from (DePue laughs) Mason City, Iowa.

DePue: Something they can't take away from you.

Boozell: Can't take that one away, right.

DePue: Sounds like you took this job with—clearly in mind—there's going to be a time when Edgar's not the governor; I'm going to be out of working for him, and this is going to be my venue to find employment afterwards.

Boozell: Exactly.

DePue: Does that mean you had no political aspirations?

Boozell: That's true. None.

DePue: Why not?

Boozell: I worked for many politicians. Raising enough money to be viable seemed to me... I think every staff kid in the beginning thinks, Hey, wouldn't it be cool to be a member of the House? Then you see that, really, you spend all of your time raising money. That's all you do, because if you don't have the money, you're going to get beat. You never know if you've got a job or not. It just seemed to me to be something that was a little bit distasteful, having to always be raising money to further your political career, and not a stable environment to be an elected official. I would rather serve elected officials.

DePue: One thing we haven't really talked about up to this point is how your family dealt with your time in the political scene. Working for Edgar especially, I would think—you already mentioned he's a tough taskmaster—keeps you busy, long hours. How would the family deal with all of that?

Boozell: My wife Sue and I have been married for thirty-one years—it's our thirty-second year this year. I attribute a lot of that to my work in government and with the legislature and with Governor Edgar. I was gone so much that the time we had together (laughter) was better. I think being gone a lot might have helped the marriage some. We have three kids. Kari is twenty-five years old and is a schoolteacher in Colorado Springs—Manitou, Colorado. I have a twenty-three-year-old daughter who is a buyer at Sears Holding Corporation in Hoffman Estates. A twenty-year-old son, Michael, who is a junior at Western Illinois University. Kari, Lindsay, Michael. It was funny; they always knew about Jim Edgar because I always talked about Edgar.

That's a quick little story here. At home, I wouldn't say "Governor Edgar" or "Jim Edgar"; I'd just call him "Edgar." You know, Edgar this, Edgar that. "I saw Edgar today and..." So when my son Michael was probably three or four years old, we went to the mansion. Always on Halloween the tobacco and candy folks would give a ton of candy—no tobacco—to the Mansion Association to hand out to the kids who would come to the mansion. The governor and Mrs. Edgar handed out a bag of candy to every kid that came through. So Michael got all dressed up in his little cowboy outfit. Sue and I are walking him through the line; we get up to the line, and Governor Edgar hands Michael a bag of candy. Michael looks at me and goes, "Where's Edgar?" (DePue laughs) The governor looked at me. I said, "Michael, he's right there." "Where's Edgar? Where's Edgar?" He must have said it two hundred times, it seemed like, and I was embarrassed to death, because it was just one of those things. "Where's Edgar?"

The governor just had his birthday this last month. We were cleaning out some stuff at home. Our daughter Lindsay, who is the buyer for Sears now—when she was in the fifth grade, we found a piece of artwork she made.

It's about six rows of a human face, like a profile of a face, then the opposite direction going the next row, then the opposite direction in the next row, in all different colors—kind of like an Andy Warhol-type thing. We turned it around, and it said, "Lindsay, fifth grade"; "Jim Edgar" was the title. You look at it—it's Jim Edgar's profile about two hundred times in different colors on this piece of paper. I called and told him that we had made a copy and were sending it to him for his birthday. He said, "Those poor kids of yours. They were probably obsessed with this Jim Edgar guy. What are we going to do if he doesn't win this next election?" (DePue laughs) The kids, they were always in t-shirts in parades or at the fairgrounds walking around with their Jim Edgar paraphernalia on, so it was a family event.

DePue: But doing the politicking yourself, running for office, was never part of the equation?

Boozell: No. I have served as the chairman of the Zoning Board of Appeals in Chatham, Illinois, for about three or four years as kind of a payback for helping Carl Oblinger get elected mayor of Chatham; that's the closest I ever came. It was one of the worst things I've ever done, because Zoning Board of Appeals, all you do is pit one neighbor against the other on a zoning issue and have to make a decision. It was no fun at all.

DePue: Going back to the insurance business, it sounds like your area of responsibility included life, auto, health, property casualty—the whole realm.

Boozell: You regulate the entire industry.

DePue: Any of those that are especially problematic from your perspective?

Boozell: Most complaints that we received at the time were on the property casualty side. Somebody would call in and complain that they didn't get a claim paid; they thought that the claim should be paid, but the insurance company said they weren't covered. So every day, I would come into the office, and there would be a stack of files on the desk. These were [from] hearing officers, who would have had a hearing with the person complaining and the company, to determine who was right and who was wrong. They would make a recommendation, and then the director would sign off on making a decision on who has to pay or who doesn't have to pay. So property casualty complaints were the biggest ones.

Not being an expert in the insurance world at all but having been a manager in a somewhat political environment, I took about every tenth file on the desk and had my secretary call in everybody on my staff associated with that file, and had them come to my office and explain how they reached the decision. That helped me learn about the particulars of a whole bunch of different types of complaints, and it kept the staff on their toes because they never knew which file I was going to pull to have somebody come in.

I remember one time a police officer from Chicago called my office. Carolyn White was my assistant. I talked about her before; she was my assistant forever, even there. She came in and said, “There’s a police officer from Chicago on the phone; he is just irate because of a claim issue he’s got, and he’s demanding to meet with you.” Nobody ever did that. I said, “Fine, tell him to come on down. See when he can make it.” I liked to do stuff like that, to make the career staff at the department understand that a claim file was more than just a claim file. There was a person behind it; they had a problem, they had an issue, and they should think of it in terms both of the insurance company’s responsibility and maybe some real-life practical issues that went into play on those things as well.

