Interview with Al Grosboll

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Interview # 1: May 20, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Wednesday, May 20, 2009. My name is Mark DePue. I'm the director of oral history for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm here today talking to Allen Grosboll about his experiences working with Jim Edgar through the time Edgar was secretary of state and while he was governor in the 1990s. Good morning, Al.

Grosboll: Good morning. I might add, by the way, that I also worked with him when he was in the legislature.

DePue: Well, we're going to get all of that, and it's going to take a little while to cover all of the bases. Let me say up front, Al, that because you're a working guy, make your living doing this business, I understand you're going to have to cut this one short today. But we will have future sessions, and we will not cut short the opportunity to hear your stories and to reflect on things. We always start, though, with when and where you were born.

Grosboll: I was born here in Springfield, at Memorial Hospital. My family lived in Petersburg, but my mother came in here for the delivery. I was born on May 17, 1951. I'm very proud of that date, by the way; because, of course, three years later was the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision—so on my third birthday.

DePue: There you go.

Grosboll: There it is.

DePue: And I'm sure when you were three years old, you were celebrating.

Grosboll: That's right.

DePue: That makes you a Baby Boomer—

Grosboll: Yes.

DePue: —and all that comes with that. What did your father do?

Grosboll: My father was an attorney. He had grown up on a farm, got an ag degree—went to the University of Illinois on an ag scholarship—but when he got out, he worked a little while; then World War II broke out. And when he came home from the war, he decided that he wanted to go to law school. So he went to University of Michigan Law School—graduated from there. Actually, while he was still there, he ran in the Republican primary for state's attorney, won; and then in the fall, he won the election. He came home to be state's attorney for the county, and then about a month later passed the Illinois Bar.

DePue: What timeframe are we talking about?

Grosboll: Nineteen forty-eight. So he was an attorney, and he was state's attorney at Menard County for twenty-four years.

DePue: What was his name?

Grosboll: His name was John E. Grosboll. My son has the same name; he's John Emerson Grosboll II.

DePue: Excellent. How about your mother? Her name?

Grosboll: My mother's name was Dorothy Tipps, T-i-p-p-s. Prior to her marriage to my dad, she was a lifelong resident of Springfield. Went to Springfield High School. Her father was a barber and ultimately moved into beauty salons and ran the Ambassador Beauty Salon here in Springfield for a couple of decades. And then later, my mother was in Petersburg visiting cousins—met my dad; they started dating, and eventually, during the war, they married.[1]

DePue: And real quick, what did your father do in the war again?

Grosboll: My dad entered the Navy, went into officer training, and was trained to be a captain on a PT boat. He trained, interestingly, in Chicago, at Northwestern; he trained at Notre Dame and then went to Newport, Rhode Island; and ultimately was shipped out, went to Australia, and then went over to New Guinea. And in New Guinea, he was given command of a PT boat. Technically, he was a lieutenant j.g. [junior grade], which was the highest that the officer training could get you to; but he would then command a PT boat, and as the commander of a PT boat, it made him a captain.

[1] John Emerson Grosboll (November 20, 1918-March 9, 2002) married Dorothy Tipps (July 16, 1919-October 22, 1986) in Tallula, Illinois, on May 23, 1944. Patrick Murphy, "Family Genealogy," http://www.familyaffairs.ws/wc01/wc01_219.htm.

DePue: Did he actually go on quite a few missions?

Grosboll: He did. You know, he never talked very much about that. There were two breeds of people that came out of World War II, those that—basically it was the highlight of their lives and became the center point for the rest of their lives. And then the other crowd were the people who came home, sort of left it behind, and moved on; and my dad was in that category. Never really would talk about the war, other than he'd answer questions.

DePue: Al, I'm going to venture forth and probably get myself into trouble here, but you have something of a reputation for being a very good storyteller yourself; so does that mean you take after your mother?

Grosboll: No. My mother did tell stories, but my dad was a terrific storyteller, a tremendous joke-teller; and could tell a story about the simplest incident that might have happened at some point in his life and turn it into a very amusing, entertaining, and sometimes educational story.

DePue: That speaks volumes for why he wouldn't then talk about his experiences in World War II, doesn't it?

Grosboll: That's right. Again, I don't think it was any particular reason other than I just don't believe that he viewed himself as being a hero, or being anything like that; he just went over, did his job, came back. He had stories that he would tell about when he was in New Guinea one time—they were hot and sweaty on the PT boat, and he thought he'd jump in and take a swim. He did, and as he was swimming along, he noticed a snake swimming beside him, and he just thought it was a beautiful snake. And he got out later and was describing it to someone, and then was informed that it was a coral snake, which was one of the most poisonous snakes that you could possibly be around. So he got a big kick out of telling that type of story.

DePue: How would you characterize your years growing up in Petersburg?

Grosboll: Very much small-town, 1950s life. When I think back to my childhood, I think probably the most vivid day-to-day memory I have is getting up. My dad would have already gone off to work—sitting in the kitchen; no air conditioning, of course—and my dad would leave notes for my two brothers and me with chores; and once those chores were done, we'd get on our bikes and we'd ride to the Jaycee Park and play baseball. We'd play baseball till noon, run home, eat lunch, and then come back and play baseball all afternoon. So riding my bike and playing baseball is what, at this age in my life, I define my childhood as.

DePue: Growing up in Petersburg, did you go to PORTA High School? Was it known as PORTA High School at that time?

Grosboll: When I started going to school there, of course, it was Petersburg; and then about the time I was probably in junior high, two smaller areas came into the school district, and they decided to rename it. They held a contest, and the winner would win a

twenty-five-dollar savings bond to come up with the winning name. And the reason I'm telling you this is that little Johnny Stiltz won that contest; and little Johnny Stiltz grew up, graduated from PORTA, went to California, did very well in California, came home a few years ago, bought an old house, turned it into a bed and breakfast, and then this last spring ran for mayor and is now the mayor of Petersburg. So little Johnny Stiltz named the school district and is now the mayor of Petersburg and is a very good guy.

DePue: Where did he come up with PORTA?

Grosboll: He took the first letter of the five communities that go to that high school. So it's Petersburg, Oakford, Rock Creek, Tallula, and Atterberry.

DePue: In high school, what were your interests? What did you see yourself becoming once you graduated?

Grosboll: I gravitated to history and government and political science almost from the very beginning. All of my family was very much interested in current events. We followed elections; we followed events that were going on. The civil rights movement was very actively going on at that moment; we all followed that. My parents were very progressive-minded in terms of those types of issues. So that, the space program—watching what was going on there. I was, personally, probably more driven to those kinds of things than my two brothers, but they were also interested in them. So in high school, I got involved in some student government. Very active in the Key Club, which is the Kiwanis service club. And then sports-wise, I was on the football team and played football for three years, and enjoyed that a lot. I was the pulling guard. My first year, we were 0-8, but by the time I graduated, we had a pretty good team; we were 6-3 and had won some very exciting games.

DePue: How would you describe the politics in your house? You'd mentioned your father ran as a Republican.

Grosboll: My dad's family was a Republican family—Midwestern, rural. I know that his father, who passed away in 1944, was very rock-ribbed Republican, sort of an anti-Roosevelt. And again, very rural, agrarian politics. My dad was a Republican—ran on the Republican ticket—but probably wouldn't recognize the Republican Party today. I think his vision was—very strong defense. My dad would have been defined as an internationalist; he believed in international policy. And again, very strong on defense. But on the other hand, he was very pro–civil rights. Of course, the Republican Party was very pro–civil rights when we were growing up; it was the Democratic Party that was split. So he was somebody who was not afraid of the federal government the way I think we are today in some ways.

So it was a Republican household in that sense; but on the other hand, it was not a real strongly political household in the sense of us against them. My mother cried all night long when John Kennedy was killed. My dad sat me down and talked about what a tragedy that was and how horrible that was. And that was important, because

what he was putting into perspective was that these types of things are not about politics. So it was a political situation in that my dad ran on the ticket; but he always ran unopposed, so it's not like it was a very political family in the sense of what I see today in some households.

DePue: It just occurred to me when you were talking about your dad and JFK's death—he's a fellow PT boat commander.

Grosboll: He was. They were in different zones of the South Pacific, but I've told people that like JFK, my dad was a PT boat captain. And I've said it's unfortunate that my dad's PT boat wasn't cut in half, or he might have been president of the United States.

DePue: (laughs) There you go. How about your own politics? First of all, when did you graduate from high school?

Grosboll: I graduated in 1969 from PORTA High School; then I went to Eastern Illinois University.

DePue: While you're in high school, then, your politics?

Grosboll: You know, that's an interesting question. I was not really active in like a Young Republican or Young Democrat or anything like that. I just never really quite got into that type of thing. On the other hand, just about everything in my county was Republican, so we would go to the Republican annual dinner; and I got to meet our congressman, who was Bob Michel—who eventually became the Republican leader—and enjoyed that experience.[2] To this day, Bob Michel still will mention my dad when I see him. Reminding him, "I'm from Petersburg," and he'll say, "Oh, yes, I remember your dad." So we had some activities along those lines, but I wasn't working a great deal for candidates or anything like that. And part of it was that I enjoyed following what was going on nationally, and I didn't find myself having real strong anti–Lyndon Johnson feelings in 1964. My attitude, even as a kid, was that he was doing the right things for the country at the time.

Of course, as I got a little older and as the Vietnam War began to expand, I, like most people in college, became a lot more cynical—a lot more cynical about politics, about Lyndon Johnson, *et cetera*. And part of the other equation is that I never liked Richard Nixon very well, so when I got to college, I found it pretty difficult to support him. So when I'm in college, I begin floating a little bit in terms of candidates; and I found myself in the unlikely position in 1972—I didn't like Nixon, so I voted for McGovern for president; but on the other hand, I came back and voted Republican in the gubernatorial race because I liked Richard Ogilvie. So I was one of

[2] Born in 1923, Robert H. Michel (R-Peoria) served as an infantryman in Europe during World War II, an experience that left him highly decorated and disabled. Three years after his discharge, he began work as administrative assistant to U.S. Rep. Harold H. Velde; when Velde retired, Michel won his seat in the 1956 election. He represented Illinois for the next thirty-eight years, serving as minority whip from 1975 to 1980 and minority leader from 1981 to 1994. "Highlights in the Career of Robert H. Michel," The Dirksen Congressional Center, Pekin, IL, http://www.dirksencenter.org/print_michel_bio.htm.

those crazy (laughs) McGovern-Ogilvie voters. I thought Ogilvie had been a very responsible governor and had been a strong leader. You get to college, particularly in that time period, there was a tendency to move to the left and move to the Democratic Party. But I couldn't quite pull myself away from the fact that when somebody is a fiscally strong person and a good manager, like Ogilvie was, and somebody shows a strong leadership, you've got to support them.

DePue: What drew you to EIU as a college?

Grosboll: I knew several people who had gone there, and they all talked about what a good experience they had. I had visited larger campuses, and I had visited smaller campuses. At that time, Eastern was around eighty-five hundred students, and basically for the last forty years, it's been in the eight thousand to twelve thousand range.

DePue: So a small university.

Grosboll: I found that to be a very comfortable size. It wasn't so large, like a University of Illinois, but on the other hand, it wasn't a glorified high school, either. And I liked the fact that it was small enough that you could make your mark in there; you could get to know lots of people in lots of areas. And I also must tell you the campus lured me in, too. I visited there in the spring. It must have been the first beautiful day of the year. The campus was beautiful, it was laid out extremely efficiently, and I loved walking from Old Main to the southern end of the campus. And then the other thing I should tell you is that I had a mild belief that I might play a little football, so I did. I was on the freshman football team for that year. I was the smallest guy on the team, and I was a lineman; but I did get to play that year, and I had some fun my freshman year. And then, of course, I wasn't big enough to go out for varsity, but it was still a good experience.

DePue: I assume you were not a scholarship player, though?

Grosboll: Oh, no. No, I was one of probably ten walk-ons, maybe a half dozen to ten walk-ons.

DePue: Your major in college?

Grosboll: I mostly went into the social sciences. My major was social science; I had a minor in history, and I had a minor in African-American studies. My degree was Bachelor of Science in Education.

DePue: Why African-American studies at that time?

Grosboll: What happened is, I actually didn't plan on it. In history, I took a class on the history of racism; I took the first unit of African-American history; I took a second unit on African-American history—enjoyed all three of those classes. Then I heard that one of the better classes was black lit, taught by a gentleman who was just a great teacher. I took that class, and I was so enamored by it—plus, I'd been introduced to authors that I'd practically never heard of—that I took a second class. So when I got close to

my senior year, my advisor happened to mention that he noticed I had enough classes—if they'd had a major in it, I almost would have had a major; but I think I needed one more class to get the minor, and I went ahead and took the other class. So it was sort of an accident.

DePue: I'm curious. How many blacks were in Petersburg when you were growing up?

Grosboll: That's a good story and a good question. Petersburg was like a lot of small towns in central Illinois. One, two, maybe three families in a small town like that. Petersburg had had a little bit larger black population maybe fifty years before I was born—there was a black church in town—but over time, there was a gravitation to Springfield. So when I was growing up, John Frazier and his wife lived a block from my house. Three blocks away was the Martin family, and it was a grandmother and a granddaughter. And then downtown, off the square a block, lived one of my best friends, Frank Washington. And Frank Washington was part of the Washington household but also part of the Craig household. An elderly gentleman who was the patriarch of that family, Bill Craig, was sort of a legend in my town. He had a couple of sons and a couple of daughters, and for the most part, they all ended up in Petersburg. So the Craig-Washington families were also in Petersburg, and that was it.

When I was in high school, there were probably four or five African-American students, but one of them was in my class—that was Frank Washington. His father was a member of the Harlem Globetrotters. They sort of had a Hall of Fame created, and Frank's dad is in the Hall of Fame—he was in the first group of inductees. Frank had a younger brother—who was a tremendous basketball player also; was in the high school when we were—and then behind them were a couple of the other younger cousins.

DePue: How would you explain the politics of Eastern Illinois in those years you were there? Because this is in the height of the Vietnam protest and student rights movement and civil rights and everything else.

Grosboll: Attitudinally, it was very similar to most campuses. Very much a growing opinion against the Vietnam War; very much against the Nixon administration; turning somewhat reluctantly toward Democratic candidates as a result of that. Eastern, however, I would say, while attitudinally similar to other campuses, probably not quite as extreme as other campuses. Again, most of the kids that go to Eastern break into two categories: awful lot of kids coming from rural communities like I did, and then a segment coming, of course, from Chicago. So just overall, the campus would not be nearly as extreme in its attitudes or actions as you might have seen on some of the other larger campuses. So we didn't particularly see violence. We'd see marches, maybe, and protests of something; but you didn't see violence, you didn't see buildings burned—you didn't see serious threats of that nature at a campus like ours.

DePue: It would have been happening right up the road in University of Illinois; and much more vociferous in terms of their protest against the war, I believe.

Grosboll: It was more vociferous, but I'd argue that even a campus like U of I was less so than some of the other larger universities in the country. Again, you didn't see buildings burn down at the University of Illinois either. You didn't see some of the kinds of things you might have seen elsewhere in the country. But certainly more organization, and probably a little more stridency at the U of I than at Eastern.

DePue: As you describe things, you weren't involved with any of that. You were an observer, if you will.

Grosboll: I was very active in student government, and student government would tangentially be involved in some of the activities. There was sort of a natural overlap of some of the people who were active in anti-war things, and it would overlap into student government; although I would say the student government stuff was more directed with antipathy toward the administration. So, for example, student government was very active organizing a march against the administration when they—

DePue: When you say "administration," the college administration?

Grosboll: The college administration, yeah. So I would say there was probably more focus in student government on protesting the university administration on certain actions. We'd had a president for 17 years, a little old-fashioned—when I look back, the guy did a lot of very good deeds; but he'd sort of outgrown his time and was a little dictatorial, so it opened the door for faculty and for students to be very concerned about some of the university policies. I would say we in student government were probably more oriented to that than we were to war protesting.

DePue: What was the name of the president at the time?

Grosboll: The president was Quincy Doudna; and President Doudna—who, of course, has passed away subsequently—was there, I believe, seventeen years, and the campus had grown from pretty small to a decent-sized, ten thousand–student university.[3] And I will also say, to his credit and to the board's credit, they had planned out growth of that campus in a very structured, slow manner so that we didn't have some of the boom and bust that some of the other universities had. So in hindsight, I certainly give them credit for that.

DePue: Do you recall Jim Edgar being on campus? I know he got there a few years before you.

Grosboll: Many, many people for years have believed that my relationship with him was a college relationship, which is, of course, like many things that become part of the story, completely untrue. I never met Jim Edgar when I was in college. He was five years ahead of me. He had been the student body president; and when I got involved in the student government, Jim Edgar's name was still floating about—spoken of with

[3] For Edgar's relationship with Doudna, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 22, 2009, 33-36; Tony Sunderman, interview by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 28, both in Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

great respect. A lot of student people who were a little older than me had been impressed with Jim Edgar; felt he'd been a very interesting, dynamic character. I got elected to the Senate as a freshman; and when I was a sophomore, I became speaker of the student Senate, and then I stayed in that role throughout the rest of my tenure. So I had a lot of dealings with faculty, Senate leaders and others, and they knew Jim Edgar and spoke of him with respect. But I never met him. I never met him when we were in school, and just had no contact with him.

DePue: You're of the age where this is an inevitable question—and we've already talked about the Vietnam War. You get close to graduation, and then questions about the draft and potential service come up. How did that work out for you?

Grosboll: That was an issue that was never very much on my mind. I know that sounds maybe a little careless, the way I'm saying that. But I don't see out of one of my eyes, and my eyesight in the second eye is not very good, so I had a college deferment, but had I not had the college deferment, then I would have had a classification in which I never would have been drafted, and my draft board told me that.

DePue: Four-F?

Grosboll: No, it was a different classification. I could be drafted in times of extreme emergency, I believe was the phrase they told me. This is about forty years ago, so you're testing my memory. But because I'm completely blind in one eye and can't see very well in the other, I knew the likelihood of my ever being drafted was about zilch.

DePue: Was that a birth defect, or something that—

Grosboll: A congenital cataract. I was born with it. I've never seen out of the eye, so I really have never had much sense of what it's like to see out of two eyes. I don't particularly notice much of a difference, to be honest. Had I been able to see out of the eye and then lost it, it would have been another story.

DePue: You're getting close to the end of your time in college. This would be '71 when you graduated?

Grosboll: No, I graduated in '73.

DePue: I'm sorry. My math is very bad, then.

Grosboll: Yes, I'm not that smart.

DePue: (laughs) What were your thoughts about a future career in the last couple years at college?

Grosboll: I fit a mold of a lot of people, and that mold was I thought I would probably go to law school, but on the other hand, I kind of liked government. I did some applying to law school in my junior-senior time period, but what I really set my sights on was the Illinois Legislative Internship. Interestingly, that's how Jim Edgar got started. I knew

a couple of people that were a year or two years older than me who had gone from Eastern into that internship. The head of our poly sci department was very good at encouraging students—Democrats and Republicans—to apply for that internship, and then he was pretty good at working the system and getting people to take a look at them. I wanted to do that. The head of the poly sci department—

DePue: His name?

Grosboll: Joe Connelly. Joe Connelly was the head of the poly sci department, and he was also the chairman of the Democratic Party of Coles County and had been a Democratic state legislator for two years. Fascinating guy, and did encourage people of both parties. He knew that my background had been Republican, although I had leaned to some Democratic candidates in college, and encouraged me to apply; and thought in particular that some of the Republican leaders might take an interest in me in the internship. So there are a lot of people who have a big thank you for Joe Connelly for his encouragement, and I'm one of those people.[4] He was one of my references, although I should qualify that and tell you that I think Joe was a reference for probably twenty people who applied for that program.

DePue: To include Edgar?

Grosboll: Did I include him?

DePue: No, would Edgar include Connelly as one of his references?

Grosboll: Yes. When Joe Connelly died, Jim Edgar was the only elected official that went to his memorial service and spoke in honor of Joe; and I think Governor Edgar and I may have been the only two Republicans in the room. I must say, it was a celebratory event, and it was a fun event. I think people very much appreciated that Governor Edgar—he was out of office at the time—took the time to come and say thank you to Joe Connelly.

DePue: Tell us a little bit more about the story that's involved with becoming a legislative intern, then.

Grosboll: I did apply for the internship, and normally about a hundred people apply for that program. They narrow that to forty people from around the country, and then the four legislative staff directors as well as a couple of other people—six, seven people, then—sit around a table, bring in forty people, and interview those forty people. And then each of the four staffs—House Republican, House Democrat, Senate Repubs, Senate Democrats—each pick three or four interns. So I went to the interview and sat down at the table, and I began being interviewed. It was about an hour-long

[4] For Edgar's thoughts on Connelly and the selection process for the internship program, see Edgar interview, May 22, 2009, 14 and 51-58. Connelly was a factor in Edgar's early political education, since he taught his ninth grade civics class, which focused heavily on the 1960 presidential election. See Sunderman interview, 10-12. Connelly may have also been the professor who was instrumental in bringing Edgar and Carter Hendren together for the first time; Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, April 28, 2009, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 8-9.

interview. And I, like everyone else, had been required to submit a writing sample. an I had submitted a sample that was a paper I had written for the university president, protesting an action that had occurred in which they tried to stop political campaigning in dormitories. And I wrote a paper—it was pretty scathing—citing Supreme Court decisions and everything, saying it was unconstitutional. And the university president did eventually reverse the policy. So I submitted that paper; and in the interview, one of the interviewers particularly zeroed in on that paper and began asking me some rather challenging questions about what I had written and some of the cases I had cited, and they were pretty tough questions. And while I felt pretty good about my answers, as I was driving back to school later that day, I was thinking to myself, I don't know who that guy was, but he either really liked me and was testing me, or else he hated my guts and I'm not going to get picked.

A couple of days later, I got a phone call and found out that that guy did like me and that he was testing me and wanted me for the internship—and that guy was a fellow named Jim Edgar. He was 26 years old; he was the head of the House Republican staff, and I tell people he's been testing me with those questions ever since.

DePue: (laughs) But at the time you're being interviewed, you didn't make the connection and say, this is the Jim Edgar who—

Grosboll: No. You know what happened? When I walked in, I think they probably introduced everybody around the table very rapidly; but I was kind of nervous, and if you had asked me the names of any of those people around the table, I wouldn't have been able to tell you. It was just one of those things—I sat down, and they moved right into the questioning, and I just didn't make the connection—and I should have, but I think I was just a little nervous. The other thing about that incident, that I think is one of the most telling things about Jim Edgar: the selection of the interns—because, I must tell you; four years later, I was doing those interviews, and I was helping to pick who would be an intern, and it's basically like a baseball lottery. There's a sequence that's picked; and then the four staff directors go in turn, picking names, and they have to go in a sequence. And, of course, you don't want to pick someone who's not going to actually agree to be on your team, because then you've blown a pick. So it's a lot like the baseball selection process.