So the other thing that I did when I walked in there—they came in, and they asked me to sign a piece of paper. There were about forty names on it; these were the people that were authorized to stamp my signature on documents in the department. I said, “Well, no.” (laughter) For what? I said, “I would like to meet everybody who has the authority to sign my name on something, and I would like them to explain to me what they have the authority to do, so I know.” Just by doing that, the list went down to about five people. It’s one of those things where things just get out of control a little bit.

DePue: I was thinking I might hear a discussion about health insurance. This is just a few years after the Clinton administration’s attempt to totally reform health insurance. We are talking in September 2009, and it’s the topic of discussion in the political world right now as well.

Boozell: Not a thing. Health insurance wasn’t that big of a deal, at least not in the regulatory environment. Remember, what I was doing is making sure that the companies were acting appropriately, that the consumer complaints were taken care of, and the financials were all in place on the company’s side. I will tell you, the biggest issue at the time dealt with worker’s compensation insurance. The only rates that required director approval in Illinois were worker’s compensation rates. No other rates. Everything else is file-and-use; the marketplace is the marketplace. Illinois is the only state in the United States of America where the market sets the rates, and we have some of the lowest rates in the country. But for worker’s compensation, which is a rate that is approved by the director, the worker’s comp folks came in; they wanted to decrease their rates an enormous amount. We had a big discussion about how much they really should be decreasing worker’s compensation rates because of what it could do to the next year if they had to jack them up way high, if they overcompensated. So worker’s compensation rates were the big issue back then, ’95 to ’98, not health insurance rates.

DePue: Did you find this job gave you a completely different pace of life from what your experiences in government were?

Boozell: Yes. Directors are paid once a month, not every other week. They have no vacation and sick time. You just do the job. You can be there or not be there as much as you want, but you're extremely accountable to the governor, and you have to run the agency. In the beginning, you think it's going to be a piece of cake—this is going to be easy—then you find out that once that first thing slips through the cracks, Oh, (DePue laughs) that's my fault all of a sudden. It's not as physically time-consuming, I think, as the other jobs I had, but it was probably more mentally time-consuming because you're always worried about a little something going wrong, and have a high profile in a state agency of that magnitude.

DePue: During this timeframe, Edgar turns fifty, I guess in August 1996.

Boozell: We had a big old party for him. I think it was Mrs. Edgar who asked me to emcee the party because I introduced levity into the administration—gags, jokes, things like that—whenever I could. So I was the emcee. We had a big whoop-de-do out at the fairgrounds, in one of the big buildings out there. Boy, I should have studied up on this one because I probably even have—we did a script. We had a bunch of people talk, and pretty much everybody was making fun of Jim Edgar, and we had a whole bunch of gag gifts and a giant cake and all that stuff.

DePue: A little bit of a roasting of him?

Boozell: It was a little bit of a roasting. As we were talking about over lunch, Joan Walters, the director of the Bureau of the Budget, dressed up as Marilyn Monroe. The capping off of the whole event was Joan walking down the staircase in this building, singing "Happy birthday, Mr. Governor" dressed as Marilyn Monroe. Jim Edgar turned about twenty-five shades of red. It was a fun time. He's a good sport.⁴⁵

DePue: Anything else that you really remember about those three years as insurance director?

Boozell: The last of those three years was when education funding reform came up in the general assembly one more time. Governor Edgar called and said, "Look, you've got the relationship with these leaders and with the members. Nothing against the legislative staff I've got on hand right now, but I need extra heavy lifting on this thing."

DePue: Let's frame that a little bit here. As I understand, what we're talking about is after the election. He beats Netsch on the issue of her wanting to raise taxes. He basically comes back and has this commission, which Ikenberry runs, and

⁴⁵ See, Joan Walters, interview by Mark DePue, August 13, 2009, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 3-6, for this story and her discussion of the various roasts held by Gov. Jim Thompson's administrative staff, and Edgar's reaction to them. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews cited in the notes were conducted as part of the Jim Edgar Oral History Project.

determines that what the state needs to do is raise taxes and do a trade-off with property taxes?⁴⁶

Boozell: Yes. I believe the bigger difference on our end was, while it wasn't a complete dollar-for-dollar switch, it was virtually a dollar-for-dollar swap on the property taxes and the income tax increase. It wasn't gaining much steam, but this was something that he decided was very important to get done. So he asked me to resign as director of insurance, come back in the senior staff, and be tasked with working on this legislation. I went back to him—and it may be the only time in the sixteen years I worked for him that I said, “No, I don't want to resign from this job. This is going to be a one-session thing you've got me doing over there. I can do both of these jobs. I don't want to quit being insurance director; I love this job.” So he let me stay on as insurance director, plus I had an office in the Capitol and worked on this as well. That was a very time-consuming period of my life, because it really was doing two jobs, but that was my choice because I wanted to make sure I kept the insurance position.