So the reason I got that phone call that day, telling me that Jim Edgar would like me to be an intern—he didn't call me directly. He had another fellow that I knew who was working under him at that point call me—Paul Ward. Paul Ward had been at Eastern and was an intern that year with Jim Edgar and the Speaker's staff in the House, and Paul Ward called me up and said, "Al, you must have done a nice job at the interview. Jim Edgar, who's head of the House Speaker's staff, would like to pick you as an intern." And I'm like, "That's great. I'm really happy to hear it." And then Paul said, "The reason I'm calling you is that Jim wants to make sure you're going to take the job (DePue laughs) before he picks you." And I said, "Oh my gosh, of course I'm going to take the job. This is what I want to do." And he said, "So you're

comfortable working for the Republicans and working on the House side, and you'll definitely take the job?" And I said, "Yes, I will."

Of course, what I would realize years later is that that was so typical of Jim Edgar. He wanted me, but he didn't want me bad enough that he would blow the selection and not have a chance to use that selection to pick somebody else if I didn't want the job. That makes me laugh, and that also makes me respect him; because I know that logical thing going on in his brain about trying to make sure he gets the right people for his staff and not missing out on an opportunity because somebody was going to say no to him.

DePue: The interviewing process, was this a partisan process where only the Republicans would interview and then you'd go to a Democratic group?

Grosboll: No, no. The four staff directors would sit in the same room with—again, two, three, four other people would be there also. Back then, they had a thing called the Legislative Council.[5] They sometimes would pick somebody. They picked a scientist. They decided they wanted a science person. People from the university were there who were active in the program. So they'd all sit in the same room and do the same interviews.

DePue: The interns, once they're selected, work for whom in the legislature?

Grosboll: Each of the four staffs would generally pick four people. They could pick fewer if they wanted, but usually they would pick four interns, and they technically worked for the leader of that caucus; so whether it was the president of the Senate or the minority leader of the Senate or the Speaker of the House or the minority leader of the House, they would work for that leader—although, for all practical purposes, they really worked for the staff director of that leader. In my case, the Speaker of the House was W. Robert Blair.[6] I met Blair a few times, talked to him a couple of times—enough to embarrass myself—but otherwise, I dealt with Jim Edgar.

DePue: Were there sixteen people overall selected then, four for each one of the…?

Grosboll: Yes. Actually, there were seventeen my year: four for each of the four staffs, and then the Legislative Council picked a person.

DePue: And what did that person do?

Grosboll: That was a person who had a science background, and—

DePue: Okay, that was the—

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[5] The Legislative Council was formed in 1937 to provide non-partisan research support to the Illinois legislature. In 1984, the legislature renamed it the Legislative Research Unit; and in 2003, the LRU merged with the Illinois Commission on Inter-governmental Cooperation. Illinois General Assembly, Legislative Research Unit, "A Brief History of the Legislative Research Unit," http://www.ilga.gov/commission/lru/LRUHistory.pdf,

[6] W. Robert Blair (R-Park Forest) was Speaker of the Illinois House from 1971-1975. Governor Edgar served on Blair's staff from 1972-1973.

Grosboll: That's right.

DePue: Every single year, they selected somebody?

Grosboll: They did it for a couple of years, and I think the reason is that they had gotten a grant from maybe the National Science Foundation to try and beef up science staff on these research teams. It went for a couple of years, and then I think it disappeared.

DePue: When you walked in the doors as an intern, what was your perception about how the legislative process worked?

Grosboll: I probably had as realistic a view of the legislative process as any intern that year, and the reason is I had served as a legislative page a few years earlier. And while that sounds pretty simplistic, the fact is, when you're a page, you do see a lot of things going on. Even if your main job is to run out and get people sandwiches, you're nevertheless beginning to see how things work. And I had participated in committee hearings, so I'd seen how that worked; I had a little bit of a feel for that. I had testified before the legislature as a student government leader, so I had seen it that way. And I had been active forming a group in Illinois called the Association of Illinois Student Governments, which then actually hired an executive director who worked in Springfield and lobbied on behalf of student issues. That group functioned for about ten years, and then eventually it faded away. But that group is the group that led to students serving on governing boards, and also every year would negotiate with the governor and other people on what tuition would be in the state. So I had had experience with the legislature through that organization, through my own testimony, and through being a page. I had a pretty good sense of what I was getting into, and it was a fairly accurate perception. Of course, being in the internship and starting to actually be the staff for a couple of committees, you see it in much greater detail, and you begin to get a much more accurate feel for legislators and what drives them. It was a great experience.

DePue: Would you describe yourself during that period of time as an idealist, optimist, or a cynic, perhaps?

Grosboll: You know, I have always been an optimist. I always have a sense that ultimately things work their way out and that ultimately, in most instances, a good policy can result from things. I have an element of cynicism. It's impossible to be in government without an element of cynicism. I had a little bit of that then, I still have a little bit of that now—but I try not to allow that to overwhelm everything else. When you're working around government, you've got to avoid being Pollyannaish, but you also have to avoid being too cynical. And it is so easy—some people fall into a trap of being cynical about everything and everyone and every motive, and that's a bad trap. That's when it's time to get out.

DePue: You expressed before—your initial dealings with Edgar—you're impressed by what I would characterize as a pragmatic approach to your selection.

Grosboll: Jim Edgar is a very pragmatic politician; and eventually when we talk a little bit about his tenure as secretary of state and his actually winning election to that position, we're going to talk about that practical side, because that is the side that is the reason he was elected secretary of state, versus losing. He's very practical. He is very political. He understands the dynamics of what it takes to get things done. And while some people may look on that with a degree of cynicism—Oh, gee, he's *political*—I don't at all. What that means is he has a very good calculator going on in his brain in terms of what's actually doable, what can we actually pass, what can we actually get enough votes for here. In my view, that's a strong positive.

DePue: We have just a few more minutes. Do you have five minutes, perhaps?

Grosboll: No, we're okay. I think I can go to 10:20.

DePue: Very good. Then we definitely have time to continue and kind of flesh out your experience as an intern, because I would expect that's a formative experience for you.

Grosboll: It was.

DePue: What exactly did you do while you were there?

Grosboll: I was assigned to a couple of committees; and I may not remember everything I did there, but I will tell you, there were two committees that I worked on that really stand out. And I'm going to talk to you about this because it sort of responds to that last question about idealism versus cynicism. One committee I was assigned to was the Higher Education Committee, which was a perfect fit for me because I'd worked higher education issues as a student government leader, had an interest in it, was a strong believer in Illinois's higher education system—and I still am. I still believe that in Illinois one of our least appreciated assets is that we have a great combination of institutions for higher education in this state. We have one of the finer community college systems; we have great four-year public institutions of higher learning; and in addition to that, we have a very strong system of private colleges and universities in this state. And I think the general public completely under-appreciates the mix of options we have in this state. So I was very much interested in that committee, and working on that committee was great because there were just some wonderful people—ethical, idealistic people. The chairman was a woman named Giddy Dyer and the Democratic leader was another woman named Eugenia Chapman.[7] And they were two very delightful people. They worked very well together, even though they were of different parties. And on that committee, I got to see very open-minded, big-hearted people trying to wrap their arms around issues and deal with them very rationally and very fairly.

[7] Goudyloch "Giddy" Dyer (R-Hinsdale) served in the Illinois House from 1969 to 1981. Eugenia S. Chapman (D-Arlington Heights) served in the Illinois House from 1965 to 1982, becoming the first female Democratic leadership appointee when she became House Minority Whip. *Illinois Issues* (November 1994), 33. The two are also notable for being the House sponsors of the Equal Rights Amendment at the start of the ratification fight in Illinois.

The other committee I handled was what was called the Reg and Reg Committee, and that was the Registration and Regulation Committee. And that committee is where every bill that had to do with regulating a particular industry or requiring registration—would go. We regulate more professions in this state than in any other state in the nation, which I view as a negative. But what that committee was—it was a place where "fetcher bills" would go.

DePue: Ah, I've heard that term before.

Grosboll: I didn't know this term till I started working there, but some of the older staffers would explain those things to you. Let's say you were involved in a particular industry that was not regulated. Somebody would put a bill in to regulate your industry, and then miraculously, they'd decide not to call the bill; the implication being somebody gave them a payoff to pull the bill. So a fetcher bill was a phrase that was used to describe efforts that were intended not really to regulate something or to stiffen regulations, but merely to attract money—and I don't mean political contributions. The suspicion is these were situations where people were just getting money under the table to either drop their own bill or to kill someone else's bill.

So I staffed that committee, too, and, of course, I would write the bill analysis there just as seriously as I would write them for the higher education committee; and that's what brought on some of the cynical comments from my fellow staffers, like, "Well, Al, I'm not sure anybody on the committee cares what the staff opinion is on this. They already know what they're going to do." So I got an education on that committee. Interestingly, my chairman of that committee was a guy named Johnny Wall. The vice chair was a fellow named Babe McAvoy. They were part of what was called the West Side Bloc, and there had been questions about their association with criminal groups.

DePue: The West Side of Chicago, I assume.

Grosboll: Yes. And if you looked at the makeup of the committee, many, many of the people on there were all drawn from groups that had question marks about them and their integrity—I'll try and say that diplomatically. Of course, I'm only mentioning those individual names because years later, they were both indicted and convicted and sent to prison, as were another half a dozen other people, most of whom, at one point in their career, had served on the Reg and Reg Committee.[8]

[8] On February 23, 1978, a jury convicted Walter "Babe" McAvoy (R-Chicago) and John F. Wall (R-Chicago) of conspiracy for extorting $2,000 from the Illinois Employment Association in exchange for beneficial legislation. At the time of his conviction, McAvoy—who had first won election to the House in 1942 and served continuously since 1951—was the ranking Republican in the state legislature. McAvoy also provided the lone, highly controversial Republican vote that enabled Paul Powell to become the first minority-speaker in Illinois history. *Chicago Tribune*, July 6, 1990; Robert E. Hartley, *Paul Powell of Illinois: A Lifelong Democrat* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999). For Edgar's thoughts on this committee and legislative ethics during this period, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 29, 2009, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 1-9.

So as you can see, I (laughs) sort of had the best and the worst of both worlds. I worked on a committee that, to me, worked the way a committee ought to work, and I worked on another committee that I would eventually come to realize represented probably the worst of that. I don't want to say that we don't have that kind of thing going on today, but I would say that that Reg and Reg Committee was sort of a continuation of a 1940s, '50s mentality of legislators positioning themselves for their own personal gain on these particular committees.

DePue: You described one of the things that you did was to write bill analyses. What were those designed to do?

Grosboll: When a committee was scheduled, there would be a list of bills up that week. The same thing happens today, although, quite frankly, there used to be far less notice, and bills would show up that hadn't been posted. They're a little better about that now. But it would be the job of the staffer assigned to that committee to take that bill; to analyze precisely what the bill did; and to list off what the interest groups had to say about that. So if it was a higher ed bill, I'd usually get the position of the Board of Higher Ed; if it dealt with a particular university under the Board of Regents, I'd call them and say, "What's going on, here? What's your position?" I would try and find out where the bill came from, who was pushing it, and go ask them what their motivation was, and then I would write that up. The goal was to attempt to write a bill review on one page, and then I would have a folder put together for each member. They'd get it the day before the committee. It would list the bill, I'd have the full bill in there, and then I'd have my one-page analysis with it. And usually at the bottom of that analysis, I would even put down some questions that ought to be asked.

So that was the formal thing we were to do; but the other thing is that it was not unusual that we would have a committee member call me and say, "Alan, I don't understand something here. Why do they want X, Y, and Z?" And I would either answer it or I would go get the answer. Another thing that you would do on staff is that they might say, "I'm okay with this bill, but I really think we ought to put a sunset in. Could you draft me an amendment?" So I would write up an amendment; I'd go down to the Legislative Reference Bureau, they'd formalize it and give it back to me, and then I'd take it to that legislator.

DePue: You're a very young guy, but the process you just described requires an awful lot of networking, and I could see the incredible benefits of somebody in your position just getting started in doing that. Did you encounter some resistance because you guys were awfully young and—

Grosboll: No, not really. Sometimes if you were dealing with an older person who was a lobbyist or was a little full of themselves, they might sort of flick you off like you're a little fly, but for the most part—first off, those interest groups want to be asked their opinion. (DePue laughs) Whether you're twenty-two years old or fifty-two years old or twelve years old, they want you to ask them their opinion; so they're glad you called them, and they're appreciative. They'll seek you out. So it is pretty heady stuff. You're twenty-one, twenty-two years old, and all of a sudden, you have people who

are in very powerful positions, wanting to tell you why their bill is a good bill or why their position is the right position.

So you mentioned the issue of relationships. That's a great question. You need to be a good reader and a good analyst, but you also need to find out information; and in many, many cases, the story is not the words, the story is why somebody is putting a bill in. Sometimes it's because a tragedy occurred, and a legislator's responding to that tragedy, and you better know that story. Sometimes it's a bad motive. Sometimes a legislator is irked by someone in a community, and they decide to get a little revenge and put a bill in that screws over a mayor or undermines somebody who that legislator doesn't like. And while you may not end up putting that into writing, you better at least be able to tell your committee leader why Representative such-and-such put this bill in. So developing those contacts and knowing that, no matter what you're faced with, within five minutes you can find out what's behind something—that's what makes you a good staff-person.

DePue: Who was it that you directly worked for while you were in that position?

Grosboll: The first year, again, I mostly worked for Giddy Dyer, who was a wonderful legislator; very typical suburban woman who had been active in local activities and then, a little later in her life—well, maybe at fifty or something—gets elected to the legislature. Interestingly, I've never seen anyone do an analysis of this, but in many ways, tracking how women started getting elected to the legislature would be an interesting study. Some of them got there because their husband died; but as time went on, what you began to see is a lot of women in the fifties and sixties, who started getting involved with the local park district or started getting elected to school boards, and then would begin to build upon that experience and move on. And it's interesting how many of the women legislators, particularly from the suburbs, started on park boards and school boards. Giddy was very typical, I think, of that person who gravitated and ultimately ended up there. She was great to work with, a wonderful person. Still alive—or at least the last I heard, she's still out there—and a very nice lady.

Eventually, though, I took over the environment committee and the agriculture committee and worked some other areas. I did public utilities. And I would have different people there. The one name that stands out most, though, as I began working, was Rep. Ted Meyer. Ted Meyer, during the Ogilvie administration, had been a young legislator that Ogilvie had handed many of his groundbreaking environmental pieces of legislation. And I learned a tremendous amount from Ted. He passed away a few years ago, but he was a fellow who knew the history of the Environmental Protection Act, how it began. By the way, a little piece of trivia here: I was recently somewhere where a gentleman got up and was bragging about the fact that the United States of America was the first government in the world to enact an environmental protection act. Later on, I was having drinks with that individual, and I said, "I need to correct you on something. The national government is not the first government that enacted an EPA; the state of Illinois is." Richard Ogilvie passed the Illinois Environmental Protection Act before the national government did. Ted Meyer

was very active in that, knew the whole history of it, and he also had been active in passing anti-pollution bonds. So I gained a lot from Ted also, and I worked with him for several years.

DePue: I want to finish up this session. We'd be remiss if we didn't ask you about how closely you worked with Edgar and the nature of that relationship.

Grosboll: It's two stories. The first is that Jim Edgar—I worked with him because he was the chief of staff for the Speaker of the House, but that didn't last long. And the reason is that when we got to the spring of 1974, which was, you know, my internship, Jim Edgar left the staff in order to run for the legislature. He actually left before that primary; he left probably at the tail end of 1973, the year he picked me as an intern. Ran for the legislature, and was defeated in the Republican primary—the only race he's ever lost. And then he went off to Colorado for a while to do some work out there. So I did work with him briefly on the staff and enjoyed that experience, but it was very brief. On the other hand, even though he lost that election, two years later, another vacancy occurred; this time he ran, and in the fall of 1976, he was elected. So beginning in January of 1977—I was still on staff—Jim Edgar came back as a legislator, and I actually had more dealings with him then than I had when he was chief of staff, which was a very brief period. And again, as a legislator, he was great to work with because he knew how to read a bill. He understood the politics of passing a bill, so staff could work with him and talk the same language; and I had that type of experience with him.

DePue: The best thing about your experience as an intern? And then we're going to have to end this session.

Grosboll: Let's see, the best thing? The best thing about the internship was that it introduced me to the world of state government. It's my foothold to how I got involved in this business. So I did the internship for roughly a year, and at the end of that, I was offered a full-time job; and the person who offered me that, since Jim Edgar had left—was Zale Glauberman. Zale had taken over as chief of staff for the Speaker, and Zale called me into his office and said, "Al, the Speaker would like to offer you a full-time job and would like you to stay on here and work committees." And I said, "Zale, that's great. I really want to do that, but I have to tell you, I made a commitment a year ago to my brother and three other individuals that I would take three weeks off this summer and go to Vermont, go up to the Canadian border, and start hiking the Long Trail in Vermont." And I said, "I really need to get off." And Zale looked at me and said, "Al, you can have three weeks off. I don't care. I'm not going to pay you, (DePue laughs) but if you want to take three weeks off, you can do it." And I said, "Okay, I'll take the job." I got up to leave, and he said, "Don't you want to know what we're going to pay you?" And I said, "Well, I guess," which, of course—it didn't matter. I didn't care. But I got paid a thousand dollars a month, so my starting salary was twelve thousand dollars.

DePue: That's a great way to finish this session, and I think anybody who's been listening up to this point would say, "Okay, there's a lot more good stuff to come." We look forward to that, Al, and as soon as we're done here, we'll talk about when.

Grosboll: Okay, thanks.

DePue: Thanks.

(end of interview)

Interview with Al Grosboll

ISG-A-L-2009-017.2

Interview # 2: May 20, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: This is session two. Mark DePue. I'm with Al Grosboll. It's still May 20, 2009. And Al, we probably ought to get this as a marker on here. The reason that we're kind of rushing a little bit today—at least, I'm rushing—is because you're most gracious in taking time off from what you're really doing in your business. So why don't you tell us what you are up to here this week?

Grosboll: I work for an organization called Environmental Law and Policy Center, and one of our bills is dealing with energy efficiency standards. Several years ago, we passed a bill that put energy efficiency guidelines into effect for commercial, industrial large-scale buildings, but we were unable to include homebuilders. This year, we have a bill that will put into place the international code for energy efficiency for residential property. We now have the homebuilders on board with it. We've been battling to get the Municipal League on board—a few other groups. I had to run over because we had a meeting with Sen. Don Harmon, in which all of the groups wrapped their arms around this final compromise. So I had to run out to take care of that, but I'm back

now. We're very optimistic Illinois will be adopting the international code for energy efficiency, for all buildings in the state of Illinois.

DePue: And it's worth mentioning: May twentieth—there's some significance when you're talking about the legislative cycle, because you're only ten days away from the end of the normal session and going into the supermajority. Is that right?

Grosboll: Right. I believe Governor Quinn has referred to it as Doomsday; (DePue laughs) but we are, and we probably don't have ten days. There is a desire by the legislature to get out before the end of May. I think, partly, the president of the Senate, Senator [John] Cullerton, has got some personal things he would like to attend to—I think he's got a child graduating from college—

DePue: He does.

Grosboll: —and other things. The reality is that if they can put the budget together and put the other issues together by May thirty-first, they can just as easily do it before May twenty-ninth. It's all doable, it's just a matter of when they set their mind to do it. So there's still time, but this is the rush season, and it's also the season of when frayed nerves begin to show. But so far, everything seems to be relatively calm in the Capitol.

DePue: Frayed nerves? They never have frayed nerves (laughter) in the Capitol building, do they?

Grosboll: Well, they get a little irritable.

DePue: How about that. We had left talking about your experiences as a legislative assistant, actually an intern there, and then being hired on for a bit. Where did you go after that period of time?

Grosboll: I stayed with the Illinois legislature until the end of November 1977. In my role working on the environment committee, I had overseen a lot of legislation that dealt with strip-mining regulation and with the abandoned mines—the old mines that were what we call pre-law, which had been stripped and abused before we had any laws that required reclamation. So the desire was to begin dealing with those older, abandoned sites. And I worked on a lot of other issues dealing with coal. I was approached by an individual who worked for Gov. Jim Thompson by the name of Frank Beale, and Frank ran and oversaw the natural resource programs for Governor Thompson. He was concerned about how the state program to clean up those old abandoned mine sites was coming along; indicated that the executive directorship would be vacant; and that on behalf of the governor, he was trying to recruit somebody that might be willing to take that. Technically, the job was under the lieutenant governor, a fellow named Dave O'Neal.[9] He was the chair of the

[9] O'Neal (R-Belleville), a former pharmacist and Republican sheriff in St. Clair County, ran against Alan Dixon in the 1980 race for the U.S. Senate. He also memorably became only the third lieutenant governor in Illinois history to

Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Council. But Frank was the individual who recruited me, talked to me, asked me if I would take the job—and after a while, I told him I would.

So on December 1, 1977, after interviewing with the lieutenant governor, I was offered the job, and I took the job. So I started working as executive director of the Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Council. Now, that sounds pretty important or pretty official. I had a staff of one person. I had a secretary, and that was it. I started working there, trying to get the state program up and running. But the more important thing was that on August 3, 1977, Jimmy Carter signed into law what was called Public Law 9587, which was the Federal Surface Mining and Reclamation Act. That federal program provided for massive sums of money to be used by states to begin cleaning up their old abandoned mine sites. So what it meant was that Illinois, which had done almost nothing in a couple of years of activity to clean up the old abandoned mine sites, all of a sudden—within the timeframe it would take to qualify—would be getting anywhere from seven to ten to fourteen million dollars of federal money to clean up abandoned mine sites. So my mission was to get the state program back up and running, and to begin positioning us to get federal money. And that's what I did for the next three years, work on abandoned mine sites.

DePue: You were how old when you started this?

Grosboll: I was twenty-six.

DePue: So still a very young guy.

Grosboll: I was. I was. It was heady stuff, and I was very excited by it. Those were the days when you go to work and you work twelve hours a day and you think it's fun…or at least I did. (laughter)

DePue: I'm curious about the organization that you were dealing with, because you said you answered to the lieutenant governor but not to one of the other departments or agencies?

Grosboll: (laughs) You are asking for detail here. The Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Council was begun back in the early seventies, and the lieutenant governor was made the chairman; and the reason is, that passed during the time that Dan Walker was governor. The legislature did not like Dan Walker and chose to make the chairman of it the lieutenant governor—who was Neil Hartigan at the time—because Neil Hartigan was closer to some of the players in the legislature than Dan Walker was.[10]

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resign his post, believing that the position should either be given enhanced powers or abolished. *Chicago Tribune*, July 9, 1981, 4.

[10] The legislature created the council in 1974 "to designate and prioritize abandoned mined lands which were to be acquired and reclaimed by the Department of Mines and Minerals." In addition to the lieutenant governor, the directors of "Mines and Minerals, Conservation, Agriculture, Business and Economic Development, and Local Governmental Affairs; the Environmental Protection Agency; and the Illinois Institute for Environmental Quality" are members of the council. Illinois State Archives, "Record Group 315.000—Abandoned Mines Reclamation Council," http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/di/315__002.htm.

So, out of the blue, they make the lieutenant governor the chair of the Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Council. Well, in response to concerns from the Walker administration, they did then provide for, I think, six other members of the council, and those six other members were all department heads appointed by Dan Walker.

So (laughs) what ended up happening was that—this would have been probably '75—Hartigan called a meeting. The department heads came in. They selected who the executive director would be, not the lieutenant governor; and over the lieutenant governor's objections, hired an executive director. The council, I should tell you, went through three and possibly four executive directors between 1975 and 1977, when I was hired. So it was a contentious situation for a year and a half when Governor Walker and Lieutenant Governor Hartigan were both in play; and then, even after that, the council was stumbling to get on its feet and actually get a program up and running.