Art Berman was a Democrat senator from the city of Chicago. Senator Berman was one of our biggest helpers, I think, on the Democrat side for getting this done, because he had been a big advocate of education funding reform for a long, long time. Really, the bottom line as it turned out, was we established the foundation level: every school district in the state of Illinois would get this amount of money per pupil from the state. It would be guaranteed, so that way, the poorer districts, basically in deep southern Illinois, would get a big infusion of cash with this. We could not convince the Senate, Senator Philip, on the property tax swap with the income tax increase, because it was an income tax increase. The frustration there was we actually had thirty-six votes to pass an income tax increase and a property tax reduction in the Illinois state Senate, but Pate Philip refused to call the bill. That was one of the biggest disappointments in my career of public service, that we couldn't get that done. We had it done, but we couldn't get it done.

DePue: Pate Philip is a suburban Republican, correct?

Boozell: DuPage County Republican, president of the Senate.

DePue: His constituents would have been the ones who had been complaining most vociferously about the high property tax rates?

⁴⁶ On May 5, 1995, Edgar named Stanley Ikenberry, who was retiring after sixteen years as president of the University of Illinois, to lead a blue-ribbon panel investigating school funding reform. When the commission wrapped up its work in March 1996, it introduced the “foundation level” concept and called for a state constitutional amendment requiring the state to provide at least half of foundation level funds. It also proposed a \$1.5 billion cut in local property taxes, which would be offset by \$1.9 billion in new state revenue. On March 22, Edgar formally introduced his plan in an unusual address to a joint session of the legislature. *Chicago Tribune*, March 22, 1996. Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, July 2, 2009, 38-44.

- Boozell: But we couldn't prove to him that in his district, those high-income earners who were going to be paying more in income taxes would have a corresponding dollar amount decrease in their property taxes.
- DePue: This goes back to your legislative liaison experiences; I'm sure that's why Edgar brought you up for this very specific and important bill. Did he weigh in and call or walk down and talk to Philip?
- Boozell: Oh, absolutely, absolutely, and it was my job to try to orchestrate what he did, too. He dug into his campaign fund, and we did statewide TV commercials that asked people to call their legislators and told them what the issues were. Jim Edgar met with every one of the legislative caucuses, went into closed-door meetings with them and answered all of their questions. We met one-on-one with members; we did everything we could possibly do to solicit votes. I'm telling you, Mark, we were successful. We passed the bill out of the House, we had the votes in the Senate—believe me, we did everything we could. There was nothing we could do to get Pate Philip to call the bill.
- DePue: Whose idea was it for him [Edgar] to use his own campaign funds for that commercial?
- Boozell: It was his idea. He thought it was important enough, and he thought that that public push would get Pate over the hump.
- DePue: Then how disappointed was he when he couldn't close the deal?
- Boozell: Very disappointed, because—I just can't reiterate enough—we had the votes. What a comment, that one guy—one guy—could stop that from happening when we had the votes to do it. He just would not call the bill; he refused to call the bill. So we ended up hodge-podging together a whole series of small—telecommunications tax and cigarette tax and all these stupid little tax increases—to fund the foundation level, and we did. The good news was we did pass the guaranteed foundation level; it is in existence today. Every year, it's gone up since we instituted this thing. Every single year, it's gone up, based upon the revenues that we put into place. There was a measure of success in that we got that done, but the point of our original exercise was to have this increasing revenue stream dedicated to funding education. That was not accomplished, because the income tax is the only tax it is possible to do with. With this hodge-podge of things we threw together, there still has to be regular state general funding thrown in to get the foundation level to increase.
- DePue: And that's part of what is straining the state's budget to this day.
- Boozell: Yes.
- DePue: Certainly the Blagojevich administration, and [Governor Quinn] today—ten, eleven years later—have the same problem, but even to a greater extent.

Boozell: Here we are again, so what does the general assembly do? They pass lump-sum appropriations; they give Governor Quinn a number, not line-itemed out, and say, here you go; good luck. So the state board of education goes through and starts chopping categoricals, which is exactly what we were working against so many years ago—that there would be this continuing increasing revenue stream into the education community.

DePue: When you say “chopping categoricals,” exactly what do you mean by that?

Boozell: For example, one issue that I’m involved with—I represent Pearson Education Systems. The textbook loan program is a very important program to them, specifically to the Catholic community and to many smaller school districts that utilize this program. The state board of education eliminated the entire forty-six million dollars in the program. It’s a zero now for 2010. Of course, they did that to try to get educators to pressure their legislators to vote for an income tax increase that Governor Quinn wants, to be able to fund government the way he wants to fund government. So it’s a selected categorical that they knew would get the most pressure on legislators. I believe he’s probably done that all across the budget spectrum. We would have done the same thing. It’s a smart thing to do.

DePue: During that timeframe, apparently you did return back, full-time?

Boozell: Then I returned back, full-time, after that was done, to the Department of Insurance, not knowing whether or not Jim Edgar was going to run for a third term. Nobody knew; he didn’t know. Nobody was quite sure what was going to happen. I had decided that I was done with government service; I was going to leave the administration whether he ran or not. It was time for me to move out into the real world, so to speak. So I recused myself in writing; I had the lawyers write up documents. I had decided to talk with three companies, to see if I could talk with them about getting a job. So I recused myself from any decisions regarding these three companies, in writing with our legal counsel, so I didn’t have a conflict, and I started talking with these folks.⁴⁷ Pat Ryan at Aon offered me a position to go to work for him. I accepted the position and went in to tell the governor; he asked me if instead, I would stay and be his chief of staff. He had decided not to run for reelection and wanted me to be the chief of staff, round out the term, handle the—I just lost the word.