DePue: Yet another example of how Illinois politics affects everything that goes on, at least at the state level.

Grosboll: It does, and it was in major play over that council. But getting that council up and running was an important thing to me. It was the first time I ever had a chance to run anything. I also would tell you that when I got offered that job, I was going through the third decision point of my life of deciding whether or not I was going to go to law school. And for the third time in a row, I said, "You know, I can go to law school anytime, but when am I going to have a chance to do *this*?" And in this case, it was run a state agency—albeit one employee other than me. So I did do that, and I enjoyed it; and over that three-year period, we got funding to do some reclamation projects in the state. And then we began qualifying for federal emergency funds dealing with mine subsidence, dealing with old mine shafts that represented threats to the public health. And, of course, our bigger project was to prepare a plan that qualified the state of Illinois for the federal funds, for the full-blown federal program, which we did complete before I left there.

DePue: This is—at least I would characterize it—more executive kind of experience versus legislative, in terms of dividing up governing rules and responsibilities.

Grosboll: It was. It was more executive; although, for the first year, since I was the only person there other than my secretary, I was the PR person and I was the lobbyist, to the extent that we needed a legislative affairs person. I was our budget person and I was also trying to write the program. The next year, I was able to get another person hired that began helping to put together other proposals. As we started getting federal funding opportunities, we started going after those, and we got them. We created the first mine subsidence rapid response team in the country. Every time there's a subsidence event today, that team is still called out; and one of the major players on it, the guy who runs it, we hired in 1978. So that was a big deal for us.

I left out a piece, and that was that when I worked for the legislature prior to taking this job, probably the biggest issue I had dealt with in the 1976-77 timeframe

was the mine subsidence insurance program. And I don't want to eat up your tape on that, but that was a very significant law in which we eventually created an insurance program for people all over the state of Illinois that was run efficiently, that didn't cost the taxpayers a single dime—and never has, since it formally went into effect in '78 or '79—and yet provides insurance now to people whose homes are above old coal mines. One other state had a program—Pennsylvania—but it was not a good program. We created this program, designed to use the private sector. Every state with major subsidence problems, in the country today, has mimicked the law that we were able to write back in 1976. A legislator named Celeste Stiehl was responsible for that, and I worked with her for over two years to craft that bill, with great help from a gentleman in the Illinois Department of Insurance named Ken Smith.[11]

So I would say that it was probably my work on that mine subsidence insurance program that brought me to the attention of the governor's staff and is why they approached me about taking that job. And I probably needed to say that, so you know how it is I segued from the legislature, ultimately, to running that program. Which has nothing to do with Jim Edgar. (laughter)

DePue: Anything that surprised you about that experience?

Grosboll: No, not at all. It was like every job I've had. It was a lot of fun. We were able to recruit a team of very smart people, of very qualified professionals. We ran as a team, we worked as a team, we had fun as a team, and we got a lot done.

DePue: I'm curious about the relationship you had with the Bureau of Mines and Minerals and with the major mining corporations in the state.

Grosboll: I actually had a good relationship with the mining companies in Illinois. First off, I wasn't regulating them. There was another section in the Department of Mines and Minerals that actually did the regulating of active coal mines. But I had known major players in the coal industry while I was working in the legislature; I got along with them well. I had been somewhat active as the strip-mining regulation bills had been passed in the Illinois legislature and while the industry had fought some of that, ultimately—usually—compromises were reached, and that was fine. All of which became moot once the federal government passed Public Law 9587, because then the state had to mimic the federal law on that. And they also began paying fees, which is how the Abandoned Mine Lands Program ultimately was funded at the national—

DePue: "They" being who?

Grosboll: The coal companies. Yeah. If you stripped a ton of coal, you paid thirty-five cents to the federal government. That went into a pot, and it is that pot that then paid for the cleanup at the old abandoned mine sites. But I got along with the coal industry fine. The U.S. Bureau of Mines actually was irrelevant in this. A new agency, the U.S.—I

[11] First elected in 1972, Rep. Celeste Stiehl (R-Belleville) is notable for being the first woman to serve in the legislative leadership. Rep. James Washburn (R-Morris) chose her as an assistant minority leader in 1975. *Chicago Tribune*, December 9, 1974, 1; *Chicago Tribune*, January 23, 1975, 4.

can't remember if it was a bureau or a division, but it was the surface mining—Bureau of Surface Mining, at the federal level is what I worked with.[12] They were fine to work with. A little bureaucratic, but particularly on emergencies, when we called them, they would move quickly: they'd look at a site, we'd call them up, we'd report it, they'd say, "Yes, you're funded," we'd get the money, and we'd deal with an emergency within hours. So that worked fine. And then ultimately, we went after the larger-scale federal program that qualified us for up to fourteen million a year. Illinois got its program in very rapidly. I don't remember if we were first, but I do know the feds told us they thought our plan was the best plan they had seen. So it was an extremely detailed plan, and they did approve the plan, and Illinois qualified for funding then.

DePue: What we haven't talked much about is your personal life. Did you get married somewhere in this process?

Grosboll: Nope. No, I did not. No. Sorry to tell you.

DePue: Then we can move right along.

Grosboll: And I'm not going to discuss any girlfriends.

DePue: (laughs) Let's talk, then, about the transition to the secretary of state's office.

Grosboll: When I had been working at Abandoned Mine Lands, when I left the legislature, Jim Edgar had been elected to the General Assembly. He then got elected again in the fall of 1978. I was at Abandoned Mine Lands. Governor Thompson approached him and offered him the position to run the legislative affairs office for the governor.[13] I think at that stage, the governor [Edgar] had a very young family. He was a state legislator, not making very much money. He was a full-time legislator; he believed that's all he should be doing, so he didn't have outside income, unlike a lot of other people in the legislature. Brenda, for the most part, was a stay-at-home mom raising the two young children. And I also think—and he'll speak to this, I suspect—he'd become a little discouraged with the legislative process. Power was becoming more and more centralized, and the power of individual members was being diminished. I think he saw that coming. I think it frustrated him, and when he had an opportunity to take the other job and realized he could have far more impact on legislation in the governor's legislative affairs job than he could as a legislator, he chose to take that.

Interestingly, shortly after he took that, he called me up and asked me to come see him. I did, and he asked me if I'd come work for him in the legislative affairs shop. And I said, no, I couldn't do it. I had only been at Abandoned Mine Lands a year, a year and a few months, and I'd made a commitment, and I just didn't feel like I'd

[12] The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act created the Office of Surface Mining (OSM). http://www.osmre.gov/aboutus/Aboutus.shtm.

[13] For Governor Edgar's account of Thompson's offer and why he decided to accept it, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 9, 2009, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 75-88.

leave after that short of a time period. Ironically, he then turned to someone that he didn't know, and it was a woman named Joan Schilf, whom, when he would eventually move to the secretary of state's office, made her his chief of staff. And it was a very good selection; she was very bright and did an excellent job.

So I passed on going to work for him in that legislative affairs shop; but then another two years passed, and in the fall of 1980, Alan Dixon, the secretary of state of Illinois, was elected to the United States Senate. With his election to the United States Senate, it meant that Jim Thompson, the governor of the state, would have the authority and responsibility to appoint a new secretary of state. He also, at the exact same time, had a vacancy in the Illinois attorney general's office because the attorney general of Illinois, Bill Scott, had been indicted and convicted of tax evasion and was thus forced to leave that office. So Jim Thompson had to fill both positions, and he chose Ty Fahner to become the attorney general and Jim Edgar to become the secretary of state.

Shortly after that, I got a telephone call from Jim Edgar's administrative assistant, Penny Clifford, who had worked for Jim Edgar in the legislature and in the legislative affairs shop and would work with him in the secretary of state's office for several years. Very efficient, competent person; very loyal. She called me up and said, "Jim wants to have lunch." So I met him for lunch—I think it was at the Sangamo Club—and the first thing out of his mouth was, "You've got to get out of those coal mines and take a real job." (laughter) And I knew what the conversation would be about, and I said, "Yes, sir, I know that's right, and I'm ready to do that now." And I explained to him that I felt I had completed my obligations. We had prepared the plan and were on the verge of getting large federal money, *et cetera*. We'd built a staff of twelve people at Abandoned Mine Lands, using federal funding, and I felt I was ready to move on.

So over that lunch, he then described to me that he would like me to work at the Vehicle Services Department. And there was a little bit of going back and forth over the next couple of weeks with him and with Joan, who was to be his chief of staff, and eventually it was determined that I would be the director of the Vehicle Services Department, which is second largest in the department. The first is the Driver Services Department. And between full-time employees and part-time, we had at least a thousand employees; probably a little more than that. So on February 2, 1981, I left Abandoned Mine Lands and went to work for Jim Edgar, the new secretary of state.

DePue: This is probably a good time for you to give us a quick thumbnail description of what the secretary of state in Illinois does and the purview that he or she has.

Grosboll: Yeah, it's an interesting thing that in Illinois, for some bizarre reason, the legislature, whenever it has had odd duties and chores, has deposited those responsibilities in the secretary of state's office. I'll speak from numbers that I was familiar with twenty years ago—the Illinois secretary of state's office had about four thousand employees, and our budget back then was well over a quarter billion dollars. And this was a situation in which we had the state archives, which is fairly traditional for secretary of

state offices; we had the index division, where you file things—that was fairly traditional; but in addition to that, the secretary of state is the chief librarian for the state of Illinois and is over the Illinois state library. The secretary of state runs the driver's licensing bureau, as well as the license plating and titling programs for the state. Only one other state vests those vehicle-related duties with a secretary, and that was Michigan. So the largest secretary of state's office in the country was Illinois, with about four thousand employees. Michigan at the time had about seventeen hundred employees. A couple of other states had secretary of state offices of maybe fifty, sixty, seventy-five people. And then I would say well over forty of the secretary of state offices had no more than twenty-five employees. So as you can see, this is a very unique situation.

Now, that has its pluses and it has its minuses. The minuses are that it is a huge bureaucracy with a vast array of responsibilities, and one minute you're dealing with archive issues that have come up; the next minute, you're dealing with a driver's licensing scandal; the next minute, you're dealing with security dealers and whether or not they're acting properly; the next minute, you're working on trying to get a new state library built, or you're working on literacy grants. So it's a vast array of responsibilities that a secretary of state has to get his or her arms around. On the other side of that coin, it also represents incredible opportunity, and it is why, other than the governor of the state, the secretary of state is the most visible elected official in the state. It is not unusual that the secretary of state's name ID is second only to the governor in terms of people knowing who that individual is. And I say that because that will certainly fit into the next part, which is Jim Edgar recognizing what that opportunity was and how he had to move quickly to take advantage of that if he wanted to stay alive politically in Illinois.[14]

DePue: The secretary of state's office in Illinois has also long had the reputation of being one of the great sources of patronage. There is a lot of history and a lot of politics that's happened since he took office as secretary of state in '81 and to the present, but I wonder if you can address the patronage stuff.

Grosboll: Actually, I don't disagree with that statement. Any time you've got four thousand employees, it does mean that you have a fair amount of sway in terms of who you're hiring, and certainly politics can play into that. But it also is important that we make a couple of distinctions here. The previous secretary of state was Alan Dixon, and Alan Dixon had instituted a merit code. Now, various secretaries had done merit codes in some way, but Secretary Dixon had expanded on that, and one of the impacts of that was that no less than 80 percent of the employees in the secretary of state's office were moved into protected, coded positions with a merit commission, so a new secretary of state of either party coming in was not in a position to all of a sudden dump four thousand employees. In the 1940s and '50s, you would have definitely seen that happening, where wholesale wiping out of large numbers of people would

[14] Edgar was extremely conscious of the political time constraints he would operate within once he took office. He discusses his thinking on this issue, as well as his strategy for dealing with it in his June 15, 2009 interview. Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 15, 2009, 1-4; 9-10; 31, 36; 53-63; 80-84.

happen if the party changed. That was not the case. Once you got into the seventies, that began to slow down and have a pretty dramatic change. Now, are there still major jobs there? Sure there are, because there are vacancies occurring all the time, and notwithstanding the more recent things that have happened on hiring practices to ensure that's not done politically, the fact of the matter is that even as Alan Dixon was putting the merit plan in place, and even as we were carrying it out, it still gave you great discretion. And a lot of those jobs were not protected by the code, so that you could move a person in or out based on whether you thought you liked them, thought they were doing a good job, or whatever.

DePue: The story that I have heard, (and I don't know if "story" would be the wrong way of saying it) is tradition was that a county chairman of the same party as the secretary of state—when a vacancy came open in a local office, calls would be made one way or another and said, This is the individual or, They'd like you to give consideration to this person.

Grosboll: There are two things wrong with that story. First off, I'll go back a little bit and say this: I think historically, if you go back thirty, forty years ago, what you would find is that when an administration changed and it was of a different party, that county chairman probably was able to pick up the phone and tell the secretary of state or his staff, "I want those three people in that station fired, and here are the three people, most of whom are my relatives, hired." That would have been pretty accurate if you go back a couple more decades. By the time Jim Edgar was there, I would say it was far more limited. First off, county chairmen had to understand they no longer had the right or the ability to tell a secretary of state or anyone else, "You need to fire those people working in my county." Those days were over and are over, because they're protected. They're protected by code— from the clerks to the driver examiners, up to the manager of the station, there's now a protection in place.

The second thing is that even when a vacancy occurs, at the point Jim Edgar was secretary of state, he could, in fact, still consider politics. But even under that scenario, that person had to be properly tested, and they had to pass the test in order to be on a list, they had to be interviewed, and proper procedures had to be followed. And then throw in another thing, which is there's a veterans preference. So if you have ten people on that list and you have a veteran, that veteran gets the preference.

The reason I'm explaining this is that when Edgar became secretary of state, you had had eight years of Democratic secretaries of state. You'd had Mike Howlett, and you'd had Alan Dixon. There were many Republican chairmen around the state who couldn't understand why Jim Edgar wasn't taking care of them, and the reason was that we had new laws in place. Today, a secretary of state is not even supposed to consider the politics of a person when they're hiring to fill a vacancy. In 1981, Jim Edgar could at least consider that. Today, theoretically, they're not supposed to. I will not be the arbiter of whether or not that is being followed—I highly doubt it in many cases. So that's a little bit of the background on hiring.

DePue: And anybody who works in the state of Illinois government now knows about the *Rutan* decision—which came down in 1990—which became much more explicit in terms of the hiring procedures.[15]

Grosboll: Hiring and firing. That's absolutely true. So in 1981 when Jim Edgar became secretary of state, it was a different world than existed ten years before in 1971. And quite frankly, in 1991 the world was completely different than it was in '81, and I would say the world today is different than it was then. So this has become an evolving thing. Different people will argue over whether or not it's all good or all bad, but by and large, those steps have been intended to try and make sure there is greater fairness, especially in the issue of protecting people once they're employed, and then secondly, trying to create a little more fairness in the hiring.

DePue: I'd like to have you explain the difference between the Vehicle Services and the Driver Services Divisions.

Grosboll: Each of them has very broad responsibilities, but to put it simply, Driver Services handles the licensing of people to drive vehicles; whether it is getting your driver's license to drive your car or whether it is a truck driver trying to get a CDL to drive a large truck, or people driving motorcycles. So Driver Services, by and large—90 percent of their responsibility is dealing with individuals who drive vehicles. The Vehicle Services Department, which I was director of, is responsible for putting license plates on seven to eight million vehicles in Illinois and collecting the revenue from that. In addition to that, we are responsible for titling those vehicles. We title about three million vehicles a year.

Again, both departments have significantly more duties than I've just described, but those are the big ones that each of those departments handle. To put that in perspective, when I went into motor vehicles, I had eight divisions, and they ranged everywhere from the titling shop, which had well over two hundred people, to a registration processing that was my second largest one, to a division in Chicago that had four stations where we literally let people walk in and get plates and handle titles. Then I had a series of others. We had a vanity plate division, a license correction unit, which was to fix things that were somehow goofed up, or somebody wanted to change a record, or they got married. So I had eight divisions.

And just to hearken back to your point about patronage, I had eight division administrators, all of whom were protected—were coded administrators—almost all of who had been hired by or put into the position by Secretary Howlett or Secretary Dixon. So we'll talk more about this, I suspect. But my point on this is that as we went in, not only in my department, but in every department, the major people that we relied on to run the office were pretty much all hired by those prior administrations; and whether we wanted to change that or not, we were not legally able to do that.

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[15] *Rutan v. Republican Party of Illinois*, 497 U.S. 62 (1990). By a 5-4 vote, the decision extended the rule of *Elrod v. Burns*, 427 U.S. 347 (1976) and *Branti v. Finkel*, 445 U.S. 507 (1980), determining "that promotions, transfers, and recalls after layoffs based on political affiliation or support are an impermissible infringement on the First Amendment rights of public employees." Justice Brennan wrote the majority opinion.

DePue: Would you say the people that you inherited were loyal to the institution or loyal to the politics?

Grosboll: I'm very glad you asked that question, because it was my belief, or it is my belief after having gone through that—and by the way, what I'm about to say is true of all of state government—that people who worked in the secretary of state's office, by and large care about their job, and they care about doing a good job. And the percent of people who put more emphasis on the politics of it and whether it's a Democrat or a Republican [secretary] is a very, very thin percent. It was my experience once I got there—people were just scared that they weren't going to be treated fairly. Once they were treated fairly, they became team players. And I'll speak to my department. I had eight division administrators, and as I began learning the department and spending my twelve hours a day there, what I came to realize was that most of them were very bright people and most of them wanted to be part of the Edgar team. Whether they had been hired by Michael Howlett or Alan Dixon or whomever, they wanted to be part of the team, and they wanted to be given that chance. And it was my position to give everyone that chance, and what I found was that—in division heads and people in the front office of my department—other than two or three people who just couldn't get over the fact that Alan Dixon wasn't there any longer, everybody else was like, You know what? We got a new boss; let's make this work.

And I eventually, as you know, became chief of staff for the office and became the deputy secretary. That never would have happened if I had not trusted those people in Vehicle Services to do their job. It was their work and the results that we produced that I believe caused Jim Edgar to say, Al's done a good job; I think he can do a good job for me in the front office. That was a very important lesson. And Jim Edgar got that lesson, too. He found out very quickly that there were people there who were registered Democrats who would bend over backwards to make Jim Edgar look good and to make the secretary of state's office look good.[16]

DePue: Is that to say that you were very pleasantly surprised by that?

Grosboll: I didn't go in there with an assumption. Again, I'm an optimistic person. I assume that when I meet someone, they're going to like me, and they're going to try and help me. And I didn't go in there with an assumption that I was going to have trouble with those people. As I got in there, I began to realize, I do need to be a little careful. There are some people who haven't dealt with this yet and who are political and would want to hurt Jim Edgar and hurt his opportunity to be a success. I had to realize there were a few people like that. But by and large, what I found was most people in life just want to do a good job. I had a great experience.

In the first month I was on the job, I met with my eight administrators; the first day—actually, shortly after this, I thought I'd made a terrible mistake—I said to the eight people, "I want you to call my secretary and arrange for me to come visit your

[16] For Edgar's philosophy on managing his personnel, his expectations for their performance, and his attitude toward the civil-service-protected holdovers he inherited, see Jim Edgar interview, June 15, 2009, 7; 15-16; 24-31.

departments; and when we do that, I want you to introduce me to every employee in your division. I want to shake hands with every employee." I don't think I realized there were as many people there, (DePue laughs) when I said that. And more explicitly, what I said was, "As we go into one of your sections, introduce me to your supervisor, and make sure your supervisor is prepared to then walk me around and introduce me to everyone."

So, over the next three or four weeks, I did that. And I must tell you, my right hand was sore for a month from shaking hands with them. But when you meet a whole bunch of people in a row like that, you have to come up with things to say. You say, "Oh, where are you from? How long have you worked here? What do you like about your job?" You ask those questions to create some conversation. And what I found out was that when you would say, "What do you like about your job," almost to a person, they would say, I really like helping the public, I like public service, I like dealing with people, I like helping people solve a problem. Almost all of them would say things, and they were very sincere, and it made a lasting impression on me.

And most of these were people—very typical would be people getting on a bus down in Carlinville, Illinois, coming up, and fifty people getting off the bus and going into the secretary of state's building—what used to be called the Centennial Building, and it's now called the Howlett Building. They're housewives, their husband's a farmer, their husband does this. And while, yeah, some of them were there because their county chairman of either party had maybe helped them get a job ten or fifteen or thirty years before, once they're there, what they like about it is dealing with the public and helping the public. And it completely destroyed my image that the secretary of state's office is just a bunch of bureaucrats taking home big, fat checks. I find out, first, they don't make very much money, and they do care about their jobs.

DePue: Both you and Governor Edgar are very young to be getting these positions that you've now landed yourself into. Was that a difficulty?

Grosboll: From my perspective, no. I was twenty-nine; he was thirty-four. I was full of energy, and like I say, I had no problem. I got to know all of the people who worked the midnight shift because I knew where the coffeepots were at night. (DePue laughs). So I knew I could go up and get a cup of coffee at two in the morning. I don't know that I'd work those kinds of hours today—I've got family responsibilities and other things. So for me at the age of twenty-nine, I was driven by a desire to learn everything I could about that department and be a success. So I don't view that as a negative. I could have been fifty going in there and would have still had to learn the whole department. I mean, that's the whole drawback in any administration. When it changes and new people are brought in, many of those people know nothing about the particular agency they're asked to go in and learn. So that's a challenge. But I don't think it had to do with my age, it had to do with the fact that I didn't know that area.

DePue: Well, the question dealt more with their willingness to accept you as their boss.

Grosboll: They didn't care about my age. What they cared about was that they didn't know who I was, and that would have been true whether I was thirty or fifty. They didn't know who I was, and all of a sudden, I'm there, and I'm going to start telling them what to do. Many of these people have been through this before. They don't know if they're going to get a nice person, a smart person, a jackass, —you know? They don't know what they're getting. So that's what it's really about. They don't know if I'm going to come in and I'm all about politics; I'm all about, You people worked for the last secretary and he's not of my party, therefore I don't care what you have to say—which may sound kind of odd, but… I can remember (laughs)—there was an individual I know who was hired by Governor Thompson; a very political person, went into a department. The first day, called in a group of people and laid down the law kind of from a political standpoint, and, of course, I believe probably undermined that director for the rest of his service. But there are people who go into positions like this and are pretty stupid. So I believe that's what the apprehension is about, not age; it's about, is this person going to be fair? Are they going to learn who I am and appreciate what I do?

DePue: Governor Edgar is going through the same process, one step higher than this. He's a better-known quantity when he gets to that position. From your perspective, how well was he received by the rank and file in the organization?

Grosboll: Same situation. They're all wondering, Who is this guy? They don't really know him. He was a—

DePue: Man, did he move up fast.

Grosboll: Yeah. He was a guy working in the governor's legislative affairs job. They don't know who he is. And the rank and file employees have never heard of him—maybe a few people know he was a legislator at one point, but they really don't know him—and I think the same apprehension is there toward him. There was a comfort level with Alan Dixon. Alan Dixon followed Mike Howlett, they were both Democrats; there was an assumption of a flow that would continue. And Alan Dixon and many of his people were kind of easygoing, I think. I don't want to say that's true across the board—so I think there was maybe a little more comfort level when that happened. When it switches from Alan Dixon of one party to Jim Edgar of another party—great apprehension.