DePue: Transition?

Boozell: The transition, and kind of keep the place going for the last year.

DePue: Before you get too far into that, Aon, is that—

Boozell: A-o-n is an insurance brokerage firm in Chicago.

⁴⁷ Kirk Brown described a similar process when he began planning his exit from IDOT. Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, December 22, 2009, 133.

DePue: So it's an acronym. Do you know what it stands for?

Boozell: It means "oneness" in Gaelic. That's what it stands for. (laughs)

DePue: So it's not an acronym, necessarily?

Boozell: No. Pat Ryan bought hundreds of companies and put them all together in this one big company.

DePue: The decision was in August 1997, I believe. Were you involved in the discussions among the inner circle about what he should do with his future career?

Boozell: Yes. During the state fair, he had a trailer at the state fairgrounds. I think it was the director's trailer or something like that. We got a call to meet him at the trailer at such-and-such a time one day during the fair. That was kind of a weird thing. I haven't thought about this in a long time. I was there; Mike Lawrence was there; Janis Cellini was there; Gene Reineke was there, who was the chief of staff at the time; Al Grosboll was there; and—

DePue: Brenda?

Boozell: No, I don't believe Brenda was there. The governor was there. That might have been about it. Steve Schnorf was there; Joan Walters might have been there. So it was a very small group of people. He said, "I can't decide if I want to run or not. I would like to hear from each of you what you think I should do and why."⁴⁸

DePue: I've heard from others that it wasn't just two options; there were three options on the table.

Boozell: I think the Senate was on the table as well: run, don't run, run for the U.S. Senate. It was interesting. You didn't have a whole lot of time to think about it. He wanted to know what you really thought. He didn't want you to work out a big speech; he just wanted, kind of on the spot, what do you think? I remember Gene Reineke was one of the first ones. Gene said, "Retire, get out of it; you're done; you're finished; walk away with your head held high." I was shocked that anybody in the administration would encourage him not to run for a third term or to run for the Senate. I thought, Well, this thing is humming along pretty good. Gene was one of the very first ones, and I remember just being absolu—I think I even gave him a dirty look, probably, thinking, Are you an idiot? I remember Al Grosboll told him he should run for the Senate. I'm pretty sure about that. I could guess on everybody. I think Schnorf said run for the Senate.

⁴⁸ For other cabinet members' recollections of Edgar's decision to retire, see Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, July 3, 2009, 2-12; Al Grosboll, interview by Mark DePue, November 6, 2009, 41-48; and Joan Walters, August 13, 2009, 31-32.

But I was a run-for-reelection kind of guy. I remember what I said: “Look, if you would run for a third term, would you ever consider running for a fourth?” He said, “No.” I said, “Then you ought to run for the third to have some fun. You’ve spent eight years working your rear end off, making hard, tough decisions. The state is finally on sound financial footing, and I think it’s time that you spent four years having fun being governor.” That was my pitch. It did not win the day, (laughter) but that was my pitch.

DePue: But as I recall, he didn’t necessarily make the final decision that day.

Boozell: No, he didn’t make the decision there. We all went around; he thanked everybody. I never heard again. It was a very close group—I was not in the very close group—that had the final... Eric Robinson was one of the press guys with Mike Lawrence, toward the end, and I remember after work, Eric told me that they had two speeches written, and he had practiced both of the speeches. Eric had gone to the ballroom and watched him practice both of the speeches, both the I’m-running-for-reelection speech and the I’m-leaving-public-life speech. He said it was very emotional for the governor, doing these speeches with the teleprompter.⁴⁹

The morning that they wanted to call the cabinet over to the mansion for his decision, I called up Eric, because I knew Eric was in on this stuff. I said, “How do you feel?” That’s all I said, because I wasn’t going to say, “He wouldn’t tell me his decision.” I said, “How do you feel?” He said, “I feel good.” (snaps) I assumed he was running for reelection. That was my assumption then. So I went over to the mansion, knowing that he was going to run for reelection; then he dropped this bombshell that he wasn’t running. I remember too that they had cookies and punch for everybody. Hell, nobody wanted cookies and punch; they wanted to go find a job. (laughter) I remember walking back. I called up Eric later that day. I said, “Eric, you told me you felt **good**. I translated that as he’s running for reelection.” He said, “Mark, I felt good that the decision had finally been made. It was such an agonizing period of time for the governor and for everybody else involved. I just felt good because he had finally made a decision.” So that’s how we all found out.

DePue: In that initial discussion out at the state fairgrounds, was there anybody there who had a stronger influence on his decision?

Boozell: I don’t know.

DePue: I’m thinking Mike Lawrence, because I’ve heard from many people that Mike was something of his conscience.

Boozell: Mike really was the ethical conscience of the administration. I don’t know why that would be an overwhelming decision in making that type of a

⁴⁹ Mike Lawrence, July 3, 2009, 2-12.

decision. I know he took Mike's counsel very, very seriously. I think Mike recommended that he get out of government as well, that he retire at the top. I also remember Edgar bragging around that he left office with a 72 percent approval rating, and I remember telling him, "Well, that's only because you're leaving office. (DePue laughs) If you were running again, I guarantee you that's not 72 percent."

DePue: Always so positive and upbeat, huh? (Boozell laughs) Let's talk about the transition, then, into your becoming his chief of staff for that last year.

Boozell: The interesting part was that Gene Reineke had a big meeting with all the senior staff and said, "Look, we expect everyone to stay till the end. We know everyone has to look for jobs; we understand that, but we expect everyone to stay to the end of this administration. We've got a year left"—whatever it was, more than a year—blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. Lo and behold, not very much time after that, (laughs) he announced that he was leaving the administration. He called me and said, "Look, I'm leaving." I said, "But you said nobody could leave." Well, he got the timing, blah-blah, right.

So Gene was leaving and had recommended that I be the chief of staff at the end of the term. The governor wholly agreed; he wanted Gene to feel me out before he talked with me. It wouldn't have been my first choice, and I told the governor that. I went in and told him, "Pat Ryan is ready to hire me; I've got this job lined up." He said, "I'll call Pat Ryan for you." I said, "I'm not asking you to do that; I just don't know if this is the right thing for me. If you're not running for office anymore, I need to think about what's the right thing for me and my family." So I told him I'd think about it. I called Pat Ryan. Pat Ryan said, "You absolutely should be Jim Edgar's chief of staff; we can talk when you're done with that." I have told Jim Edgar a hundred times if I've told him once since then, "Thank you for giving me that opportunity," because it's the best job I've ever had, it's the biggest role I've ever had, and it really is an entrée to a lot of different things, future job-wise. Being the chief of staff—not many people are the governor's chiefs of staff. It was a good job.

DePue: We've talked about Dillard as chief of staff and Jim Reilly as chief of staff. I don't think you fleshed out the personality or the kind of chief of staff that Gene Reineke was.

Boozell: Reineke really was inside of himself, very reclusive. He didn't like to meet with people, didn't like to talk to people; he barked a lot; he was mean. Never friendly, and just kind of a hard-ass. That's how Gene handled himself. So I decided that was not how I wanted to handle myself in the role, like any of the other chiefs of staff. I was there in a period of time when everybody knew we had a little more than a year left; we had another legislative session, and there were some things we wanted to accomplish; we wanted to go out on top; we wanted to make darn sure that nothing bad happened in that last year of our

term to tarnish the Edgar image. We wanted to transition seamlessly with the next administration because we were the good guys, and we wanted to go out that way. That was my job. I remember I asked Governor Edgar, “How do you define the role of chief of staff?” He said, “You run the place, and I’ll try to stay out of your way.” He just wanted to make sure everything ran right and that nothing went off the rails.

DePue: The Jim Edgar you described at the beginning of his administration was something of a micro-manager. What had changed, or had it?

Boozell: I think he was looking to the next step as well. Now, he knew there was some stuff we wanted to get done, but he was more hands-off at the end. You’re absolutely right; he did change a lot. He had more confidence, maybe. He knew I could do the job, and gave up some of the responsibility with the authority.

DePue: Describe yourself, how you saw yourself playing that key role being chief of staff.

Boozell: The most unpopular thing I did was that we met every single morning at 7:30 in my office—the senior staff; that hadn’t been done before. I felt that if we were going to try to keep a lid on everything that was happening and make sure that we knew what was going on, the folks who were touching every area of government—a half dozen or so people in the front office staff—and I would meet every single morning, and we did. That was built around when I had to drop off Kari at the bus stop. I’d take my daughter to the bus stop, she’d get on the bus, I’d drive in, then they’d all come in. We did a meeting every single morning. Sometimes the meeting was five minutes long; sometimes the meeting lasted the entire day, depending on what happened. During the legislative session—the governor’s office is there on the second floor—I would make a point of going out to the rail so anybody who maybe didn’t want to schedule a meeting with me could meet with me, could come up and talk with me about something.⁵⁰ I tried to be very accessible to the lobbyists, to members—anybody who wanted to meet. I rarely turned anybody down to sit down and talk with.

DePue: That doesn’t sound like the role that either Jim Reilly or Gene Reineke saw themselves playing.

Boozell: They didn’t have the background of having been a legislative director either, for that long of a period of time. I probably kind of missed hanging around those folks. You can shut yourself in that chief of staff’s office and not come out for two days, too. You got a bathroom and everything back there; (DePue laughs) you never have to come out. But there’s no back door, either.

⁵⁰ “The rail” Boozell is referring to is the brass rail along the third floor of the Illinois State Capitol rotunda, outside the House and Senate chambers, long used as a meeting spot for legislators and those who wish to lobby them.

DePue: What were some of the main issues that you dealt with that last year?

Boozell: The legislative issues, I don't remember that there was anything really big. There were probably some things. Deno Perdiou was our legislative director at the time. Appointments was one of the big things we dealt with that was a huge disappointment. I think maybe I talked about this last time.

DePue: I don't think we did this for the record. We definitely want to get your discussion about that.

Boozell: After George Ryan had been elected—George Ryan and Pate Philip are very close friends—we put out our final appointments to boards and commissions, which was a big, long list of people. I was on the list. The governor appointed me to the Sports Facilities Authority, which was a non-paid position. I was going to be moving up to the Chicago area. It oversaw the operations of what's now Cellular Field. Big baseball fan, and so he put me on that board; he put a bunch of people on the boards and commissions that were out there. He put Joan Walters on the Education and Labor Relations Board in a paying position because this was going to be her job; it was like a five-year term.