Now, I will tell you, I think Jim Edgar did some very smart things right off the bat. First off, he said all the right things. He said to people all he cared about was that they do a good job. He went into facilities, he went into major departments, he addressed groups of the managers—and in every one of those, he said, "All I care about is that you're showing up." Because remember, there were fears in those days that there were people on the payroll who never came to work. And Edgar would say, "I want you at work, at your desk, doing your job, and if people do their job, they have nothing to be afraid of." So Jim Edgar sent the right message out to everybody.

Secondly, although we did move on a lot of the department heads, Secretary Edgar did not just come in and willy-nilly wipe out a bunch of people. The biggest department in the place was Driver Services, and a fellow named Bill Logan ran it and had been there for many years. And Bill stayed with us for a fair amount of time. There was a point eventually where Secretary Edgar brought in somebody else, but Bill was there for, oh, I don't know, a year or two, and I think that was extremely important on the transitioning. He couldn't do that in my department because my predecessor, who was a former roommate of mine, went off to DC with Senator Dixon.

DePue: What was his name?

Grosboll: Scott Shearer. So—

DePue: College roommate?

Grosboll: No. He and I roomed together in Springfield. So there were several departments that vacated because people went with Senator Dixon. So the secretary did move on those; brought in people he knew and trusted in some of the other major departments. Even where he eventually would want to have his own person there, he asked people to stay on and help in that transition. Bill Logan stayed for a while. Bill was a good guy and did help out, and that was good. And then in a lot of the agencies, whether it was the archives or the index or others, those people not only stayed, but they were there after Jim Edgar left. So John Daley was running the archives when Jim Edgar got there, and he was running it for years afterwards. He just passed away.

DePue: Of no relation to the other Daley family in Chicago.

Grosboll: No, none. No. And the same thing was true in some of the other areas. So he did not move in a manner that sent threatening signals out to people. The one thing that I think the secretary did that he had to do, which might have sent some messages, was because immediately, as you know, we had to clamp down on some criminal activity that was apparent in Chicago. The secretary sent some very strong and harsh messages about how we would deal with people that we caught taking bribes or doing illegal activities.

DePue: That is one of the things I'd like to have you explain in more detail. What exactly did Secretary Edgar and others discover when he came into office?

Grosboll: I need to qualify this by making the point that I was not in the front office; I was over in Vehicle Services. Joan Schilf—or Joan Walters now—was in the front office handling this. But almost immediately, she and Secretary Edgar were notified that there were major undercover operations going on about criminal activities in, as I recall, a particular driver station in Chicago.

DePue: Notified by whom?

Grosboll: I can't remember which prosecutorial arm it was, but it might have been the Cook County State's Attorney's Office; it might have been the Illinois State Police. But under any circumstances—in fact, he might have even been notified before he set foot in the office, but certainly that first day or that first week in office, he was made aware that there was a massive undercover operation going on and that charges were going to be filed. People were selling driver's licenses, and illegal activities were occurring.[17]

DePue: Would Alan Dixon have been aware of this as well?

Grosboll: I can't speak to that. Joan might be able to, but I don't know. So interestingly, that's one of the first things he has to deal with. And again, the office did everything it had to do in terms of complete cooperation. We had an internal affairs shop that we utilized at that stage, I think, to participate and to make sure we had a complete handle on what was going on. And then the key was that the secretary had to use the bully pulpit—both external to the office and internal in the office—to send a message that this was conduct that would not be accepted and that any time we found it, we would be having people arrested and fired. And I will tell you that in the entire ten years that Jim Edgar was secretary of state, there was never an incident in which we caught someone stealing money, selling a driver's license, or doing anything of an illegal nature that we did not fire them or force them to resign—or we accepted their resignation in lieu of being fired. There was never a case where we didn't do that. It was a black-and-white rule, and I would say that every employee in that office knew it. And you may say, "Well, that's kind of simple." (imitates DePue; DePue laughs) I will simply say to you that in prior cases, it was not true, and in subsequent administrations, it was not true.

DePue: And, of course, that's the demise of George Ryan.

Grosboll: Right. One of the instances that was reported, that came out in the trial, was there was an individual caught stealing money who was told he was going to be fired. He made a couple of phone calls, other calls were made, and the individual was given a suspension and let back to work. We would not allow that. The rule was very clear: if you get caught stealing money, you're fired. And that was important. That was a very, very important message to send. And it had to be consistent, and it had to be across all boundaries, Republican and Democrat. It had to be consistent. And it was as consistent as anything could possibly be.

DePue: What was it about the driver's licenses themselves that made them such a lucrative thing for people who had nefarious purposes, if you will?

Grosboll: There are several circumstances in the driver's licensing world. And, by the way, there were issues on license plates, too, that we should talk about. But on the driver's license—what made a driver's license of value was if you had a person who had previously lost their driver's license due to drunk driving, reckless driving, or

[17] Jim Edgar interview, June 15, 2009, 17-23.

something and they would want to get another license under maybe a different name; somehow alter something that would allow our office to print them a driver's license so they would have that in their possession and could drive and do other things. It was of value to illegal immigrants because once an illegal immigrant has an Illinois driver's license, it opens the door for them in many, many other ways.[18] One of the areas, unfortunately, that we had to have a lot of dealings was in the area of what were called the driving schools, the schools that advertise up there: We can get you a driver's license. And while we would like to believe that what they meant was, We'll teach you how to drive, (DePue laughs) and we'll make sure you get in there; what they were also saying at times was, We'll get you a driver's license whether you're supposed to get one or not. And there were many instances where we found out that's exactly what they were doing. And we would have to send undercover operators into those facilities or into those schools to uncover that. The third type of incident would be some other felon that would need a fictitious driver's license so that they could conduct other felonious activities under a different name. So for all of those reasons—and again, I'm speaking back in the early eighties, so we're talking well over twenty years ago, twenty-five years ago—we're talking about a driver's license that might be worth a five or six hundred–dollar bribe to get. We're talking about employees who maybe were making five hundred dollars a week, and yet they could sell a single driver's license and equal that amount; and that's why it's an extremely vulnerable area.

Similarly, on the motor vehicle side, we had to watch out for people who were car thieves who would be looking to figure out how to title a stolen car in order to resell it. We had to be on guard for that. Or vehicles that were completely totaled out in another state—in Illinois, we title that as a salvage vehicle so that people are forewarned that this car was totaled out or was severely damaged. There would be efforts underway to take a vehicle that was a bad vehicle in another state, bring it in here, and get it titled in a different way. Again, worth hundreds of dollars to the person wanting to do that. So that's what we had to be on guard for.

DePue: You mentioned before there was already an ongoing investigation that was being done by law enforcement agencies, but also internal investigations. I wonder if you could discuss what Secretary Edgar did to beef that up, perhaps.

Grosboll: Again, I'm not the best person to talk about the '81–'84 time period because Joan was in the position at that time—she can speak better to it. But I do know that the office, I think, put a far greater focus, even at that point, on its internal affairs shop and making sure that we were in there, attempting to identify these, and not having to rely entirely on outside entities. Now, I'll speak to what we did later on, because later on we created an inspector general's office, which I believe became a much more effective way to deal with it. It is that inspector general's office that a few years later, George Ryan and his staff would be accused of dismantling.

[18] For Edgar's pragmatic view on the question of licensing illegal immigrants, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 22, 2009, ALPL, 78.

DePue: Do you recall the year that was created, roughly?

Grosboll: I don't, but it is in the review book that I have given you on the office.

DePue: Part of this collection, for those who are interested—there is a document that Al gave me titled "Safety and Service: Ten Years in the Office of the Secretary of State."

Grosboll: Yeah, I know it's in there. It's probably around 1987 or '88. We created that and put a gentleman named Jim Redenbo in charge, who was a longtime veteran of the Illinois State Police Department; very bright, very smart, very much up on the latest technology, and did a great job organizing our shop. The interesting thing—and I don't know if Joan will echo this same point—but in the six and a half years that I served as deputy secretary, I would say that I spent anywhere from 25 to 35 percent of my time on internal affairs matters, undercover operations, and personnel issues. Again, you're dealing with four thousand employees. There are heady personnel issues that are arising on a regular basis, and there wasn't a day that went by that I wasn't on the phone talking with the inspector general about either a suspected activity or an undercover operation that was producing results, or something along those lines.

DePue: We already established Secretary Edgar got to this position early 1981, and he has to run for reelection about a year and a half later. So keeping that in mind, what's one of the first couple things that he does to kind of make his mark?

Grosboll: Let me, if I can, just expand on that setup for a second. Again, Jim Edgar and Ty Fahner are both in the same position. Ty Fahner's going in the AG's office; Jim Edgar's going in at the secretary of state's office. The public knows neither one of them. So in Secretary Edgar's case, he realizes that not only does he have to get in and understand this office, but he has to position himself to have a record to run on. If you think about it, he has less than a year to establish a record. He could have had a primary challenge, by the way—by the end of 1981and if he hasn't established himself, it's going to be pretty tough for him to run a strong campaign in 1982. So people forget he had very little window of opportunity to do this. He's trying to deal with an office of people who don't know him; he's got to establish his relationship with them because they're the key to his doing his job right; he's got to deal with undercover operations that he found out about almost immediately; and he's got to figure out what his agenda is. And he has a couple of weeks to figure that out before he goes in there in January of 1981.

But Jim Edgar understood that he had to get an agenda, that he had to take charge immediately, and I believe he understood that he needed the cooperation of the longtime people in the office. So that's what he did. I think he built trust relatively quickly. He found people who were really smart, who had been in the office a long time and knew it, and he built upon their knowledge.

There was a fellow who ran our traffic safety stuff, Gary March. Gary, I think, helped Jim Edgar understand drunk driving issues and understand other traffic safety

issues. There were other people in the office who understood the issue of why people weren't losing their driver's licenses for drunk driving. And very quickly, Jim Edgar realized that we had an epidemic on our hands in this state and in the country dealing with drunk driving, and that we had never taken it seriously.

I happen to have a little personal background on this issue in that when the state's first drunk driving laws were passed—they were then called DWI laws—the Illinois legislature passed a law that said if you're stopped and an officer has reason to believe that you've been drinking and driving, he can ask you to take a Breathalyzer or a chemical test. And the law was to say, if you take it and fail it, obviously you're probably going to be found guilty and lose your driver's license. If you don't take it, then you should lose it for a period of time. Well, the legislature was not exactly controlled by anti–drunk driving people at the time; and to be very blunt, the trial lawyers and the bar association had a lot to do with making sure that the Illinois law was not particularly effective.

So when Jim Edgar becomes secretary of state, what he finds out is our law is rated as the worst law in the country, and here's the primary reason: you get stopped for drunk driving, you take the Breathalyzer, you fail it. Illinois law says you get two tries. So if you fail it, you then simply say, "I'm not taking the second one." And by not taking the second one, the worst that happens to you is they have no evidence that you're drunk. You've refused to blow, so therefore you are supposed to lose your license for a short period of time; but when it goes to court, the judge finds that there really wasn't enough evidence and throws the case out, so that in Illinois, well over 90 percent of the people arrested for drunk driving were not losing their driver's license—and that's a fact. It was enough to cause any reasonable person to shake their head, saying, What in the world were we thinking? Edgar moved very quickly to get that law changed, and we changed the law so that people could not beat the system in that way. Again, I'm not the best person to talk about those first couple of years, but I will tell you that that first step he took substantively was important, but more important was he carved out an issue; and the significance is, no secretary of state had ever said, I'm going to get into the business of addressing the drunk driving issue. No secretary of state thought it was a good idea.

DePue: Well, that begs an obvious question: why?

Grosboll: Because of a fear that people losing their driver's license would be your neighbor who's had a couple of drinks at the local bar and is going to be really mad at you. It's going to cause bartenders and bar owners to say you're cutting down on their business. Why would you want to make them mad? When you're an elected official, the first rule you learn is: don't make enemies. Jim Edgar made a choice that he was going to make some enemies. And he did, by the way. When he runs for governor, bar owners all over the state of Illinois are handing out bumper stickers that say, "Anybody but Edgar," (DePue laughs) and they were being passed out by beer distributors. So you do make enemies, but also it's how you get things done that need to be done. We had the worst drunk driving law in the nation in 1981, and by the time

Jim Edgar left, Mothers Against Drunk Driving ranked Illinois as having the best laws in the country on drunk driving.

DePue: How active was MADD at the beginning at his tenure?

Grosboll: Interestingly, MADD was not the primary group at the beginning, when Jim Edgar got started. My recollection is Illinois had another organization, called the Alliance Against Drunk Driving, or Driving Drunk.[19] And that organization was an Illinois grassroots entity that actually provided the initial backing for the governor. Mothers Against Drunk Driving had started to make its mark nationally, and eventually it did set up shop here, and a lady named Marty Paige eventually became their person and became very effective. But in the first days in Illinois, the Alliance was very effective, and then along came MADD. MADD had the national recognition, and every human being in Illinois knew what MADD was by the time they were done.

DePue: Did he get this accomplished in 1981?

Grosboll: In 1981, he passed the bill that did tighten up the drunk driving rules.

DePue: Looking at the timeline—

Grosboll: By the way, if you look at the whole scheme of what Edgar eventually would do on drunk driving, what he did in '81 is seemingly a small portion; but it was incredibly significant in 1981 because we were so bad and because nobody had wanted to tackle the issue. The legislature didn't want to tackle that issue.

DePue: Was it 1981 that it went from .1 to .08?

Grosboll: No, no, that happened many years later.[20]

DePue: And to get a sense of how quickly this happened—again, the normal legislative process is that he gets the position in January, when Dixon steps out. Is this bill passed by the time we get to June?

Grosboll: I believe that's the case. Now, the secretary may have a better memory than I do. But the reason I say that is, I don't think he could have passed it in '82 because it was an election year. So I don't know that it would have passed. But my recollection is he passed it in '81. He ran on it. He ran on it in the '82 election, so certainly in that timeframe, it had passed. My gut tells me it was 1981.

DePue: Would they have had a veto session at that time?

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[19] Grosboll is probably thinking about the Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists, which claims to have been the first advocacy group for stiffer drunk driving laws in Illinois. AAIM, "AAIM's Story," http://www.aaim1.org/aaimstory.asp.

[20] Despite several attempts over the years, the legislature did not pass a law lowering the blood-alcohol standard from .1 to .08 until May 7, 1997. *Chicago Tribune*, May 8, 1997, 1.

Grosboll: They might have. They might have. Again, I think either he or Joan can address that better. My recollection is that he did pass it that first session. And it tightened up on the rules for taking those Breathalyzers, it increased penalties—it did a host of things that at least got us into the ballgame. I mean, we weren't even dealing with multiple offenders. Now, down the road, we would deal with all those issues far more extensively; but at least in '81, he made a mark, he made an imprint, and he jumped into that issue.

DePue: I've got on my notes administrative suspensions as well. Is that kind of what you've been talking about, or is that a different issue?

Grosboll: No, that comes several years later, and administrative suspensions is a different issue. Even after Jim Edgar had dealt with the poor law we had—and that law is what I would call the foundation—you have to have a law that says, If you get arrested, here are these procedures that will be followed. Those need to be reasonable and sane. The penalties need to be reasonable, *et cetera*. The foundation in Illinois was completely messed up, and that's what he dealt with in '81. I believe in'85, and I may correct that later when we talk—Secretary Edgar was convinced that we needed to move to a mode that allowed the secretary of state's office to simply take away driver's licenses when certain circumstances were met. It wouldn't be a criminal activity—you'd still have a criminal trial on the issue of whether you did things—but if you were stopped and you blew and you violated the standards, our office would be authorized to take away your driver's license because that's an administrative procedure. And other states had begun to move in that direction. Or if you had refused to blow, the office would be authorized to take away your license. That was a huge jump.

But again, it dealt with the fact that even with the stronger foundation law, we still had probably only 10 percent of drunk drivers losing their driver's license for a single day. So what Edgar said—we have to get to a point where there is certainty. People have to know if they get caught, they're going to lose their driver's license. And that's what the summary suspension law allowed us to do. And we did pass that law. We had a fierce set of negotiations among the DUI people—the anti–DUI groups, the bar association, the trial attorneys, *et cetera*—and eventually we did craft a bill that moved us in that direction. And literally in the first year, the first year after we passed it, 91 percent of the people caught drunk driving lost their driver's license. So you can see that going from 10 percent losing [their] driver's license to 91 percent losing [their] driver's license was a dramatic change in Illinois.

DePue: Would you say that Edgar is pushing so hard on this particular front and other things dealing with DUIs, *et cetera*, for pragmatic political reasons, or because he had a sincere desire to make some improvements in that area?

Grosboll: Sometimes it's hard to divide those two, but it would be a disservice if I didn't say this: Jim Edgar was a true believer. He believed that it was wrong for somebody to get into a car drunk and drive that vehicle and threaten the lives of his children, your children, your family. He absolutely believed to his soul that he was right and that Illinois politicians had shirked their responsibility to face up to this. But I must tell

you that he also recognized that in making that commitment and in heading down that road, it was a political statement, and if he was right, he could stand on that; if he was wrong, voters could vote him out. And so in this, I think you've got a guy who, first off, is making the right decision. Early on in the anti–drunk driving stuff, lots of people were a little nervous about how strongly they get in. Later on, everybody's there, and everybody just assumes it was easy. Well, if it was easy, why, before 1981, didn't we see hardly anybody in the country doing anything on drunk driving? And then, of course, it got called a crusade. But it does beg the question: why is it that we in this country were so willing to accept the idea that it was okay for people to leave a party drunker than a skunk—everybody laughs about that—and potentially go out and kill someone.

I've talked to you about this before—not on tape—that I think the most interesting overlooked aspect of Jim Edgar's tenure as secretary of state is how he redefined the office of secretary of state. If you go back prior to 1982's election and look at what secretaries of state talked about in their campaigns… Secretary Dixon, when he had run, his campaign—and these were all worthy ideas, by the way—was we're going to have multi-year license plates so you don't have to get a new set of plates every year; we are going to get vanity plates out there. It was those kinds of things—popular and good things to do. And, by the way, Secretary Dixon made a series of promises in his campaign, and he followed through on them, to his credit. You go back to prior campaigns. They talked about good service to the public; they talked about getting license plates out faster. It was all of those kinds of issues. You will see no secretaries of state ever campaigning about drunk driving. Never. There's no secretary of state who did that. You won't find secretaries of state ever talking about literacy; and how it's the state's obligation to help people read, particularly people who are out of high school that are never going to learn to read unless you embark upon a path to get them in and take away the blemish that it's an embarrassment. You don't see hardly any secretaries talk about libraries and what they're going to do about libraries.

DePue: You're saying all of these things in terms of secretaries of state who are running prior to the time Edgar got to office.

Grosboll: Yeah, that's exactly right. So you don't see any secretary talk about drunk driving, you don't see them talk about libraries, you don't see them talk about literacy, you don't see them *ever* take up the position that we need to mandate insurance for people driving cars—because that was very controversial, to make people have to buy insurance if they're going to drive a car. You don't see that as an issue. After 1982? Nobody has run for secretary of state since 1982 who hasn't focused on drunk driving, literacy, libraries, and in some cases, enforcement of mandatory car insurance. And there are a few other things that are out there that nobody ever talked about before Jim Edgar. And again, it is one of those things that is completely overlooked by people who talk about Jim Edgar.

DePue: We're going to spend a lot more time talking about secretary of state.

Grosboll: I got about fifteen minutes.

DePue: I don't think we're going to get done with all of it today. That's fine—we can pick it up later—but while we're in this area, would you say then, that Jim Edgar's terms as secretary of state were transformative?

Grosboll: They were transformative for the state, because I think they moved us to the forefront on drunk driving issues. And let me, by the way, be fair here. I think Jim Edgar led that effort; it was transformative; it turned the secretary of state's office into an office that was expected to deliver on drunk driving, literacy—these other issues. And subsequent secretaries have done that. Due credit needs to be given. George Ryan continued to follow through on those; I think Jesse White continued to follow through on those issues. So it's important that we recognize that subsequent secretaries of state have continued to carry the flag. My only point is that the Edgar years were transformative in terms of turning the office into something other than just a patronage haven and a "Gee, let's provide better service" haven. So they were transformative. They were also transformative for Jim Edgar. I can speak to that if you'd like. (laughs)

DePue: I think we will certainly get there, but to finish off with our time today, I think this is a subject closer to your area of responsibility, and that's the manufacturing of license plates in Illinois. I think that was something else that happened very early in his tenure.

Grosboll: Yeah. Yeah, the manufacturing of license plates, today never ever comes up as an issue. It's not exactly a household issue. But I will tell you, in 1981, Jim Edgar could not go anywhere in the state of Illinois that people didn't stop him and say, "Why aren't we making license plates in Illinois?" Our license plates at that moment in time were being made by Texas and New York prisoners. Many years before—let's go back even further. Probably forty years before—forty, fifty years earlier—license plates had been made in Illinois prisons. That stopped. Then a company—and I can't remember the name, but I believe it was up near Macomb, Illinois—manufactured the plates for several years. They then lost the bid to a firm in Arkansas. The state of Illinois gave the contract to the Illinois company anyway. The Arkansas firm sued, and it went all the way to the Supreme Court, the United States Supreme Court—that preferences for state vendors are unfair and a violation of interstate commerce, something like that. And Illinois was forced to give the contract, then, to an Arkansas company, a private company.

Then that company manufactured for several years; they bribed an official, and they were convicted. Illinois had a law that said we can't give a contract to any company owned by a person convicted of bribing a public official, so we denied them a continuation of the contract. That case went all the way to the United States Supreme Court, too, and the court affirmed Illinois's decision not to give them the

contract.[21] So two cases (laughter) in a row, in Illinois, went all the way to the Supreme Court on these issues; and that put Illinois in a position where the state of Texas won our bid, and they won the bid to do the first massive plating of the five-year plates. So over a period of time, we spent about twenty million dollars in the state of Texas. I happened to go down to the state of Texas to see how they were making our plates, and I noticed that they had a beautiful, immaculate license plate manufacturing facility at their prison. And I was commenting to the guy who ran the prison manufacturing facility what a lovely operation he had, and he said, "Well, yes, we can thank you people in Illinois. You built this facility. (DePue laughs) You paid for it." And he wasn't kidding. When we did our massive license plate manufacturing to get multi plates out there the first time, Texas took in all of that money. They not only paid for the operation, but they paid to build the entire facility and to modernize it.

When I got to the department, Texas was making most of our plates, and New York was making some also. And after about six months of Jim Edgar hearing from every corner of the state that it was wrong that we were paying Texas to make our license plates, he kept saying to me, "Why aren't we making plates in our prisons?" I proceeded to meet with our prison officials, who had no interest in doing it. That position would change later, but they had no interest.

So we then started thinking about what to do. I had a deputy at motor vehicles named Sarunas Valiukenas, and I asked Sarunas to do a survey of how the states were having their plates manufactured. He did that, and he found out how all fifty states were having their license plates manufactured and how many they were having manufactured every year. Most states were, in fact, getting them made in prisons or having another state's prisons do it, but then we found out that the state of Kansas was doing something unique. They had a facility of disabled people making their license plates.