Pate called me after we filed them all, and said, "We're not going to approve these appointments." "What are you talking about? The governor made the appointments. You've never turned down a board or commission appointment by this governor." He said, "Publicly, I'm going to say that we're not going to be able to get around to it, we don't have the time to do it, or something. The truth of the matter is, George says they're his appointments, that we ought to hold them for him, and I'm not appointing Joan Walters to anything." We had several discussions around this. The governor talked with him. Everybody talked with him to try to loosen him up, but his allegiance to George, who thought, I want these hundred appointments, and his animosity toward Joan, who he had wrangled with over the budget for several years... We thought we were getting through to him; we kept working on him right up to the very end. At the very end, he called me and said, "Okay, we're pulling you out of the message. We'll approve you, put you on the sports facilities board, and we're going to deny all the rest of them."

DePue: Why had he singled you out for approval?

Boozell: He liked me. I said, "No, thank you. I'm a part of the Edgar team, and if you're not putting me in with the group, I don't want the appointment." He said, "No, no, you do." I said, "No, I don't. Don't bother putting it through. We're done," and left on those terms. It wasn't a great end to the administration. For example, it was my idea that on the last legislative day of the House and the Senate—June thirtieth, or whatever it was, of '98. It might have been the veto session. In October, they came back in for the veto session. I went down to the governor; I said, "Look, they're adjourning in an hour. I think you should come up to the floor and walk through the floor and get big

whoop-de-doop applause and all that.” He wouldn’t do it. He said, “Nope, not going to do it.”

DePue: Because of what happened to the appointments?

Boozell: Yep, I think it’s because of what happened with the appointments.

DePue: Did he personally express to you his feelings about that one?

Boozell: Oh yeah, he was very upset (laughs) about his appointments not going through. This was a George vs. Jim thing. When it came down to it, Pate Philip said, Hey, I’m going to be here for the next four years; there’s a new governor in town, and I’m not going to make him mad. Now, on the other side of this—you’ll read in the press, if you do a little research—George Ryan’s public pronouncement was, “Those are Jim Edgar’s appointments and he’s entitled to them. He ought to get them; the Senate ought to approve them.” Then he’d call Pate and say, “Don’t do it, because I want the things.” So that’s kind of how that was.⁵¹

DePue: Do you think there were some deals that Ryan was already working on for some of those appointments?

Boozell: Oh, probably. That’s what the appointments are for. The transition was also not something that I’m especially proud of because I don’t think it went as well as it should have gone, at least not as far as we’re concerned. A couple of things: first, we didn’t know who to deal with. Who’s going to be your chief of staff? He [Ryan] wasn’t sure. So I found myself meeting with both Scott Fawell and Bob Newton.

When we came into office eight years before, we set up transition teams; we asked the Thompson administration who they wanted their point person to be, to make sure that the right people in the administration were available at any given point in time. I made sure that all of the directors, everyone in our administration, knew, “I’ll be letting you know who they want to talk with to make sure that this is a very smooth and easy transition.” They [Ryan’s people] said, “Ah, we don’t need you guys; we can figure it out. We know what we’re doing.” Well, (laughs) there is stuff they don’t know. So we had all of the directors put together books of, Here’s what you should know coming in to run this agency; here are the issues that you should be aware of.

Finally, Ryan decided that Bob Newton was going to be his chief of staff, and Scott Fawell was in a different role. I met with Bob Newton several times. But to my knowledge, the only real meetings that ever took place were between Bob and I. They never held transition meetings like we did; they never had reports done like we did. I gave him all of the reports that we had

⁵¹ For more on the Senate’s rejection of Edgar’s final 114 appointments, see *Chicago Tribune*, December 4, 1998.

put together so they would have something to make sure that government... We were more concerned that the government would transition smoothly than they were, because they figured they'd been around longer than we had, they probably should have been elected governor eight years ago, and that they would just take over from there. You see how that all ended.

DePue: You're using the term "they." Ryan and Newton and Fawell and—

Boozell: The Ryan folks. Yeah, the Ryan folks.

DePue: Was that just a reflection of Ryan's own personality?

Boozell: No, I think it was a reflection of—I have told you several times, Mark—it's top-down. We were all individuals, but we were all instilled with a certain sense by Jim Edgar on how he wanted this place to run. It is the Edgar administration, right? I believe that George Ryan let the Ryan administration know what his sense was, and it was just a very different sense than ours.

DePue: I'm going to ask you just a couple of other issues that maybe you recall. Again, I don't want to put you on the spot, but I'll ask anyway. Nineteen ninety-eight was the year that Edgar was able to launch a three billion-dollar school building program, the first in about twenty years. Was that something that took some of your time as chief of staff?

Boozell: Yes. We had to pass the legislation, then we had to work on projects. Any time you do construction projects, it's high profile; everybody working together with every member of the general assembly. That was where you would have all of the agency directors, the governor, and everybody deeply involved in all that kind of stuff. So it wasn't me; that was a real team effort.

DePue: Thompson saw himself as a builder—Build Illinois, the whole project—made a name for himself in that way. Did Edgar get as enthused about those kinds of projects?

Boozell: No, not at all. He got very enthused about building the Illinois State Library, but that's when he was secretary of state; then that was very important to him. But now, he was more concerned about operational efficiencies than he was about having things built and named after him.⁵²

DePue: This is still very early in the process, but—the institution we're sitting in right now, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum—the discussions started to get serious towards that timeframe.

Boozell: Yes, it did. I don't think Jim Edgar got probably enough credit, because he started the whole discussion process and pushed hard to make sure that this thing was initiated when he was still the governor.

⁵² See Kirk Brown, 58-59, for his discussion of Edgar's attitude toward road-building projects.

DePue: You just said that he didn't get excited about a lot of building programs. What was different about this place?

Boozell: I wouldn't call this a construction project. I think you asked me about construction projects. The tape will tell, the tape will tell. (DePue laughs) The Illinois State Library and this facility are like educational institutions, practically; they're not just a construction project. It's not a road or a bridge or something like that—that's what I meant to say. That was great—he loved to cut ribbons at election time and all that. I think these were things that he thought, These are lasting legacies.

DePue: And he did what specifically then, just started the discussion towards this goal?

Boozell: For this facility?

DePue: Yeah.

Boozell: As I remember, it was Jim Edgar who got the very first appropriation put in our last budget to start the planning project for this facility. Then I think George Ryan took credit for thinking of it, or something like that. (laughs)

DePue: It's Ryan's name that's on the cornerstone.

Boozell: Well, and I've given you my position on that.

DePue: I think it was also January 1998 that Edgar launched the KidCare program. Is that something that you recall any specifics on?

Boozell: I remember Mrs. Edgar was very involved in this, because kids were the thing she liked to get involved with. I remember in development of the brochures and the advertising and stuff like that, Brenda had a role to play in all of that. But that's about all I remember about it.

DePue: There's one other thing, and you had prompted me earlier on this. He had one more serious health issue in that last year.

Boozell: Oh, that's right. Whatever the month was, his valve wore out. I think the valve that he had replaced was like a pig valve or something like that, however they do these things. I was the chief of staff at the time and got called—I was probably the first call—that he was being admitted for this valve issue, that it had to be replaced. I think he was walking on his treadmill and started having some problems. As I recall, it was probably even on a Saturday morning, because he never did things during the week when you would expect him to. It was right over here—what's the name of the hospital here?

DePue: St. John's?

Boozell: St. John's. Yeah, that's where he was. We went in and worked with the staff there; we set up the government in the room next to his. So he was in a room—I mean, he was fine—they just replaced this valve, but he was admitted to the hospital for several days. So we had a conference room right next to his room, we had phone lines put in, and Mike Lawrence and I were there every day. That's where we ran the state of Illinois, out of the hospital there for that week. Mike had me do the press briefings every day, which was kind of bizarre.

It was a little bit cool because of one comment that I made; to this day, I will have people recognize me for this comment, and this was, what, ten years ago? What do you always say, that they're in good spirits, you know? You always say the same thing right after some politician has surgery or something done to them: Well, they're in good spirits, and they're feeling fine, and blah blah. The doctor's with me—it was not Dr. Dove again; this was a different doctor—and he gave his little report thing. I'm just standing there. I went up and said, "Are there any other questions?" Somebody said, "What did he have for lunch?" I said, "I'm pretty sure that it was not a double bacon cheeseburger." That made the press in Chicago. That's the clip they showed on the Chicago (laughter) network news programs. I've had people to this day—"You're the guy who said that about the double bacon cheeseburger."

But that was very interesting. We orchestrated a big whoop-de-doop when he left the hospital: had the helicopter take him away and all that kind of stuff, just to show that he was still... He walked out to the helicopter and got flown probably to the cabin or something.

DePue: Did you consciously think, I need to inject some levity into some of these situations to keep it—

Boozell: I just always have levity on the mind. You can diffuse a lot with levity. It wasn't a serious question, either. Who cares what the guy had for lunch, right? But yeah, it was a tense situation, because everybody wanted to report he had a second heart attack, when really he never had the first one.

DePue: He never even had his first.

Boozell: He never had the first one. (laughter) That was pretty interesting; it was a fun thing to do. I just remember, we had phone lines and everything, and boom, we set up right there, and we just ran... He had people coming in and making decisions. It was kind of fun.

DePue: Do you have any anecdotes or stories about the last couple days of the administration?

Boozell: I do. The swearing-in was on a Monday. I'm sure it was a Monday, because, always being the nice guy, I called Bob Newton; I said, "If you guys want to

move in over the weekend, that would be fine; I'll work out of the mansion." I talked with the governor about this, and we decided to let them go ahead so they could move their furniture into the main governor's suite of offices. The governor and I would just work out of the mansion. My secretary, Carolyn White, was over there, and Sherry Struck was over there, because you're not doing a whole lot; you're just handling last-minute stuff. So we set up over in the mansion there and let them move their stuff in over the weekend. I came over on Monday morning to make sure that I had everything, just kind of as a final check. The Ryan folks had changed the locks on us before they were authorized to change the locks. I could not get in to the front governor's office on Monday morning, before they took office at noon, because they had changed the locks. I had to have the guard let me in.

DePue: Well, that part of their transition team was functioning. (laughter)

Boozell: The locksmith knew what he was doing. I will never forget—at whatever time it was, 11:30 or something like that, the governor and Mrs. Edgar came down. I was in the little office. If you go in the public entrance area, the first office to the right is kind of in a little empty seating area that's right next to the governor's office, and that's where I set up. They came down and said, "Time to go. Thanks for everything." We all hugged, and they got in the limo and went to the inauguration. Carolyn White and I walked out the main gates, got in our cars, and drove home.

DePue: After the very long career in government that the governor had—he was still pretty young at the time he stepped out of it—what do you think his mood was at the time?