So Sarunas and the staff in our office—a fellow named Dick Robinson helped out on this—began making inquiries of the rehab facilities in Illinois that employed the disabled; and lo and behold, we came across what is now called Macon Resources, which at the time was the—oh, I'm going to draw a blank on what their name was back at the time. But Macon County Resources, which employed about two hundred disabled people, said they were interested. We were a little leery whether they had the resources and the ability to do this. We went over, checked them out. They had very sophisticated operations, and they had a staff of very bright people who talked the

[21] Sec. of State Paul Powell first awarded the plate contract to Metal Stamping Co. of Conway, Arkansas, in 1969. On March 26, 1974, four years after Powell's death, the president of MSC, J. Patrick Stoltz, pleaded guilty to paying Powell eighty thousand dollars. In response to this scandal and others, in 1977 the state legislature passed a measure banning state contracts from people and companies convicted of bribery or attempted bribery. When the state rejected MSC's (now reorganized as Polyvend Inc.) low bid for the multi-year plate contract, the company sued in state court. The Illinois Appellate Court struck down the new state law June 7, 1978, but was reversed the following year by the Illinois Supreme Court. *Polyvend, Inc. v. Puckorius* 77 Ill. 2d 287, 395 N.E.2d 1376 (1979). Peter C. Erlinder, "Doing Business with Government," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 55 (1979), 504-506; *Chicago Tribune*, June 8, 1978; *Chicago Tribune*, October 3, 1979.

language, knew the equipment, knew the processes, had toured Kansas, had visited others. And we went, These guys can do it. So we let them know we were going to bid out the license plate manufacturing. We bid it out, I think, in January of 1982, and they came in *significantly* below either Texas or New York prisons. And they started making our plates, and they did a great job.

And what we found was they saved the state of Illinois millions of dollars. When we went through our replating process, between '83 and '86—not only did they have two hundred employees, they had to hire another hundred people. They worked three shifts, twenty-four hours a day, to make our plates. They employed all of these people, all of the money stayed in Illinois, and they were far more reliable. If we had a problem with them, we'd call them or we'd drive over there, and they would correct it. We did not have that success with either Texas or New York. And I had times as director, before we switched over, where I didn't know that we were going to have enough plates at our facilities because I couldn't get the out-of-state prisons to respond. So this was all driven by Jim Edgar basically saying to us, "This is unacceptable. There's no excuse why the fifth-largest state in the nation is going to Texas or New York to make its license plates. You've got to get this changed." So we found another route, we worked with them, and it happened; and it's one of the great successes of the Edgar administration.[22]

DePue: An ultimate win-win scenario.

Grosboll: It was a win-win for everybody. It was also good because Macon Resources then—not only were they employing local people and many people with disabilities, but there were other products they were buying that were being bought, in effect, in Illinois. So it's more than a win-win-win, because there's probably about ten wins in there if we want to go through them all.

DePue: I think we probably expired on time here for today, and this is a good place to take a break. Again, there's still a lot more that I want to find out about the secretary of state years, and we haven't even suggested that you have a lot of years with Edgar once he gets to the governor's office (Grosboll laughs) as well; so more to come. Thank you very much, Al.

Grosboll: Okay, thank you.

(end of interview)

[22] See, Edgar interview, June 15, 2009, 51-53, for Edgar's recollection of the change.

Interview with Al Grosboll

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Interview # 3: June 4, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Thursday, June 4, 2009. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history here at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. We're sitting in the library, one of the small offices here, and I'm talking to Al Grosboll. This is our third session, I believe, Al.

Grosboll: Yes.

DePue: Good morning.

Grosboll: Good morning.

DePue: And last time, we talked a lot about your growing up, your experiences, and especially your time as the director of motor vehicles while you were working in the secretary of state's office. And primarily we were focusing on those first couple of years. Where I'd like to start today is with the general election in 1982 when Edgar, for the first time, after only been in the office for a year, is going to be running for secretary of state. And I know we talked about it in some very elementary sense, but I did want to ask you some more specific questions. So let's start by asking you to flesh out the personality of Jerry Cosentino, who is his opponent.

Grosboll: I don't know that I'm an expert on Jerome Cosentino, but he had been a member of the Metropolitan Sanitary District board, owned a trucking firm, appeared to have significant sums of money. And he had entered the political world, as I mentioned, a few years before, running for the Metropolitan Sanitary District. He

then used that in1978 to run for state treasurer. And he seemed to have the Democratic Party behind him; he won the nomination and then won the state treasurer seat. So he served as the treasurer for four years and then ran for secretary of state in 1982. He again pretty much had the Democratic Party behind him in that race. He certainly was competitive in terms of money and the ability to raise money, as well as put up money of his own. So this was not an easy race. So I—

DePue: Can I interject here real quick? This is a couple years after Mayor [Richard J.] Daley had passed away.

Grosboll: Yes.

DePue: And we know the clout that it carried when Daley and the Democratic machine in Chicago said, "You're our candidate." Was that still going on when Cosentino was elected?

Grosboll: Yeah, I think different people have different impressions of this. While there was certainly change going on and there was disruption with the machine. First you have Mayor [Michael] Bilandic suffering through the snow epidemic in Chicago that ultimately cost him his job to Jane Byrne. You had four rather unusual, frantic years under Jane Byrne. Mayor [Harold] Washington then is elected, and you end up with council wars. So the Democratic machine is not quite the same old Democratic machine, but it is still turning out large numbers of votes. Cook County is voting very heavily Democratic—not as much as it is today, I might add. There still was, in the county, the ability of a Republican to win at the county level. Keep in mind that before Richard Ogilvie was elected governor in 1968, he was the Cook County board president as a Republican, and prior to that, he'd been the Cook County sheriff. So in Cook County as a county-wide organization, it was pretty heavily Democratic, but every so often, a Republican could get elected. That's really not true today on a county-wide level, or it's hard for me to imagine that happening today. But the machine was still able to put out large numbers of votes, and Cook County was going to vote pretty heavily Democratic under any circumstances, even during those years of disruption.

DePue: Sorry for that interruption. Do you remember any of the main issues or themes going forward in that particular election?

Grosboll: From Jim Edgar's perspective—everybody has to run on a series of themes and make their mark—and I think Edgar had a pretty clear sense of what his statement was going to be. One of the themes that we would hear in his ads was, "He's already making a difference," and that dealt, I think, number one, with the issue of corruption in the office. As you may remember, we talked about the fact that there was a scandal breaking, literally on the day he walked into the office.

DePue: Right.

Grosboll: We toughened up on the whole issue of driver's licenses being sold out of these facilities. So Jim Edgar, first off, I think, laid claim to the fact that he was going to run an honest office; and people who were not going to follow that—we would find them and we would have them arrested, and we would have them fired. So that was one theme.

I think another theme that Edgar cared a great deal about (whether or not it plays particularly well in elections is another matter) but that's the whole issue of efficiency—doing your job and doing it well. And I think Edgar's attitude was that we were a retail outlet, if you want to think about it that way. We talk about politics being retail; well, secretary of state's office really is a retail operation, because we have facilities—maybe not in every county—but we are active in some way, in the secretary of state's office, in every county in the state of Illinois. Whether that's getting driver's licenses, whether it's getting license plates, whether it's getting a vanity plate, whether we're registering a corporation—those are all retail activities, and I think Jim Edgar very correctly realized that if people had a good experience when they did those things, they would think better of him and this office. So Edgar did put an emphasis on that kind of thing. I heard him speak to that issue many, many times; that he wanted people walking into our office—he wanted the office to be clean, he wanted people to be friendly, and he wanted the practices of how we actually took care of people to be professional. So I think he viewed that as an issue. And then, of course, the drunk driving issue. He had clearly made a commitment that that was the issue he was going to jump into. He did. We've spoken about that quite a bit.

DePue: And just to clarify the record, because you and I weren't quite sure when that happened: he was able to push through legislation in '81 that took effect January 1, 1982; and this is the first of many steps that we'll be talking about.

Grosboll: Right. It was the stage that I described as getting the basics right. Our core law was just not a good law; we took care of that. It's that law that caused us to be ranked as the worst state in the nation in how we dealt with drunk driving.

So as Jim Edgar entered into that election, he had fairly rapidly defined, at least in his mind, a sense of who he was and what he was, and set the foundation for a campaign. Run the office well, fight corruption, and go head to head on the drunk driving issue.

DePue: And what you've talked about is not just the issues but basically the strategy that he's going to take in running this election.

Grosboll: Yes.

DePue: Illinois politics being what it is, there was some back and forth; and Cosentino apparently came out hard against Edgar in saying that even with this new legislation that we just talked about, there were some serious problems—of course, as Cosentino was presenting it. And one was that when things went before

an appellate court panel to rule, there had apparently been some paperwork that officers were supposed to fill out, and they were not addressing probable cause in how they filled this out; so a lot of these things were being put aside. In other words, drunk drivers were not being pursued by the courts because—one could say a technicality in terms of how the paperwork was drafted up in the first place. Do you remember that kind of an allegation?

Grosboll: I remember it vaguely. And, of course, what you deal with when you're going with a new law—you oftentimes will have issues of whether or not the procedures jibe with the law and whether or not that's consistent with the Supreme Court or the court's opinion of how things are to be done. More likely, what was really involved with this issue is you have a judge or a panel somewhere raise an issue, and then all of a sudden, that gets exploded into something far greater than what the issue really amounts to. This topic—I do recall it came up in the campaign; but, of course, a year later, it was passed, it was forgotten, and if you had raised the issue with anyone, they wouldn't have even known what you were talking about. But it's not unusual when you pass a new law, or you have a new issue in play, that you run into some issues of the initial administration of it.

I will tell you, we had a similar issue arise when we passed the mandatory insurance law in Illinois, which would come several years later, which meant if you're going to drive, you have to have liability insurance. Right out of the gate, we had some judges beginning to rule that there were certain things that they didn't like about that program or how it was to be administered. And it had to get its way worked through the courts. Eventually the Supreme Court clarified some matters on it.

DePue: The Illinois Supreme Court?

Grosboll: Yes, the Illinois Supreme Court did. So it's not unusual when a new law takes affect that you'll run into that kind of thing. The problem is, if it coincides with an election, (DePue laughs) then all of the sudden, it becomes exploded into something that it's really not. And as soon as the election's over with, the issue goes away, and things begin to work just as smoothly as you knew they would.

DePue: In a *Chicago Tribune* article, they were asking Edgar about this. This is essentially what he came back and said: that the judges in Illinois at that time were still letting 74 percent of drunk driver suspects—who refused to take breath and blood tests and then asked for court hearings—avoid automatically losing their licenses under the state's implied consent law.

Grosboll: Right.

DePue: And so I guess I'm saying that my impression is, Edgar's position at this time is that this is still a work in progress.

Grosboll: It was, and I should have talked about this very point, that there were still judges in Illinois who were reluctant to take away people's driver's licenses. It's difficult

today to understand the mindset in the early 1980s and throughout the ’70s, which was that the driver’s license is what allows people to work, and it’s what allows people to put bread on the table. And there was a tremendous reluctance to take those driver’s licenses away. So I believe that when this issue, this rather minor issue, arose, there were some judges who were utilizing that as their excuse not to do what the legislature wanted judges to do. Now, as time went by, I think more and more judges bought into what it was that we were all trying to do on the drunk driving issue; but the mentality at that stage in the game was not one of having strong support behind it. Eventually, the judges got there.

DePue: And you did talk—very eloquently, last time, about how different secretary of state campaigns had been after Edgar, and this is at the very heart of what’s different about those campaigns.

Grosboll: Right. The fact that Jerry Cosentino as Edgar’s opponent would, in effect, try to out–drunk driver him (DePue laughs) is quite a milestone, because it means all of the sudden you have two secretary of state candidates for the first time in the history of the state of Illinois arguing over who’s going to do a better job going after drunk drivers. That’s a milestone. (laughs)

DePue: Another allegation that came up during the campaign is Cosentino claiming—CA-zen-tee-no or CO-zen-tee-no?

Grosboll: Either way.

DePue: —that Edgar was abusing his privileges and flying the state aircraft all over the state; not just doing state business but, while he’s at it, campaigning.

Grosboll: That’s a pretty typical criticism, people that are on the outs… And if you go back and look at the seventies and the eighties, and even into the nineties, candidates who are incumbents that use the state plane, even if they were reimbursing for trips that were related to a campaign—if it’s strictly campaign, they had to pay for it; but if they were flying on regular business and being seen in one part of the state, then the candidate did not have to pay for it. Usually the people outside trying to get in were critical of that. So that’s one of those things that would arise in a campaign. So long as a candidate could show that they were paying for political trips, usually they were fine. And I don’t recall this issue ever hurting Jim Edgar. I think, again, he was always very careful about making sure that we were protected and that if we did a trip that was a political trip, it got paid for out of the campaign.

DePue: It gets to the issue—where’s that line between political trips and secretary of state trips, in the first place?

Grosboll: That’s correct, and an example of that would be that people could, let’s say, fly to southern Illinois, open up a driver’s station or visit a driver’s station, do something on drunk driving, and that night hold a fundraiser. So, perfectly legal to

do that. Today we might have a little bit different standard in how we view that, but at that time period, that was perfectly kosher.

DePue: You've spent your life around a lot of different politicians, especially Governor Edgar, but plenty of others in the state as well. Talk about Edgar's ambition compared to others' ambitions and how that affected or didn't affect their judgment.

Grosboll: He was a very ambitious guy. I think he knew that he would like to be in higher office; he knew that there were roads that he could get on that would get him to higher office; and when this secretary of state opportunity arose, I think he had a tremendous sense of what that opportunity was. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for him, and he was not going to let it slip away. That loss that he suffered in 1974 was a very difficult loss for him. Again, I don't want to say that at the ripe old age of twenty-five he thought his political career was over with, but I think it was pretty doggone close to that. He had been active in school politics in high school and was student body president at Eastern. He'd gone into the legislative internship, and all of a sudden he's working for the most powerful legislator in Illinois, Russell Arrington. And finally his opportunity comes to become a member of the legislature, and he gets beat. He didn't have private wealth, so all of a sudden he has not won what he's aimed for in the last five, six years to be; he's lost that. He doesn't have a job, he has no personal wealth to fall back on, and all of a sudden he finds himself with debt and no job. That was a very difficult situation. And I've heard Jim Edgar say this probably a hundred times, that one of the things he learned about losing is he never wanted to lose (DePue laughs) ever again. And, of course, he has never lost a race since then. So that made a huge impression on him, and I suspect on the day he dies, he'll be uttering, "I learned one thing about that campaign: I never wanted to lose again." It just made a huge impression on him.

So I think you take that experience with just an innate ambition he had, and it meant that he was very hard-driving in '82. He knew this was his chance, and if he lost that race, that would be the end of us seeing Jim Edgar. If he won that race, then he would be well positioned for higher office down the road.

DePue: Based on that comment and his ambition, his driving goal to become secretary of state and he obviously had aspirations beyond that point, what kind of guidance was he giving people who were working in the secretary of state's office about what their role would be in the secretary of state's office versus the campaign itself?

Grosboll: I would say there were a couple of things that stand out in my mind. The first thing you need to understand is he made a decision when he went to that office in terms of who he hired as his chief of staff. He hired Joan Schilf—who later became Joan Walters—who was a nonpolitical person. She was not a person who worked on campaigns, ran campaigns, thought that way. She was a professional who viewed her job was to run the office or to help him run that office in as

professional a manner as possible. On the other hand, Jim Edgar turned to someone else then to run his '82 campaign, and that person was separate and apart from the person who was running the office.[23] That may seem like a small thing, looking back on 1981 and 1982, but that was a huge thing. If you recall, eventually, when George Ryan got into serious trouble—and his chief of staff at the time was Scott Fawell—Scott had a dual role: he ran the office and he ran the campaign functions. And I always felt that that was a mistake because it's so difficult to separate out the political from the office. Edgar in his first move made that separation and made it clear: Joan was going to run the office, someone else would run the campaign.

DePue: And this someone else is Carter Hendren?

Grosboll: Yes. Carter was someone Jim Edgar had developed a good relationship with when he ran for the legislature. Carter was a student at Eastern. Extremely strong mind when it comes to these types of campaigns, a tremendous organizer, and someone that Jim Edgar clicked with in terms of how to run a campaign. Now, that doesn't mean they didn't disagree, just like all of us who worked for Jim Edgar didn't agree with him at times, but nevertheless, Carter was someone Jim Edgar respected and someone who was very competent at his job. But the separation was made.

The second thing I would tell you is that, again, this is a different time period; it's the early 1980s. You've got an office that, as you have pointed out, in some ways is a patronage situation because you do have thousands of employees, many of whom have political inclinations. Although I would tell you most of those were Democratic inclinations when Jim Edgar was elected, and we didn't change many people. But on the other hand, Edgar wants to run a clean shop. He's run a campaign saying, "We're cleaning up the office." So there was a tough balancing act to draw a line between those who were working in the office and those needs of a campaign. Edgar tried to be very clear with all of us: he didn't want any campaign work or fundraising being done in offices. If somebody, outside of the office, wanted to help the campaign in the evenings or on weekends, he certainly welcomed that. Today we'd be a little more careful about that, but back then the fine line and what most people thought was the proper line was no campaigning, no political work, no fundraising at the office. Outside of your business, you could do whatever you wanted to do. Edgar was pretty clear about drawing that line.

DePue: From what you could see, were there people in the offices who were actively supporting him and enthusiastic about his campaign, and working outside the office for his campaign?

[23] Carter Hendren ran Edgar's 1982 campaign for secretary of state. For his recollection of the race, see Carter Hendren, interview by Mark DePue, April 28, 2009, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library (ALPL), Springfield, IL, 21-40.

Grosboll: Yeah. I wouldn't say that it was an overwhelming number, but yes, there were many people, particularly people who had come into the office with Jim Edgar, people that he had appointed in directorships and deputy directorships. We all felt a very strong loyalty to him and wanted to help him. In my case, I wanted to give him money because I supported him and I was working for him. I did not go out and do a large amount of campaign work. I felt that I was running a department of four thousand people. We had huge issues there that related to how Jim Edgar would be defined and how he could be helped or hurt. The best thing that I could do would be to run that department as well as I could and make sure that if I was working twelve or thirteen or fourteen hours a day, it was making sure the department didn't embarrass him. It was making sure that we did things that he was able to brag about. My time was better spent doing that than being out walking in a parade. There were other directors who maybe had smaller departments and whatever, and they were more inclined to go out and work a parade and try and get a bunch of people to help work a parade. I walked some parades, but I just was not nearly as active in those kinds of political things as some of the other people were.

DePue: Did he put much pressure on you to get more involved with the politics side of it?

Grosboll: No, there was no pressure. Jim Edgar would no more have expected me to walk a parade than he would have expected a Democrat that was supporting his opponent to walk on his behalf. So Edgar respected those lines. On the other hand, he had political people that, if there was a parade coming, he'd be very clear that he wanted a large group of people there. He'd tell his political people that, but he wouldn't tell me as a department director, "Be at that parade and get people there." And I think in the entire ten years I worked in the office, Jim Edgar never said that kind of thing to me or implied it.

DePue: Let's get to the election results. Just a couple days after the election, he had 55 percent of the vote against Cosentino's 44 percent, so a sizeable victory for him.

Grosboll: But Mark, we need to stop here and just put that into perspective. This was a guy who two years before probably had a name ID in Illinois of less than 1 percent. Nobody knew who Jim Edgar was. And yet, in a matter of a year and eleven months, or a year and ten months, really, from the time he was appointed, he gets elected to statewide office with a pretty impressive amount. That's the same election that Jim Thompson and Adlai Stevenson basically tied for governor. I had to fly out of town the day after that election, so on—I can't remember whether it was November second or November fifth…

DePue: November second.

Grosboll: November second. On November third, I was on an airplane flying somewhere. I had to go to a meeting dealing with the secretary of state's office. And when I got there, the only question people had is, "Who won that governor's race?" (DePue laughs) They didn't care whether my boss won or not—at that point, they knew

he had won. But Jim Thompson and Adlai Stevenson tied for governor; Tyrone Fahner lost the attorney general's office; and Jim Edgar convincingly won the secretary of state's office. That's an incredible feat when one stands back and realizes Jim Edgar had no money, he had no name ID, he had no experience ever running statewide, and he'd had some bad experiences running for the legislature. And yet, here he is, on top of the world. So it was pretty convincing and amazing.

DePue: You mentioned Edgar's victory over Cosentino. The other interesting race, of course, that you've already alluded to, is Fahner's defeat to none other than Neil Hartigan.

Grosboll: And of course, that's the great setup for the race that's eventually to come. Edgar's winning with fifty—what?—fifty-five?

DePue: Fifty-five to forty-four.

Grosboll: Fifty-five percent of the vote, and Neil Hartigan is winning the attorney general's office as a Democrat with about 55 percent of the vote, too. So now you have two people in the second tier down—once you get beyond the U.S. Senate and the governor's race—two very impressive victories, one on the Republican side, and one on the Democratic side. Of course, it's giving us a preview of things to come.

DePue: Do you have any other reflections on that race at the top of the ticket, Thompson versus Stevenson? Because that's a classic.

Grosboll: I can simply say this: I think Jim Thompson was a very lucky man. The Supreme Court could have gone either way in determining the outcome of that election. Ultimately, it went his way, and then four years later, when I think that Thompson's situation was even weaker than it had been in '82, Stevenson decides to run again. Stevenson had an outstanding chance to win that race. And, of course, that was the election when the LaRouchies invaded the Democratic Party and in fact won the lieutenant governor's spot.

DePue: Let's pick that up in more detail here a little bit later as we move forward. (laughs) Another fascinating incident.

Grosboll: Yeah, it was.

DePue: The kind of thing that says, "Only in Illinois." (laughs) Other states have colorful histories in politics as well, but Illinois certainly has its share. What do you think in terms of the relationship that Edgar had [with the media] or the perception that the media had of Edgar during this timeframe?

Grosboll: It's a little difficult to completely put myself back in that time period, but I don't think that it's a stretch to suggest that the media was still trying to get their arms around who Jim Edgar was. I remember a columnist, for example, prior to the '82 election, comparing Jim Edgar and Tyrone Fahner and their attempts to win their offices. And it was an article that basically said both of them are going to have

trouble; both of them have huge challenges. Neither had run statewide before. Ultimately, they're both running against people who have won statewide office. Ty Fahner had to run against Neil Hartigan, who had won statewide for lieutenant governor; and Edgar had to run against Jerry Cosentino, who had won statewide as state treasurer. I remembered reading the article, saying this reporter does not understand Jim Edgar. And this is not a knock on Tyrone Fahner—who was a very good attorney, a very good prosecutor, a solid attorney general—but Ty was not a politician, and he was not somebody who thought like a politician in terms of what it takes to build a winning coalition. Jim Edgar did think that way, and his mind was a very, very agile mind when it came to elections and politics.

The media did not understand that initially about Jim Edgar. They viewed him as this guy who didn't drink alcohol, and therefore, he must be a little odd. He was a guy who went to church every Sunday, went to the American Baptist Church—not the Southern Baptist, which Edgar always liked to make that point; it's a different church. He was a guy who had family values that sometimes the general public and the media like to scoff at or make fun of. And I would tell you that the media did have a little bit of that attitude that if he's a churchgoer and if he's a southern Baptist, and if he doesn't drink—then he must not really understand politics in Illinois. It was, to me, just a complete misreading of his political skills.

DePue: Your comments made me think about an article I read, again, in the *Tribune* that's kind of a synopsis of Jim Edgar—all the different political personalities that were running in that race. But it starts off, "Jim Edgar, the teetotaling Illinois secretary of state," and then it goes into a description of him going to an Oktoberfest event where everybody's drinking large quantities of beer. And I'm sure they're trying—OK, how's this teetotaler going to approach a group of people drinking beer, and his whole thing is about drunk driving?[24]

Grosboll: Right, yeah. It really opened my eyes on this whole issue of how we view people in society who don't drink. It's as if they must be a little strange. And it caused me to realize that even I would find myself saying that about somebody—Oh, do they think they're better than me?—that kind of an attitude, and that's really unfortunate. And, of course, the irony of it is that Edgar himself never chastised anybody around him that did drink. This was merely a personal decision he made about his own conduct, that he just simply was not someone who was going to drink. I think it was a big deal to his mother, and he had huge respect for his mother. He knew what his mother had done to raise his brothers and him; and I think that it was important to his mother, and Jim Edgar honored that and respected that. I came to appreciate that after I saw him with his mother. But it was an interesting thing.[25]

[24] *Chicago Tribune*, October 24, 1982.
[25] For Fred Edgar's thoughts on the influence of religion on his brother's values, see Fred Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, April 22, 2009, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 3-14.

And the other thing was that Edgar had a group of people around him—quite frankly who were pretty hard drinkers, and his only point was, don't go out and drive. I think if any of us had gone out and drunk too much and then gotten into a car and drove a car, it would have put him in a terrible position in terms of whether or not he would have asked us to resign. Fortunately, we never had to get to that point in the office. But he never lectured other people about their personal conduct, other than, don't break the law.

The same thing was true of swearing. I'll tell you a story. He came over to Springfield a couple of weeks ago. They had the *Rod Blagojevich Superstar* show here. There's a considerable amount of cussing in that program. The governor was going to go to that program—there were 20 of us going to it as a group—and he—

DePue: This is in a theatre down the road here, maybe we should say.

Grosboll: Yes, yes. It was here in Springfield, at the theatre. Second City had come down here. And this is a modern story, but I'm going to relate it to the 1980s. So the governor came over. There was a birthday party for Mike McCormick here in Springfield, a surprise, and afterwards, we were going to go to the *Rod Blagojevich Superstar* show. Second City had come to Springfield to put it on. I saw him, to ask him if he was going to go, and he said, yes, he was going to attend. Now, that ultimately changed because he had some travel plans come up that caused him to not be able to attend that. But when I initially saw him, I said, "Governor, you do understand that the language in this is pretty bad" and he smiled and said, "Yes, Al, I'm aware of that." And he said, "But you know what? I don't think I'm going to hear anything that I haven't heard from you guys." (laughter)

So the fact that his staff could be in a room discussing an issue with him, very angry, using rather foul language—he did not get into a mood of chastising anyone for their language; he merely had a code of conduct for himself, and that's a thing that people don't understand. I remember hearing some politicians who would be sitting around talking about Jim Edgar, and they would say things like, "Oh yeah, you know, I used a little bad language around him and really made him blush." And I found myself thinking, that's a person who doesn't really know Jim Edgar. Jim Edgar never blushed over other people's language. He would have blushed over his own language, but not other people's language.

DePue: Nineteen eighty-two and going into 1983 is another interesting milestone, if you will, for Illinois politics. And I don't know that this bears too much on our story about the secretary of state, but I wanted to ask you about the Cutback Amendment going into affect and how that might change the department and Edgar's ability to push through some of these initiatives that he wanted. And first,

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For the importance of Governor Edgar's mother in shaping his character, see Fred Edgar, 18-22, and Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 31-34.

we probably ought to very briefly let you explain what the Cutback Amendment was all about.

Grosboll: I actually can probably do a better job on that than I can of actually answering that question of yours. But the Cutback Amendment was in response to the legislature and Governor Thompson, for lack of a better term, pulling a fast one over pay raises.[26] The Illinois legislature wanted a pay raise for themselves. Governor Thompson had vowed to veto any pay raise of legislators. What happened is, after the election, the legislature proceeded to pass a pay raise for themselves. They were in session for a very brief span. All the governor had to do was to take the bill and just sit on it, and it would have died on its own, because the session was about to end anyway. But Thompson had made an arrangement with the leaders in which he would have the measure vetoed immediately so that they could override him. And of course it was a lame duck legislature doing the override; these were all people who had just gotten reelected, or many of them had; Thompson had just gotten reelected. Thompson wasn't even in town—he was in Florida, as I recall—and so the Autopen was used, and the legislature passed the override. Literally stayed in their seats, waited for it to go to the second floor. The Autopen vetoed it so Thompson could say he honored his pledge. The bill was then sent back to the legislature within minutes, and the legislature overrode the governor's veto.

DePue: This would have been late '78. Would Edgar have been one of those who voted for it?

Grosboll: Was it '78?

DePue: Yeah, because it went before the public in—

Grosboll: Yeah, I can't remember what year it was, and I don't remember what the story was on that, who voted for what. But what I recall is that it was the arrangement that the leaders and Thompson had made. The public got it real quickly that all Thompson had to do was wait till the legislature left town, veto it, and it would be dead. But the manner in which he did it was such that clearly it was conspiring with the leaders. So the governor could say he vetoed it and yet at the same time, let the legislators have their pay raise. The fact that it was done in a lame duck session, the fact that the governor wasn't even in town—became an extraordinarily irksome situation to the general populace.

Pat Quinn, who at the time was a guy who had worked several efforts to put initiatives on the ballot, immediately began working on an initiative called the Cutback. People can call it whatever they want, but the fact is it was a retaliation by the general public for that kind of conduct, and it was as if people had been watching the movie *Network* and following (DePue laughs) the advice of Howard

[26] On the relationship between public outcry over the pay raise and the Cutback Amendment, see Mike Lawrence, interview by Mark DePue, March 4, 2009, Jim Edgar Oral History Project, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL, 38-41. For details on the pay raise fight, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 9, 2009, 66-75.

Beale saying, “I’m mad as hell, and I’m not going to take it anymore.” The Cutback went on the ballot, and the public overwhelmingly passed it. And I would say 95 percent of the votes for it were in retaliation for that conduct by the governor and the legislature. Now, there were some arguments to be made that it made sense to pass that constitutional amendment.

The thing that gets left out is not only did it cut back the number of the members of the House from 177 to 118, but in addition to that, it did away with cumulative voting. And that’s the real significance of your question, if I can say that. The significance is that in Illinois, based on the 1870 constitution, we had allowed cumulative voting in which we had legislative districts drawn up, and from each district, three people would be elected—two from one party, one from the other party—so that the minority party in a region would always have at least one member elected. You had unusual situations in which a central Illinois region, which was overwhelmingly Republican, would elect two Republicans and one Democrat; so that within my central Illinois area, there would always be at least one Democrat. In Chicago, it meant that you would always have two Democrats, but you’d also have a Republican from that area. Now, there was a little bit of manipulation in terms of who the Republicans were, particularly in Cook County, because Mayor Daley was actually able to influence who the Republican candidates were, in some cases. But overall, the minority party of a region would always have some element of representation. The voting on that was such that you got to cast three votes; but you could cast three votes for one person, which was called a bullet; you could cast one vote for three individuals; you could cast one and a half votes for two people; or you could cast two votes for one person and one vote for another person. It was a very unusual system.

My problem at the time with cumulative voting was that the public didn’t understand how the system worked. There was complete ignorance on the part of the public as to how they could cast those votes. And the other problem was that if a district had a legislator who was particularly bad and that the public just didn’t like, they could almost never get rid of that person; and the reason is, that person usually appealed to a core of voters who would bullet for them. They’d mark one X, and that person would get three votes. So the public didn’t know how it worked, and the public couldn’t get rid of somebody they wanted to get rid of. That was my problem with it.

Now, on the other hand, what we now realize in looking back is that the one thing that cumulative voting did was it moderated the legislature. In each of the caucuses—you would have people from every region of the state sitting in the Republican caucus, and you had people from all over the state sitting in the Democratic caucus. Whereas today, for example, you have many regions in the state of Illinois that are represented by the Republican Party—which is significantly a minority party now and has little influence in the legislature—and those regions are not getting a great deal of representation. It also means that the parties have gone more to extremes. The Republican Party has moved more to the right; the Democratic Party has moved more to the left. And the reason is that

they don't have the more moderating influences from their minority areas. So the Democratic Party does not have as many people from the conservative areas of the state; the Republican Party does not have as many liberal members from urban areas as it used to have. I can remember when I worked as an intern and as a staffer, the Republican caucus had people of all persuasions. That's really not true today. So cumulative voting, I think many people would argue—I don't know that we should bring it back, but it's certainly a fair assessment to say that cumulative voting did have some benefits that were not entirely appreciated at the time.

DePue: One of the challenges that some people put forward in terms of the problems when we do away with cumulative voting, is that it made the leaders, the four leaders in the legislature, more powerful. And that kind of gets to my initial question of what will this pose Edgar in getting some of his initiatives pushed forward?

Grosboll: I don't know. I haven't really thought about whether the change in the structure of the legislature hurt Edgar when he was in the secretary of state's office. I don't know that that's true. I will say that when Edgar was in the governor's office, clearly the impact of stronger leaders had taken effect. The concept of a governor meeting with the "four tops" had begun surfacing during the Thompson era and has continued ever since. It continued with Edgar, Ryan, Blagojevich, and Quinn; that many, many things going on are being handled by five human beings, with the legislature having not a great deal of influence in terms of the normal members. I don't know how much of that relates to cumulative voting. Other people will have stronger opinions on this than I do.

I think more importantly what's happened is that the fundraising processes have changed. It used to be that most members of the legislature did not rely on leadership to raise money for them. Today, all of the seats that are in question, all of the vulnerable seats or the toss-up seats, rely on leadership to give them many, many dollars. Some of these races are million-dollar races now, and leadership is now playing a role so that the people elected to those seats are far more beholden to the speaker or to the minority leader, or the president of the Senate or the minority leader of the Senate—far more beholden to them than they were thirty-five years ago. That's the biggest thing, the centralization of fundraising. That is a very bad thing in my opinion. The legislature just this last week passed some legislation to cut into that. My read right now—and I think the read of a lot of people following it—is that it's done very little if anything to weaken the power of the four leaders. So that's the big change that's occurred, and that change did ultimately have an impact on Jim Edgar when he was governor.

DePue: We're at the point where I think we can move into the years where you were deputy secretary of state. So explain to us how you ended up making that move.

Grosboll: In the summer of 1984, Joan Schilf and her husband, Mike Walters, decided that they were going to move to Seattle. And it sort of became known that they were going to be leaving and that the chief of staff spot—interestingly, I think Joan was

the assistant secretary, and then we had a spot in Chicago called the deputy But it was Edgar's opinion and ultimately my opinion that the title of the chief of staff should be deputy secretary, not assistant. So when Joan left and Edgar filled the position, he flipped those so that the deputy secretary would be in Springfield running the office, and then the person in Chicago—who would sort of be his point person—would become the assistant.

So Secretary Edgar began, I think, giving consideration of what he was going to do. He did talk to me about it and indicated that he was leaning toward putting me into that position. I think he felt that he needed a detail person, somebody who enjoyed management. I had shown that in the Vehicle Service Department. We had had several big issues that we had tackled and I think we'd done an excellent job with; and at the same time, he needed somebody who at least appreciated the political world and didn't shun it, and I didn't. While I didn't consider myself to be the political person in the office, I at least understood what was going on, respected that process, and felt that I could work with people who were more political than I was.

So ultimately, Joan did leave and move to Seattle, and at that point—I believe it was October one—I moved into the chief of staff's position in the office. I was thirty-three when I went to the chief of staff's spot, which was a huge challenge, far more than what I had been facing in Vehicle Services. And when you're the head of the department, you have a little fiefdom—you have to get control of that and know those issues; but when you move to the front office, being chief of staff in the secretary of state's office, you have to have a sense of the entire organization and be in control of that. So that's what I did on October 1, 1984.

DePue: You just said chief of staff, but we've also referred to it as the deputy secretary of state. Is it one and the same?

Grosboll: Yes, it is.

DePue: And chief of staff has a connotation—maybe deputy does as well—but you're really going to be working with crucial personnel issues and the inner sanctum, the inner workings of the organization?

Grosboll: Yeah. I don't want to bore your listeners on this, but I will tell you that I probably spent, boy, I don't know, 40 to 50 percent of my time—at least it seems like it when I look back—dealing with personnel matters and dealing with undercover operations; both dealing with our employees as well as dealing with outside organizations that were attempting to get hold of driver's licenses or illegal titles or you name it. My door was shut a lot as we were dealing with those kinds of matters. So a lot of personnel matters, a lot of undercover operations, a lot of policing operations—and then the next area that takes up a great deal of time is the budget.

We had a budget office. We had very competent people working on the budget, but it was my job to be a part of that on behalf of the secretary of state; to make sure that that budget was conforming with where he wanted to go and to make sure that before we would meet with him, a lot of the *i*'s had been dotted and that whatever we were proposing was a defensible thing. It also meant that I had to spend far more time on legislation. I dealt with legislation in vehicles, but now, all of a sudden, I was dealing with DUI issues. And on the DUI issues, one of the first things that I had to jump into was the administrative suspension of a driver's license. That's another issue we chatted a little bit about. But the bottom line here is that I did have to become very seriously involved in budgeting, personnel, undercover, legislative operations, as well as then deal with twenty-some-odd department directors who had their own little issues that had to be dealt with on a fairly regular basis.

DePue: Were you also involved in the development of policy?

Grosboll: Oh yeah. There were clearly areas where the secretary of state would say, "I really think we should begin taking a look at X," and we would do that. We got into the issue, for example—there were some trucking issues that just needed some attention. I'm drawing a little bit of a blank on some of those, but I think part of it dealt with some testing issues. And eventually that was dealt with because we had a commercial driver's license program passed at the federal level that had to be implemented in Illinois That was a massive job that we had to tackle—one of those jobs that is almost invisible to the public and yet if we failed to do it properly, we would have hurt people in Illinois badly and potentially jeopardized federal money.

So it's one of those things—if you do it wrong, you get hurt very, very badly; you do it right, no one even knows you did it right. That happened with re-plating, when we had to get new license plates onto every car in Illinois. The same thing—if you do it poorly, it literally could jeopardize your boss's reelection; if you do it well, no one is ever going to say, "I'm going to vote for that guy because he did a nice job re-plating us." So, I'm not quite sure where you want to head with this, but…

DePue: I think where we want to go next is if you could give us a very quick thumbnail sketch of the organization of the secretary of state's office at the time—what you had purview over.

Grosboll: There are the big departments. Of course, Driver Services was the one that was probably most visible and most in the news. It was our largest organization, and it dealt with the implementation of our DUI laws and it dealt with the commercial driver's license issue and implementing the federal laws on that and doing it in a manner that was smooth and worked. It deals with issues like, we were issuing driver's licenses on a pretty regular basis to everyone, and ultimately we started doing internal studies to determine whether or not that made any sense. We know that people from the age of thirty-five to fifty-five have so few accidents per-

million-miles driven, that we began to realize we don't really need to be bringing those people in every couple of years to be retested—unless, of course, they've had accidents or unless they've had major tickets.

So we began rethinking the whole business of who we bring in to be tested determined that people above a certain age need to be brought in more frequently. Initially we thought that was fifty-five, sixty. Eventually, we found out the studies didn't bear that out, and we really began to focus on the business of people—once they exceed the age of seventy, probably more like seventy-five is when they really begin to be serious threats. So we began realizing we needed to bring those people in more frequently; and ultimately, after you reach your eighties, you should come in every year. So the whole revamping of how drivers should be tested was an issue that department had to deal with.

The other big dog was the vehicle service department, the one that I had just left, because of the retail nature of our business. But in addition to that, we have a police department, and that police department is involved in lots of undercover operations dealing with auto theft, dealing with the issues of stickers being stolen—all sorts of things along those lines. We created an inspector general's office that became the entity that, in my opinion, protected the integrity of the office; so that was very important.

But then, what most people don't realize is the secretary of state is the state librarian, and we had a tremendous number of programs dealing with libraries. And ultimately, Edgar fought for and got money to build the new state library. That had been on the books for thirty years; we finally got that done. Edgar also fought to get money for library construction that could be used by other libraries around the state. Literacy programs ran under the auspices of the state library. So that was a huge program.

The secretary of state is also the state archivist. We are over all of the state's records in the state archives. We're over the Index Department. Any documents that have to be filed with the state of Illinois are filed there. The Corporations Department, which eventually was renamed Business Services—we do all the filings of corporations that have to file in Illinois to be incorporated. The Securities Department—we handled all securities registration and dealing with those issues. So you can see that the department—sorry, the office just had a multitude of departments with all sorts of responsibilities. In most secretary of state's offices, they handle things like the Index Department and maybe the archives, and in a few states, business filings. Only one state, Michigan, deals with the driver's licenses and license plates.

DePue: In some cases in other states, I think they deal with elections?

Grosboll: They do. They do. We do not run elections in Illinois; we have an elections board that does that. But you're correct, in some states—actually, in several states, the secretaries of state are more involved in election administration.

DePue: I don't know that we went into this much last time, so I'll ask you this now. Why did the secretary of state need a police department?

Grosboll: It was related to the fact that we were involved in license plates and driver's licensing. So, for example, when we would have instances where we felt that car titles were being manufactured by crooks, oftentimes it was our police department—which was very familiar with those types of activities and was specialized in it—that would be called in to deal with that. There have been several proposals to merge the secretary of state's police department with the state police department, and if you're outside the office, it probably makes no sense. Why does the secretary of state get a police department when we've got the state police? The concern that eventually arises from every secretary of state is, I would have no guarantee that at the drop of a hat, I could have a set of people specialized in some of these issues on top of a particular allegation or a particular crime that's occurred. Or if we know that out of a dormitory at a university, a kid is manufacturing fake driver's licenses, we have the ability to immediately be on the spot that second; and the secretary of state knows that on the click of his fingers, that job's going to get dealt with. Whereas, if the secretary of state has to call the state police and ask the state police of a different constitutional officer, maybe of a different party, "Gee, we think this is going on," there's no controlling how quickly they'll be there. That's the type of concern you will hear from secretaries. And now that I'm not in the office, I don't feel as strongly about it as I might have twenty years ago. But when you're there, you like the ability to know that you can have police handling a problem immediately and know that they're going to be held accountable to you.

So we did. We used our state police to go in on stolen driver's license manufacturing machines, people who'd gotten their hands on stickers, people who we knew were moving fake titles through the system. Our police department could be on the spot and handling that almost immediately. And they knew what they were doing because those are the issues they dealt with every day.

DePue: Did they also provide some security to the secretary himself, or drivers, things like that?

Grosboll: Actually, I believe security for the secretary of state is still provided by the state police. I think that's right.

DePue: How about the state Capitol?

Grosboll: One of the larger departments or more significant departments that the secretary of state has is the physical services department, and the physical services department oversees the entire Capitol—what do I want to say?—complex. So, for example, Jim Edgar had just a very, very strong competent person running that named George Fleischli. And George took it as a personal campaign to see to it that the buildings were clean. That may seem like a small thing, but I cannot tell you the number of people on both sides of the aisle who would say to me what a

great job Jim Edgar had done making sure the Capitol was clean. And (laughs) again, that may seem like a silly thing, but it was true. You would walk in the building, and the floors were clean, the garbage had been cleaned out, the bathrooms were cleaned on a regular basis. And then we began to work on the physical necessities of the Capitol building. There had been a plan going on for many years to clean up the structure of the building. So, for example, the dome of the Capitol was filthy. When you looked up from the center of the building, you could hardly see the stained glass that was at the top of the dome.

DePue: You're talking about from the interior of the building.

Grosboll: From the interior of the building. And I can't remember the year we did it, but it was sometime in the late nineties—we did secure the funding to completely refurbish the dome of the Capitol building. It was about a million-dollar project.

DePue: So this would have been the time when he was governor, and not secretary of state.

Grosboll: No, it was eighties.

DePue: Okay, late eighties.

Grosboll: Yeah, if I said nineties, that's wrong. But it's the mid- to late eighties. Scaffolding was built from the floor of the state Capitol building all the way (DePue laughs) to the top of the building. The frieze at the base of the dome was completely redone; all of the work up to the stained glass was completely cleaned and repainted. All of the stained glass was taken out. Interestingly, one of the things we found was that the stained glass at the top of the building needed to be re-leaded. The lead was very brittle, and as soon as you touched it, pieces of it would fall, and of course, that's a couple hundred feet to the floor. Those pieces of glass could have fallen to the floor of the Capitol building and obviously done serious damage to people, had they been nearby. And all of that was removed. The glass did not need to be worked on—it just needed to be cleaned—but it did all have to be re-leaded. And then when we placed it all back up above, we put Plexiglas under it so that if we ever got to a point where the same thing reoccurred broken pieces couldn't fall to the ground. None of that was protected before. But eventually, the entire dome was completed. And I remember the day that we unveiled it. We had a huge ceremony in the Capitol building. Secretary Edgar had the Springfield municipal band come in and play John Philip Sousa, and they talked about the process of what it took to get this cleaned up; then eventually, they completely relit the dome as the band was playing John Philip Sousa music—probably "Stars and Stripes"—and it was just an amazing sight to see what the dome looked like when it was clean and lighted.[27]

DePue: Was this the same timeframe that they cleaned up a lot of the other meeting rooms and chambers, where they found some of this old artwork?

[27] For Edgar's love of John Philip Sousa, see Jim Edgar, interview with Mark DePue, June 22, 2009, 52.

Grosboll: The problem was that the cleanup in the building, in that sense, has been going on for three or four decades; so yes, it was in the sequence of that occurring, but the dome project was really the masterpiece of the building. So the physical services department, again, is a little-understood under appreciated department, but they oversee all of the grounds of the Capitol. They oversee the cleaning and the maintenance of the building, the security of the building, *et cetera*.

DePue: That answered my next question. They oversaw the security of the building. So Secretary of State Police were in there?

Grosboll: They were, although, quite frankly, we did not use Secretary of State Police on a full-time, daily basis with the building. We would have them available if there was a need. If we knew, for example, that there was going to be a rally or a march or something which would bring a lot of people to the building and additional security might be needed, then the Secretary of State's Police would be available to help handle that. This was another reason why the secretary always liked to have police available: so that the secretary who's responsible for the building literally had police at hand if he needed them to be there.

DePue: Like in early years when he was secretary of state, were there were still activities going on with the Equal Rights Amendment.

Grosboll: Yes, and again, Joan can speak more to this as she was involved with some of the decisions then. But, as you may remember, we had incidents of people—there was some blood thrown on the floor in front of Governor Thompson's office; and then eventually, the crowning incident was when a group of women chained themselves, I believe, to the area right outside the Senate chamber and vowed not to leave. And after a little bit of time, the office eventually made the decision to go in with the police, with chain-cutters, and to arrest them. I can't recall if they were really arrested and charged with anything or if they were simply cut free and told to leave the building; but I remember that [the protests] had built for a while, and then eventually, that decision was made.[28]

DePue: And that's just the kind of issue that the secretary of state normally doesn't consider as part of their purview and probably wish would go away (laughs) in some respects.