Boozell: I wondered many times if he was really comfortable—I don't know anything here for sure—but I wonder if he was really ready to go. I wonder if he had second thoughts even right then, because he didn't seem happy to go. It wasn't like, Thank God I'm out of this place! He was really sad to go. I think he knew he had done a lot, but I just wonder if he thought that he could have done more—especially considering what happened subsequently, what a different state this place would have been, had he made one different decision. But I know Brenda was ready to go. I know that she would have supported any decision he made, I think 100 percent, but I think that she was really ready to go. It was probably better for the family that it ended the way that it did, and he's been fine ever since.

DePue: Do you think those last few years he was governor, he was consciously grooming or cultivating some future leaders for the Republican Party?

Boozell: No, I don't think so. I think that's too bad. I think that's something that the whole Republican Party of that era, we failed on: we didn't have a back bench, and we still don't have a back bench ready to go. We made fun of the Democrats; when we took total control we made fun of them for not having a

back bench. But we didn't learn from that mistake and have people who were ready to move up, who were high profile enough, who could step in and be the next Jim Edgar. We didn't do that, and I think that's something that we could have done better at.

DePue: Were people asking you or thinking of you as one of those people?

Boozell: No, I'd always made it perfectly clear I'd never run for office. No.

DePue: We got to that point. What then happens to you for the next few years after you step away from the Edgar administration?

Boozell: I took a week off, and then... (laughter)

DePue: A whole week?

Boozell: I took a whole week off, then I went to work for Pat Ryan at Aon. My wife was a schoolteacher, teaching in Rochester. This was January; she wanted to honor her contract and finish out the school year, and the kids wanted to finish out the school year in Chatham. Aon put me up in an apartment right on Lake Michigan, on the fifty-fourth floor of this big old apartment building, so I lived there. I think we bought a house and they moved down in about August. I came back and forth; I either came home or they came up on a weekend. It was quite a long time—worked for Aon for seven years. The last three, I've been with Dykema, which is a law firm in the Loop; I do government policy work for them. I do regulatory licensing and lobbying work for this law firm.

DePue: Tell me again what your job description would be with Aon?

Boozell: With Aon, I ran several of their managing general underwriting groups. When I first went there, I assumed—you know they say never assume; makes an ass out of you and me—that's a part we'll redact. (laughter) I assumed that I would be doing government relations work for Aon. I got there, and Pat Ryan said, "No, I'm not going to waste your time doing that. If I need something, I can call the governor or I can call the president. I don't need anybody to do that stuff. I want you to learn the business, because that will help you out more." Well, I thought he was wasting my time because I thought I'd be better doing government work, but I spent seven years running a group of seven or eight insurance groups, and learned the business from the inside out, which has helped me greatly in working with clients now at the law firm on getting licensing and regulatory issues settled for them. So it was a good run.

DePue: Well, we've had a long run right here. It's been fascinating to talk with you. I want to give you an opportunity to make some more generalized reflections on your timeframe, because you've had a long-term experience with the Edgar administration. What was your overall assessment of his time as both secretary of state and governor? How would you wrap it all up?

Boozell: I think that he—

DePue: You gave me a rather incredulous look there.

Boozell: (laughs) I didn't know there was a test at the end. I would say—anybody who would look back at the administration would say—this is a group of people who made a difference. While it was the Edgar administration, it was a big group of people who worked together and really did have common goals: make the boss look good so that we can accomplish some things and make a difference in this state. I think that we did that. We did it in the education arena; we did it in the public safety arena; we did it in the economic and financial arena. You know what? We left Illinois a better place than when we were given control of it. I think that would be my overall sense of Jim Edgar and the Edgar administration.

DePue: Looking back at all those years, what would you say is the proudest accomplishment for you personally?

Boozell: Oh... I don't know. I try not to be proud. I don't like that word. I'm happy that I was scandal-free. I tell people now that I'm the last gubernatorial chief of staff not to be either in jail or indicted (laughs) or under investigation, and I think that I am. I didn't involve myself in illegal or unseemly activities. I behaved myself, and I was faithful to the cause.

DePue: You certainly mentioned with—I'm tempted to use the word "pride"—your accomplishments while you were insurance director, a couple of the projects there.

Boozell: They were high-profile. Once again, they were something that was lasting—like I think Jim Edgar's legacy of maybe this building or the library, or that kind of stuff. My kids can Google me, and something will come up. (laughter) The liquidation lawsuit: I think that was an accomplishment that really did make a difference for a whole group of regulators and a regulatory community. So I made a difference there. I like to think I made a difference in dealing with the legislature and the members of the legislature and the leadership at the time. I think the way that I conducted myself—with integrity but with humor—we were able to accomplish some things that maybe we wouldn't have been able to accomplish if I hadn't had the relationships and maintained that atmosphere of cooperation with the legislative leadership.

DePue: Any final comments?

Boozell: No. In just a couple of weeks, the governor's having a party. It's twenty years since he announced for governor; he's inviting everybody who was a part of his administration to come and join him at the fairgrounds for a whoop-de-doop. Thinking back on it, I was involved in something that I will always be proud to tell my kids and my grandchildren about. It was a good group of

people; we did things right, we did things we believed in, and really—I think just to end it on my final note—it was a group of people who made a difference; I think made a good difference.

DePue: Thank you very much, Mark. It's been fun and fascinating to hear you talk about your experiences, and important history to boot.

Boozell: Thank you.

(end of interview)