Grosboll: That's exactly right. Most secretaries don't understand they're going to be dealing with issues like that. We have thousands of people who come to the Capitol building, marching or protesting or wanting to make a statement, and obviously there's a need to make sure that they're able to express their rights and to have demonstrations. But there are also times when the office has to make a call in terms of when does that right of expression begin to move into other people's rights. It's dealt with, and it's usually dealt with in a fairly responsible manner, but every so often, there is an incident that goes a little beyond the norm.

[28] Edgar's account of the ERA protests is in Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 15, 2009, 67-70.

DePue: So having said all that, the understanding is this is a very large and complex organization that he's directing. Let's go into something I know you want to address a little bit, and that's some of Edgar's management style and some of the management initiatives that he implemented.

Grosboll: Yeah. First off, it's interesting to note that Jim Edgar never managed a large organization prior to the secretary of state's office. He managed the legislative affairs team for the governor's office, and that required some organizational skills, because you're tracking thousands of bills, and you have to know what you're doing. But in comparison, that somewhat pales with the job of being secretary of state. So this was really the first time he had a large-scale management responsibility. And again, as I look back, he was pretty good. I mean, instinctively, he had a lot of the right attitudes.

Let me first start with the staffing issue. The staffing issue is that he did not jump in immediately and start getting rid of people who were running departments simply because they had worked for Alan Dixon or Mike Howlett, who were members of a different party. I think Edgar had a sense that, number one, we need to take an opportunity to find out who's good and who's not, who knows their job and who doesn't. Edgar always had an understanding that executive officers come and go, but the bureaucracy is here forever, and the bureaucracy is what keeps things running. We can have our criticisms of the bureaucracy, and there are times when we need to rein them in or give them a little clearer direction, but overall, the bureaucracy knows what they're doing, and I think Edgar's attitude is, you don't throw the bureaucracy out. You get an understanding of what's going on and who you can rely on and who you can trust and who knows what they're doing. So he did take that type of attitude, and it was a step-by-step process of getting a handle on the office.

Ultimately, there were many people who had worked for prior administrations that we asked to stay on not just temporarily but asked to stay on permanently. They were there the day he walked in, and they were there the day he left. There were many people that Edgar ultimately brought into the organization, and he tried to bring in people who were smart, who were capable of taking on things that maybe they had not dealt with before but were very quick at learning. He wanted people who were realistic. Jim Edgar was not somebody who would normally go out and hire a dreamer, somebody that was a purist or a purist idealist. He wanted people who understood the real world, and hiring practical-minded people who understand other people was important to him. So I think the first thing is to recognize that he really had an understanding that you needed a mix of people who had been there for many years and a mix of new people who would rethink things a little bit, and he needed people who were practical-minded.

The next thing is, Jim Edgar had very strong opinions about what he wanted to do with things, but he also had a very strong opinion in terms of respecting his core staff. I've said this before, and that is, that I think that if you look at the people who Jim Edgar was closest to, trusted the most, respected the

most—they were people who argued with him. So, for example, the classic example is Mike Lawrence. Mike Lawrence and Jim Edgar would have arguments a lot. They would argue over issues. I had arguments with the secretary. I don't know if I had as many arguments as Mike Lawrence did, but—

DePue: Mike Lawrence, his press secretary in later years.

Grosboll: Mike Lawrence eventually was a press secretary, late in our secretary of state years, or the latter half of them.

DePue: I think '87 is when he joined.

Grosboll: Yeah, and then was Governor Edgar's press secretary. Mike's background was in the media—and I know you're going to talk with Mike.

DePue: I have already.

Grosboll: And Mike is somebody who has a very strong sense of what's right and a strong sense of what's smart from a political standpoint, a very high sense of ethics, *et cetera*. So I think the more Mike argued with Jim Edgar, the madder Jim Edgar got, but the more he respected Mike. (DePue laughs) I think that could also be said for Joan. Joan Walters also had very strong opinions—very smart—and also argued a great deal with the secretary. I had arguments with him. I won't speak to the issue of his level of respect for my arguing with him, but I will just tell you—observing that relationship with other people—Jim Edgar liked arguments in that sense; he didn't like conflict. He wished everything could be nice and smooth, but the point is he appreciated it. So in the running of that office, there might be instincts on Jim Edgar's part to do A and B and C; but if Joan Walters said, "We're not going to do that. We can't do that. It's going to mess everything up," or "I think it's a violation of this or this or this," Jim Edgar respected that. So he had a huge amount of respect for his own staff, and he had a huge amount of trust in them, even if at times, he hated what they were telling him.

And when I look back, I think it is one of the reasons Jim Edgar was extremely successful and did not get into trouble. Politicians want to do things; they want to get things done in a certain way, and somebody needs to be there saying, "Mr. Secretary, we can do that, but we can't do it the way you want to do it." He always had pretty strong legislative affairs directors. Mark Boozell was our legislative affairs director and had very strong opinions and a strong sense of what you needed to do to pass a bill. Jim Edgar thought he knew more than anybody (DePue laughs) how to pass a bill. So when he and Mark would get into an argument about how to accomplish something, they usually ended up with the right approach. But sometimes it took that arguing, because Mark might say, "You don't understand what this legislator is going to do if we go about it this way versus the way you want to do it." So that welcoming of strong opinions and that inclusion of very smart, aggressive people around him who would challenge him was, I think, an important key to his success.

The third thing I would say about his management style is this: I'm not sure that Joan or I, who worked with him on this day-to-day basis,would say that he was the classic trained manager. He wasn't; but he had great instincts. And one of those instincts was that he appreciated two things about lower management. I'm not talking about his front office staff, and in some cases, not even his department heads, but the people the next rung down. He appreciated the fact that they were the heart of the organization. If those supervisors were doing a good job, then people were going to think well of Jim Edgar. If those supervisors were not doing a good job, it could reflect very poorly on the organization.

So Joan and I both were strong advocates of supervisory training. We had supervisors in the office that had been there for thirty years and had never had a training class on how to be a supervisor, never had a training program on how to conduct evaluations of employees. So we did begin running a series of those types of things. We had the personnel shop begin running programs to train supervisors in how to deal with problematic employees. We had them trained in how to do evaluations, so that if a person did become a problem, you would properly advise them, and you were helping them to improve. And many times, good supervision can in fact lead to an improved employee. Edgar understood that and when we pushed those types of programs, Edgar was very strongly supportive. When we would say to him, would you come to these broader training sessions and put in a good word, he would be there, and he would talk about the importance of those supervisors. Now, that stuff is important because of the skills that you're giving to those people, but also, it's really giving them a sense of purpose. And many of these people are people who had never met a department director. Some of these people were people who had never been in the same room with the secretary of state. So all of a sudden, you're giving people a greater sense of why they're important, and I think that's valuable.

In addition to that, he supported our efforts to create quality circles. That was a very popular thing in the 1980s, and at the vehicle services department, we started a series of quality circles. Every single one of them was successful. Every single one of them came up with great ideas to improve the sections that they represented.

DePue: What is the basic concept behind the quality circle?

Grosboll: A quality circle is where you take employees in an area that have an interest, and they meet once a week, usually without the supervisor there. It's the lower-level people, and you're basically saying to them, "What's the biggest problem you've got here," or "What's an issue you deal with that you'd like to solve?" They define what they want to tackle, then argue among themselves how to deal with it.They are expected to come up with some solutions, how to do it and what it would cost, and then make the recommendations. And usually, as the director, I would sit in on their final presentation. And every single time, they would say, We're throwing away too many documents here, and we're throwing them away because of X, Y, and Z; and we can solve X, Y, and Z if only we would do the

following. And whenever they would do that kind of thing, they were always right. And it was interesting because the supervisors would almost always have a little bit of resentment that the employees were trying to come up with better ideas. But eventually, even the supervisors began to realize that their employees had some decent ideas. So quality circles are not the panacea of all problems, but they do help empower employees, and in certain cases, I think they can come up with great ideas. Edgar enjoyed that. When he heard those stories, he liked it. He would go to where we would have a group meeting of the circles. He would go and thank people for spending the time doing it.

One of the other things that came from that was he decided he wanted a panel outside of the secretary's office called an innovations committee, which would come up with ideas about the office, completely separate and apart from the front office. I was director of motor vehicles, and he asked me to be on that, and we came up with a lot of ideas. One of them was the employee-of-the-month program. We started that early in Jim Edgar's tenure, and that program is still going on today. If you go into the office, you'll see a plaque on the wall with the employee of the month. We decided the program only works if the secretary of state will become personally involved in it. So we would recognize the person in our newsletters, we would put the person's name on a plaque and their picture up on the wall that month. Finally the secretary of state would personally show up at the recognition event to thank that employee.

DePue: I imagine you were in a position where lots of people were coming in and making comments, and you had to try to figure out if they're just blowing smoke or if they were sincere. But were you hearing feedback from employees at all levels, or any particular levels, about how this all was being received?

Grosboll: The answer is yes, but we need to qualify this. I was a department director or I was the deputy chief of staff—or the chief of staff or deputy secretary of state—so I'm getting it (laughter) from people who obviously know what position I'm in. So I'm not sure it's the most unbiased representation. But I will tell you that many employees told me, and I felt it was sincere, that they greatly appreciated seeing the secretary of state, that he would physically visit the buildings. Several of the department directors said to Jim Edgar, "if you just would come to the department and pay a visit every so often, walk around and shake hands, show up at a retirement event, an event recognizing somebody for thirty years of service to the office, a birthday party every so often—it sends a message to people that you care and that you're around. I don't think any secretary has ever been in and out of various offices of the secretary of state as much as Jim Edgar has—at least in the last hundred years, let's say. Maybe when it was a smaller office, it was more common. But once we became an office of four thousand people, I think there were secretaries who never set foot in many of the departments that they oversaw, and that's not an exaggeration. So that physical appearance is important, being seen and just saying thanks to people. Jim Edgar said thank you to his employees an awful lot.

DePue: How about budgeting? Were there any initiatives that he was taking on the budget side that you were privy to?

Grosboll: The big issue on the budgeting was that each year, it was a challenge to put together a budget from all of the departments. That was handled by our central budgeting office, which was run by a gentleman named Tom Herndon. Tom Herndon was the budget officer when we came to the secretary of state's office, and Tom was there when we left. We might have even eventually brought Tom to one of our other departments under the governor's office. I think that is what happened. But Tom had been there under the Democrats. He was very reliable. He knew the budget and the history of it. So every year, whether it was Joan or whether it was me, we would spend a great deal of time getting the budget put together for a presentation to Jim Edgar. The difficulties came when the general assembly would decide that everyone was going to have to take cutback, and then we would have to go back to the drawing boards and reframe what we were going to do. The challenge for us was that during most of our ten year period, we were taking on new responsibilities, like the commercial driver's licensing program, where we had to take on a whole new responsibility that did not exist previously. The legislature would periodically give us other new duties and in many of the things we were doing were more costly. So we had to balance out the legislature in many cases, slicing budgets with our taking on new obligations, and then trying to figure out how to get the budget in balance. Ten years we had to do that. I would say that overall, it worked. Each year was its own challenge.

DePue: I would think especially in the early years, because there was a bit of a recession in the '82, '83, '84 timeframe.

Grosboll: Yeah, we had some very tough years in there. I think Jim Edgar's approach on the budget was a good approach. He assumed that Joan Walters and Tom Herndon, or when I became the deputy secretary, Tom and I would work out most of the budget details and issues. And then ultimately, whether it was Joan or me, we would make a presentation to him, usually a preliminary. We would get his feedback. He would indicate to us if he was troubled by a certain approach. Otherwise, he would give us an okay to move forward, we would move to the next stage, and then ultimately he would sign off on the final budget. That was an area, though, where he relied greatly on the staff to do their job. But we obviously knew there were a few controversial things. He would want to make sure that funding was there for literacy, or that funding was there to make sure that we would be able to properly get done what we were supposed to do on drunk driving issues. He would ensure that was there, and it was our job to make sure that his priorities were met. But I would say his role on the budgeting was not to get into the nitty-gritty, but rather to deal with the overall themes: are we going to be able to do what we have said we will do?

DePue: You spent an awful lot of your life and career dealing with the man. I'll put you on the spot here a little bit—and we're still talking about the secretary of state

years; perhaps this applies for the governorship as well: what criticisms would you have on his leadership or management style?

Grosboll: It's an interesting thing. I made the point that Jim Edgar went around the office saying thank you to people probably more than any other secretary, but I would say that one of Jim Edgar's weaknesses was that he maybe didn't say thank you enough to the people who were closest to him. And I'm saying this to you because I've said that to him myself, and I suspect he'll tell you that, too; that the people that worked with him on a daily basis—the core staff, the top directors—when a project was complete, he might say, "Good job." It was not in his nature to go out of his way to call somebody and say, "u did a really good job today, and I want to thank you for that." That's not exactly Jim Edgar's nature. And those of us who are close to him, somewhat humorously would make fun of the small ways that he would say thank you. He would say it in very small ways, and then we would share that with each other and have a good laugh at it, because we just knew that that's not his normal nature. He could do it with people that are somewhat strangers; the people far down the ranks. He could say to them, "I want to thank you for all you're doing. It's very much appreciated." But in terms of people he's close with, I think it's tougher for him to say that. And partly he's a shy person instinctively. He's very quiet, he's very much to himself; and to turn to friends and close people and to be more intimate is not in his nature.

DePue: Is he a demanding taskmaster?

Grosboll: Yeah, but I don't consider that to be a weakness or a problem with him. I believe that successful politicians, successful elected officials, need to be demanding taskmasters.

DePue: Could you tell if he was upset or angry about something?

Grosboll: Yes. We talked earlier about the issue of swearing. Jim Edgar didn't swear, but he had his own way of showing when he was upset. And there were many times when he would be upset with something that had happened—something that the legislature had done that just had completely confounded a problem; it might be that somebody hadn't properly counted the number of votes that we were going to get on something. It might be that somebody somewhere in the ranks of our office had done something incredibly stupid that was going to embarrass the office. But you could see it in his face. He might physically stiffen up. And, of course, verbally, he would make it very clear when he was unhappy and that something had to be taken care of. So that too is important. Even the nicest politicians and the nicest administrators have to be able to show when they are extremely upset with their staff if they're going to be effective.

DePue: We've been talking an awful lot about his management style, his personality, and things like that. Let's get back onto something of a timeline here, and I wanted to touch base with a couple initiatives. Nineteen eighty-four—and maybe this is about the time you're getting on board as the deputy secretary of state—

Thompson establishes the Illinois Literacy Council, and he chooses Edgar as the chair of the council.

Grosboll: Yeah. We talked earlier about where ideas come from, the issue of did he encourage this or that. There were ideas in our office that were generated by people in the lower ranks up through directors; maybe ideas the front office team came up with; and then there are ideas that Jim Edgar comes up with. And the literacy issue was one that Jim Edgar, for whatever reason, had a personal attraction to. He felt that literacy issues were important. Part of this, I think, stems from the fact that he is a huge reader; he loves books, he loves reading. He's been that way his entire life. And I think the idea that certain people can't read bothered him. I think he also recognized that that was an issue that had potential. And I don't want to suggest that everything in his mind is political, but when you have an issue that you feel for and also has some political value—it's kind of nice when those marry. And this was one of those issues. Our thrust into literacy was a Jim Edgar–inspired thing. He wanted to do it, and he made that call. He—

DePue: Was he the one who convinced Thompson to establish this in the first place?

Grosboll: I cannot tell you if he's the one who talked Thompson into it or not. I know that he made absolutely certain that he got on it (DePue laughs) and obviously played a major role with it, but I can't speak to the issue of how the idea came about. Barbara Bush had gotten involved in literacy issues many, many years ago. He was a big fan of Barbara Bush, and I know that he greatly respected what she had been doing with literacy. And I can't quite remember the timing of all of this.

DePue: She would have been the wife of the vice president at the time.

Grosboll: Yes, the vice president at the time. But he met Barbara Bush, it seems to me, fairly early and liked and respected her a great deal. I think the secretary and possibly Joan can speak to that issue. Again, the beauty of this was it was a marriage of personal interest with the idea that this also had value.

DePue: You mentioned marriage. Was Brenda in—is than an interest of hers as well?

Grosboll: I think she was interested in it, but this was more Jim Edgar than anyone else.

DePue: How about the organ donor program?

Grosboll: The organ donor program is one that the secretary of state's office is involved in because of the issue of people signing on the back of their driver's license, giving permission. And I can't remember when that concept began, that the way to push more organ donation was this language on the back of a driver's license. It was probably sometime in the seventies or early eighties when that whole idea had come about. So we were involved pushing it. I think we did a good job at it. But it was sort of a Sisyphean type of project, though, because you had to constantly be reminding the public of it. So we had a standard that every employee in the driver's license station was to be saying to people, "Would you like to sign the

back of your driver's license?" And that got a little old for employees, so we had to be reiterating it all the time. Then we came up with a public relations campaign, where we put posters up on the walls of all of our facilities about saving a life by signing it. We put out brochures on it. But no matter (laughs) what you do on this—just about every secretary of state at one point or another is going to be criticized that they haven't done enough. And we would go through spells where we would do campaigns on it, we would get lots of people signed up, and then it would seemingly fall off and we'd have to spark everybody up again. I think every secretary—I know George Ryan got into this program big time; Jesse White got into it. Each secretary in their own way has gotten into this program. It's an important program, and each secretary has to kind of come up with their own ideas about how to push it.

DePue: Before we get into a whole series of questions about the evolution of legislation on auto insurance and on DUI, as that continued down the road, and some other issues dealing with vehicles—let's take just a very quick break here.

Grosboll: Okay.

(pause in recording)

DePue: Okay, we took a very quick break, and we are back at it again. During the break, Al, you mentioned another important aspect of management in some of the initiatives—and that was an internship program, which is a natural for Jim Edgar.

Grosboll: Yeah. Jim Edgar started in state government in the Illinois Legislative Internship Program, the same program I started in.[29] And so I would tell you one theme that has been pretty consistent in Jim Edgar's career has been he sort of has a love affair with internships and providing opportunities to younger people. So we did a couple of things. We did start a sort of fellowship program, year-long thing, to offer opportunities to young people. The other thing that program did, aside from the fact that it provided young people an opportunity to have a fellowship or an internship in the secretary of state's office, is it brought in talent. The same thing was true in the governor's office with our internships. It brought in talented people who we might not otherwise come across. The political system produces certain kinds of people, the whole governmental process produces certain kinds of people that come up through bureaucracies or come through the legislature; but these very bright college people who are about to graduate, who are enthusiastic and kind of come with different ideas, it's important to bring them into state government. Fellowship programs do that; and I would tell you that many of the better people in state government have come through a fellowship program, and they wouldn't have come in any other way. We also did summer internships, where we brought people in, a lot of young kids that got a little bit of a sampling of state government that way.

[29] Illinois Legislative Staff Internship Program. For Edgar's recollections of his application to and selection by the program, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, May 22, 2009, 47-58.

It was of concern to Jim Edgar that we did not have as many minorities in management positions in our office. It was an issue that he asked several of us to take up, so eventually Steve Schnorf, who was running the driver services department; Tammy McClure, who ran our personnel shop; myself, and one or two other people talked about this issue. And eventually we decided to come up with an internship for minority management, with the idea of identifying some people that appeared to have talent in our organization—or maybe they weren't in our organization but had been brought to our attention—who maybe weren't ready for management yet, but we thought they had the skills and the ability to do that. We started a minority management program and used that as a way to recruit more people, whether Hispanic or African American, into the ranks of management. So I think that internship was successful, and was just another way we used that type program.

DePue: Let's move on to some of the other initiatives, and we've talked about this already quite a bit. But I know a consistent thread through most of Edgar's administration as secretary of state was to make a series of moves that were tightening up on DUI, drunk driving issues—I think you said DWI to begin with. A couple in particular: one would be the hearing division being reorganized, formal and informal hearing divisions. Does that ring any bells for you?

Grosboll: Right. Yeah, again, I was not personally involved when that was done. I think it was early in the administration. It was the secretary's and the deputy secretary, Joan Walters's, opinion that we needed to do some streamlining of the administrative hearings office. It was not particularly well organized and was not functioning effectively. So, they divided it into the two functions: the informal dealing with lesser situations and the formal being more of a judicial activity. I think you could say that it was modeled very much along the lines of a judicial action—and that would be the formal hearing shop.

DePue: You make that kind of a move so that it would be easier to suspend somebody's license?

Grosboll: I think it had more to do with the issue of expertise and training people more along one line versus another line; and I think the sense was that it would help us focus more on the most important things that we had in front of us. I think that program did prove to be a much more efficient way to operate that department.

DePue: Another significant step—1986, a law is enacted. I'm sure that Edgar, and you were behind the Statutory Summary Suspension of driver's licenses.

Grosboll: Yes, I would say that there were many, many things that we accomplished in the ten-year period that we were in the secretary of state's office. This law has to rank among the most significant that we were involved with. And the credit for this is Jim Edgar. This was driven entirely by him. He participated in national anti–drunk driving programs and activities. The concept of an administrative summary suspension had been developed and he was greatly intrigued by it. When I came

into the deputy secretary position in late ’84, he informed me that this was a priority of his and that he wanted us to focus on it.

DePue: What exactly did that mean?

Grosboll: Up until this point in time, the issue of somebody losing their driver’s license for drunk driving was strictly a matter handled in the courts; and as we know, 90 percent of the people being arrested for drunk driving never lost their driver’s license. It just wasn’t happening. It was Jim Edgar’s position, and was becoming the opinion in some other states, too, that under certain circumstances, the secretary of state’s office ought to be able to simply suspend the driving privileges of someone if they violated certain aspects of the law.

DePue: The secretary of state and not the courts?

Grosboll: That’s correct. All of it reviewable by the courts, by the way; but that the secretary of state ought to have the burden to simply do a suspension. For example, if a person refused to take a breathalyzer, it should not take a court to tell us that it’s okay to suspend their driver’s license; the mere fact that a person refused to take the Breathalyzer should in and of itself be sufficient grounds for the secretary of state to suspend. By the way—very similar to our ability to suspend the driving privileges of someone who gets three tickets or a person who makes other violations; we had the ability to do suspensions. But in the case of drunk driving, it required the court to go through their processes. And those processes were ones in which ultimately 90 percent of the people never lost driving privileges.

It’s important that we pause here and recognize that, nationally, the one point that was being made throughout the nation by people who were experts on this topic was that if you want people to obey the law and to stop drinking and driving, then punishment must be certain. There must be a sense of certainty that if you are caught drinking and driving, you will lose your driving privileges. If you don’t have that sense of certainty, then the laws lose their effect. And similarly, it has to happen fairly swiftly. If you get caught drinking and driving and three years later, you lose your driving privileges for a brief period of time, it does not have the same impact as knowing that you were caught today, and thirty days from now, your driving privileges are suspended. So first, there must be a degree of certainty, and secondly, it should happen rapidly.

So Jim Edgar set out to put into place the authority of the office to do this. Now, eventually the question would arise: does the secretary of state or does anybody have the legal right to do a suspension of driving privileges for these reasons? The court concluded that yes, these administrative offices do have the right to do it, and the reason is this: if you get a driver’s license, you are accepting responsibilities, and among those responsibilities are that you will not do certain things; and if you do, the administrative entity that has given you that driver’s license has the same right to take it away. The courts ultimately agreed with that,

and that was their reasoning. So the agencies across the country that are handing out driver's privileges to people retain the right to take those driver privileges away if you abuse it.

DePue: And the term "privileges" is (laughs) an important distinction, is it not?

Grosboll: From almost the first day Jim Edgar went into the secretary of state's office as its leader, he began making the point everywhere he went: driving is not a right, driving is a privilege. You earn the privilege to drive by showing that you can pass a test and by agreeing to honor the laws of the state of Illinois. You do not have a right to be a driver. Now, you obviously have certain rights in a court of law if administrative procedures are not handled correctly; so an action of the secretary of state's office, in effect, can be reviewed by a court. You have rights in that sense, but the concept that you have a right to drive your vehicle is not true. It's a privilege, and you have to earn it, and then you have to continue earning that right to keep it.

DePue: I imagine this legislation, when it went before the state legislature, was not a slam dunk. Where were you getting pushback?

Grosboll: This was a very difficult issue. This was the first issue that I really had to grapple with in the secretary of state's office. This issue was being led by our driver services people. A gentleman named Gary March was really a tremendous resource on this issue and a driving force. Another individual very active in it was a woman named Karen Lobe. And in the administrative hearings department, Lowell Bohn was the director of that agency, and again, very focused on this issue, very strong. The opposition to this came principally from lawyers. The—

DePue: ACLU?

Grosboll: No, no. The principal objections were coming from the trial lawyers—the Chicago Bar Association, to some extent the American Bar Association or the Illinois Bar Association. But it was the legal community that we did almost all of our battling with. It's not to say that there wasn't pushback from tavern owners—obviously any institution related to alcohol. There were many legislators who were not exactly on the bandwagon that our efforts on drunk driving made sense. Now, as time went on and as the public clearly began to demonstrate its support for these laws and began to demonstrate its lower tolerance for people who were drinking and driving and killing people, more and more legislators got on board; but initially, that was not true. There was a lot of fighting going on there.

So as we entered into this, we began negotiations—again, primarily with a group of attorneys from Chicago who had problems with this, but eventually we were able to get some buy-in. There were some issues—and I can't remember all of the details at this point in my life—where the lawyers began to realize they were probably not going to win on this issue; and on that point, they began moving to tactics of making the law more tolerable or more acceptable. I wish my

memory was a little better on some of the details of those negotiations. But they were very lengthy negotiations. I sat for hours and hours and hours, going back and forth with the legal community on this, leaving periodically to go talk to the secretary to make sure he was fine with the direction we were moving in.

I still remember the day I told him that we had turned a corner in which they were now beginning to accept that there would be such a thing as a summary suspension; it was now haggling about how it would work and what would happen. The issue of a work permit came up. So if you lose your driving privileges for a set number of days, would you be allowed to get a worker's permit? And we ultimately agreed that the person would have to go thirty days even without a worker's permit; but at the end of that thirty, they could get a worker's permit if the court felt that it was justified. Now, I think there were people on the anti–drunk driving side who felt that we shouldn't have given on that issue; but from a practical standpoint, the one sympathetic issue we were dealing with was: yes, this person's a drunk, and yes, this person is threatening lives, but you know what? During the daytime, he's got to get to work to support his family. That attitude was out there, and we had to deal with that.

DePue: Was there any aspect of the bill that dealt with treatment?

Grosboll: One of the things that our administrative hearings department and Jim Edgar were severely criticized for is that people whose license was revoked—meaning they had been convicted of drunk driving—we would not give their driving privileges back simply because a set period of time went by. They had to prove to us that they had gotten treatment and that they had successfully completed a program. We were severely criticized for that.

DePue: By the same community?

Grosboll: By that same community and by a lot of legislators who felt—because there were cases in which we literally might not give a driver's license back for three, five, seven years because we knew the person was still continuing to abuse substances and was refusing to go to a program, or was refusing to go through any kind of remedial treatment. And people would say, "Oh, come on, they haven't had their driver's license for three years. You don't have a right to keep it away from them." And they were wrong; we did have a right to keep it away from them. Oftentimes, by the way, we're dealing with people who probably had been arrested and had been caught drinking and driving multiple times. These cases were normally not single events. By the time a judge ever revoked someone's license, these people were very scary. In many cases, we would know that person was still drinking; we would know that they'd been arrested once or twice for driving without a driver's license; we would know that they had refused to participate in any remedial program. And our position was, we don't care if it takes ten or twenty years. If they do not face up to this issue, we are not going to give them back a driver's license. A lot of people disliked that position, but we felt that was the proper position.

Back to summary suspension, if I may. The issue here was that if a person refused a breathalyzer, that automatically would give the secretary of state's office the right to take away their driving privileges. They could appeal to a judge, indicating that maybe their arrest had been improper or that they had not been read their rights properly—and there were instances in which the court did review, did come to that conclusion, and did, in effect, nullify our summary suspension. I mentioned to you before, that prior to this administrative suspension law, or what we call summary suspension, 90 percent of the people in Illinois arrested for drunk driving never lost their driving privileges for a single day. Ninety percent. After the summary suspension law went into effect, 90 percent of people arrested for drunk driving were losing their driving privileges for some period of time.

And thus, we accomplished the two goals we were after: we got certainty—people knew if they got arrested, and if they refused or if they failed badly, they would lose their driving privileges, and it would happen rapidly. I can't recall precisely, but I believe the rule was within thirty days, they would lose their driving privileges, and they would lose it for a minimum of thirty days. Again, without recalling the precise details, I think what we said was if you blew and you exceeded the limits of the law, you would lose your driving privileges for a set number of days. If you refused to blow, you would lose it for even more time on a summary suspension. And I don't recall the exact period of that. So that law was tested.

We did eventually pass the law. We reached some agreement with the lawyers. They weren't entirely happy, but they, I think, saw the handwriting on the wall that this was coming, that it was a trend—other states were starting to move in this direction—there was a force behind this movement, and if they didn't compromise, they were probably going to lose. Similarly, we felt that we needed to compromise a little bit to get this through, and we did. Eventually we passed the bill, it was signed into law, and then I believe in '86 is when it actually took effect, January 1, 1986.

And at that point, we began to see historic movements on this issue. When the public begins to understand that 90 percent of the people arrested for drunk driving are losing their driving privileges,that sends a tremendously strong message rippling through the system. The trends we've seen nationally in terms of the decline of deaths on our highways, and particularly deaths related to alcohol—I think it is not out of line at all to suggest that the beginning of those declines date almost exactly to the dates when states began to take this issue seriously. I don't think it's a stretch at all to say that the passage of this law and the passage of the other DUI laws in this state saved hundreds and hundreds of lives.

DePue: You mentioned a couple of times that this bill was tested. I assume what you mean was that it was challenged in court after the bill passed.

Grosboll: Yes.

DePue: And Edgar obviously knew this was going to happen.

Grosboll: Yes. Everybody knew that the concept of summary suspension would be challenged as it related to drunk driving, because what we're now seeing is not only if you refuse [the breathalyzer] the result will be administrative action, but if you blow and you fail, we will also suspend you for that. The information coming to our attention that you have registered an X percent on a breathalyzer machine would give us cause to suspend your driving privileges. That was a dramatic change from prior law in this state, as well as in most other states. So it was challenged. I don't remember the case in particular that went through the court system, but ultimately the courts ruled the way we thought they would; which is this is an administrative action, and the administering agency handling it has a right under certain circumstances to pull that privilege back.

DePue: Was the state of Illinois at the front of this trend or in the middle of it?

Grosboll: We were at the front of this trend. I'm sure there were a couple of other states also working on the same issue at the time, but by and large, most states did not move in this direction at the time we did. They came later. So we were a leader. And I have to say in all honesty, while I'm very proud of the role I played as the chief negotiator along with Gary March on this issue the credit for this issue is Jim Edgar. He was tenacious; he would not give up on it. He explained to me what summary suspension was and said, "This is important to me. This is the most important step that we can move on in this state on drunk driving." He was right about that. I jumped into this issue because he told me to jump into this issue.

DePue: Okay. Mothers Against Drunk Drivers. I wondered if you can tell us if that organization was active in this push as well.

Grosboll: Yes. In Illinois, we had two very good and important organizations. Mothers Against Drunk Driving had become the poster organization, really, for the anti–drunk driving activities in this country. It had risen nationally as a major organization, and then it would rise in each individual state. And in Illinois we did have a strong group under the name Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). A woman who had been a victim of a drunk driver was personally very committed to this issue and was a very articulate spokesperson on this issue.

In addition to that, there was another organization that was very effective in Illinois called the Alliance Against Intoxicated Motorists, or AAIM. And that group initially was more active in Illinois than MADD was. On the other hand, MADD had a lot more visibility—the name did. So it's really important that we recognize both those groups were very important. You've got to have political leadership on an issue like this, but at the same time, you also have to have groups like AAIM and MADD because they are the face of the victims, and they are the average common citizen speaking out. And the public and the media need to see that. It was a very good partnership that Jim Edgar had with those organizations.

DePue: Let's move on to a related issue, and another big fight for the Edgar administration was the requirement to have auto insurance.

Grosboll: Yeah. This was an issue that we took on later in the administration. For somewhere in the vicinity of twenty-five to thirty years, there had been efforts in Illinois to mandate insurance. And by insurance, we mean liability insurance—not that you have to insure your car against it being damaged, but rather you need to ensure that if you cause an accident, your insurance will cover the losses of the other party. So liability insurance is what's at issue here. In Illinois, that battle had been going on for years and had gotten nowhere. Jim Edgar believed that this was an issue of fairness, that it was not right that three-quarters of the population get into their cars, buy insurance for themselves—insurance to protect in case they hurt someone else—but another segment of the population does not. That was causing the rates of people who were the law-abiding people to go up, and he just thought that was wrong. It appeared to us—and I must tell you that the numbers on this are always a little bit in contention in terms of what numbers are right—but at the time, there was a growing sense by the public that more and more people were driving uninsured; there were more and more incidents of people causing accidents and not having insurance. It was our sense that somewhere well above 20 percent of the population was driving without insurance. At one point, I think the insurance department made an assessment that 27 percent of the population was driving without insurance. That number seemed a little high, but I'll say this: I do not believe the 20 percent was high. I think that at least 20 percent of the Illinois population was driving without car insurance.

DePue: Could I speculate that the people who were uninsured were causing a higher proportion of the accidents as well?

Grosboll: There was a sense of that, yes. So this was a rising concern and one that the secretary wanted to take on. I want to pause here just for a second. I've made this observation a lot of times to people, and that is that elected officials, particularly if they're out and about a lot, are great barometers of public attitudes. When Jim Edgar became secretary of state and I'm in the vehicle services department, he correctly would say to me every time he would see me, "What's going on with our car titles? I'm hearing that it's taking months to get a car title." And I would say, "My people tell me they're getting them out as fast as they can." And he'd say, "No, no, something's wrong out there." So sure enough, as I delved into that issue as director of the department, what I would find is that we had some terrible glitches, Ultimately the head of the titles division had some great ideas to streamline it that weren't particularly costly. It was a matter of bringing on a night shift to help get this job done faster. And we pretty much set into policy that we would have titles out rapidly. The administrator got what he needed, and within months, Jim Edgar quit asking me about car titles, because that job got done.

Same thing with vanity plates. He kept saying, "Why is everybody complaining to me about vanity plates taking six months?" Sure enough, once I delved into it, that's exactly what was happening. We computerized that program,

we got our license plate manufacturing facility to agree to deliver plates so that nobody would ever be waiting more than a month to get their vanity plates. Once we accomplished that, Jim Edgar quit asking me about it.

Same thing happened on mandatory insurance. It became that people would say to him: "How come I have to buy insurance but other people aren't buying insurance? That's not right." So as the great barometer for our office, Jim Edgar knew what the hottest issue was out there. The result of that was we began to focus more and more on what was causing that issue to fail in the legislature, and how we might focus on it and take the lead. So we began working with Senator Bob Kustra, who would later become Jim Edgar's lieutenant governor and had an interest in this issue. We made some modifications in the program. The most significant thing we did was to begin negotiating with some of the players in the insurance industry. Sarunas Valiukenas and I worked on this as well as Mark Boozell, who headed up our legislative affairs shop. The big companies opposed states mandating it because they were afraid they'd get stuck with terrible bills, and they didn't want to insure certain people. All the concerns that they had, by the way, have never, ever come to pass. Eventually the independent insurance agents began to open up to us and indicate some interest.

Here's why and it's a very simple thing. The independent agents are the ones that are dealing face-to-face every day with that customer who's growing madder and madder about why their rates are going up because of these uninsured people. So the independent agents, who are the retailers, are the ones having to listen to it. And in a way, they have as much interest in getting this problem solved as we did in the political world. So eventually, the independent agents said to us, "Here are some things we think you need to do to make this a better law or a better idea." We liked their ideas, we adapted them, and they got up at a press conference and endorsed the concept of passing a mandatory insurance law. That was the turning point in the mandatory insurance legislation, and eventually, building upon that, building upon some new support from legislators, we were able to pass the bill.

DePue: You've already touched on it a bit here, but clarify—yeah, it's chilly in here, isn't it?

Grosboll: It is chilly.

DePue: Clarify again where the pushback on this bill was coming from primarily.

Grosboll: The pushback came from two arenas: the insurance companies, who are very powerful, and Illinois has much reason to be proud of the fact that we are home to large insurance companies, and we should feel good about that. I think it's one of our stronger attributes, that we have large insurance companies here—we should be proud of that—but it doesn't mean they're right on every issue. They are powerful, though, and many of the legislators, who represented districts where insurance companies are home, fought us vehemently.

DePue: For example, State Farm, up in Bloomington.

Grosboll: Absolutely. And you know what? It is okay that their legislators are fighting for them, because if those companies are concerned about their viability, and if a law potentially threatens them, then their legislator should be saying, "Wait a minute; let's slow down here a little bit." I don't have any problem with that, and I don't think Jim Edgar had any problem with that. But, it still didn't mean we were going to back off, and we were right on this issue. We went head-to-head with the insurance companies. I will also tell you that many legislators who represented people who are poor—many of the African-American legislators have concerns with this, and again, I completely understand where they were coming from. There were concerns that they would have constituents who simply would not be able to afford to buy insurance. On the other hand, what they were basically arguing is: they can't buy insurance, and if they cause an accident and kill somebody or do great harm to someone, it's okay that somebody else has to pay for that. So these are issues in which there are clearly legitimate positions on all sides, but our job was to push the position that we thought was right, and we did that. Those members of the legislature who had a different perspective did what they had to do, and I respect that. So that's where the major opposition came from, but legislators, like secretaries of state, are good barometers, and I think they understood that there was a rising tide of resentment and a rising tide of a sense of gross unfairness that we did not require people to be insured. So we passed the bill.

The next step in this—and we may have chatted about this a little bit, but I think it provides a lesson to elected officials, and it provides some insight into Jim Edgar. These battles that we had with the insurance companies were not fun. This was hardball on our part, and it was hardball on their part. There were some hard feelings after we won. Sarunas Valiukenas and I had probably spent more time on this bill than anybody else in the office, particularly Sarunas. We both felt that while we had passed this bill, we also recognized that putting this thing into effect and making it work right would require the help and knowledge of the insurance companies. So we talked to Secretary Edgar about that. Edgar, probably more than anybody else, understood that if we pass the bill and then don't administer it right, it would blow up in our face. We told him that we wanted to go to the insurance companies, and ask them to come back to the table. Now that we've beat their brains in (DePue laughs) and passed this bill, would they come back to the table, sit down with us, and tell us now what we need to do with the law and with the program administration to actually make it work right. Edgar encouraged that and said we ought to do that. They know how to run their business better than we do, and if there are ways that we can fine-tune this bill to make it work more effectively, we'll do that.

So that's exactly what we did. We brought in all of the major companies. Almost all of them agreed to sit back down with us and we worked for months to fine-tune the law that we had just passed. So when the legislature came back into session, we passed another bill that was a streamlining of the original bill, and it

put into place dozens and dozens of the ideas that the companies had, which they knew would make it a better bill and create a greater likelihood that it would succeed. Stand back from that just for a minute: how many other statewide elected officials, after getting trashed by an industry, would come right back to them and say, "Hey, come back in; we want you to be a part of this?" It is a great indicator of Jim Edgar's practicality side, and also his respect for the system. The respect for the system is: we're enemies today, but tomorrow we got to work together. He understood that, and he understood that it was to his benefit that we do that.

DePue: Maybe this is an aspect of the legislative process, but why couldn't that same thing have happened for the first bill?

Grosboll: Because the insurance companies were not about to tell us how to make this a better bill. (DePue laughs) This is typical, by the way, of a lot of issues. You don't want to tell your opponents how to make the bill a better bill because you want to be able to say to legislators, "This will never work, because in their bill it does X, Y, and Z, and that's not workable." You don't want to say, "Here's an amendment that will make this bill work," because it will remove all of your arguments. So what you try to do is you try to find the weaknesses and exploit those;. But the key is, if you're going to be the one administering this afterwards, you want to go right back to their arguments and say, "You know what? They might have been right."

And that's what we did. I believe that is why the mandatory insurance program went into effect, and when it did, there were almost there were very few problems with it. And I don't know if you've seen the numbers, but going back to that time period, the department of insurance had indicated to us in 1987 that something like 19 percent of the population was uninsured. Quietly they told us they knew that figure was a little higher than that, but that's what they recorded it at. And that's the year we passed it. In 1989 we started educating the public, and in '89, that number started dropping, and it got down to 10 percent uninsured; and then it went fully into effect in 1990. And in 1990, the department of insurance reported to us that they could find only 4 percent of the Illinois population that was uninsured. I still have difficulty believing that it got that low. It was our general sense, particularly when we started going out and checking people, that it was probably at 7 percent or a little below.

DePue: What were the penalties for somebody discovered to be driving without insurance?

Grosboll: I believe, and I—(laughs) you're catching me a little off guard on this.

DePue: Sorry about that.

Grosboll: I think the issue was that if you owned the car and you had not properly insured it, we would take away your driving privileges; and that's how we got around to it.

DePue: We're going to switch now to a little bit more of a political arena, as if our discussion wasn't about politics already—it has been all the way through. But 1986 is an interesting year for Edgar because he's one of thirty people, I believe, that the *U.S. News and World Report* cites as a rising star in politics.

Grosboll: And they were pretty smart to do that, weren't they?

DePue: Yeah, and it gets back to that ambition issue. Was Edgar already talking to you? Was it common knowledge among everybody that he was interested in becoming the governor?

Grosboll: Common knowledge. There just was no doubt whatsoever that Jim Edgar would be running for governor at some point in time. Thompson had been in for a pretty lengthy period of time. With the '82 election, that meant that he would be there for ten years, because there was a two-year term in there, in the middle of his service. And people didn't know what would happen in '86. They thought he might not run in '86. So clearly people knew Jim Edgar was going to be running for governor at some point. The same thing was true of Neil Hartigan on the Democratic side—a great sense that at some point, he's going to be running.

DePue: Did he take you into his confidence and start talking about how he could better position himself to do that?

Grosboll: I wouldn't say he was taking me into confidence; I think it was just a very casual conversation that any of us at that time—we'd be on a plane ride somewhere or we would be having lunch or whatever—we would talk about the likelihood of Thompson running or not, what he might be doing. So yeah, we had lots of conversations about that, eventually talking about potential people he might want to be on the same ticket when he ran, to be his lieutenant governor. We would talk about what his strengths were, issues that he needed to get educated on, get briefed on. Yeah, so a lot of that was going on because of an absolute sense that, yes, he's going to run for governor at some point.

DePue: But in 1986, Thompson decides to run for an almost unprecedented fourth term?

Grosboll: Yes. It was a—

DePue: And again, the first term was two years.

Grosboll: Yeah. There was another governor who had run four times: that was Richard Oglesby—not Ogilvie, but Oglesby. But different generation, and it was a different kind of situation. So if Thompson were running again, and if he won, he would serve for fourteen years, which would in fact be the longest service, particularly consecutive service, of any governor in Illinois history.

DePue: Let's get on to that election in 1986 on Edgar's part and why it was—and you and I both had kind of decided not to spend too much time on this, but there's always interesting aspects to Illinois politics.

Grosboll: Right. That year the Democratic Party pretty much did some slating, and one of the people they picked was a lady named Jane Spurjen or Spurgin.

DePue: Spirgel.

Grosboll: Spirgel, whatever. And she was relatively unknown. She was an elected official somewhere else, very active in the Democratic Party, and they slated her to run for secretary of state. I don't think that Jim Edgar viewed that this was going to be a particularly serious challenge, but nevertheless, he never would underestimate anybody. But we went into the primary season realizing that that's who he would be facing. Gubernatorially, it looked like it was going to be a very difficult year for Jim Thompson because Adlai Stevenson was running for the second time. He had selected a well-known state senator named George Sangmeister—well known in Springfield, but not well known statewide—a respected gentleman, good guy, to be his lieutenant governor candidate.[30]

So on primary night, I remember being in the campaign headquarters, and we had set up a pretty sophisticated system in which we had people all over the state who were calling in information to us about their counties. We were then plugging that into a computer. The computer was programmed to reflect what percent a vote we would normally expect and how many votes we would expect out of that county, with the ability to then project what that would mean for the whole state. And as that data began to come in, I would say we were a good hour to an hour and a half ahead of the AP service and the major networks.

So we were tracking what was going on, and very early in the evening, we began to notice that the Democratic candidate that had been slated to run against Jim Edgar was running behind, and she was running behind another woman named Janice Hart. And Janice Hart was a LaRouchie, a follower of Lyndon LaRouche, who had gotten onto the Democratic ballot in the primary. Nobody had paid any attention to her at all, but she had a pretty good ballot name: Janice Hart versus Jane Spirgel. Nobody knew either one of them, but the ballot name of Janice Hart was a more attractive name. The Democratic Party had done very little to say to its members all across the state, here are our approved candidates, and as a result of that, Janice Hart was beginning to pull away. And all of us were just elated—in a way, it's kind of bizarre to think of it that way—that this was happening and how humorous that the Democrats weren't even going to have their candidate, and this nutcase was going to be running. And she was a nutcase, you know—

DePue: It's probably worth mentioning. What does it mean to be a LaRouchie candidate?

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[30] George E. Sangmeister (D-Mokena, February 16, 1931-October 7, 2007) was a member of the Illinois General Assembly, serving in the House from 1973-1977 and in the Senate from 1977-1987. After his defeat in the lieutenant governor's race, he ran successfully for Congress, serving as a representative from 1989 to 1995. *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-Present*, http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=S000056.

Deleted: Senate

Grosboll: Again, it's a follower of Lyndon LaRouche, who was an extremist guy; who had conspiracies about everything—believed that the Queen of England was running drugs all over the world, and all sorts of other related ideas.

Jim Edgar, interestingly, before anyone else, said to us, "Guys, that's not the race that matters." And I'm thinking, what is he talking about? That's his race; that's the person he's going to be opposing. And he said, "No, look what's happening in the lieutenant governor's race." (DePue laughs) Because in the lieutenant governor's race, the Democratic candidate, George Sangmeister, was losing to a fellow named Mark Fairchild, who was also a member of the LaRouche policy team or party. And Mark Fairchild had a very nice ballot name versus a guy who most people had never heard of named George Sangmeister. Mark Fairchild is pulling further and further ahead, and Edgar is saying, "If he wins that race, this whole election is over with." The reason is that the gubernatorial candidate, Adlai Stevenson, must run with the winner of the Democratic lieutenant governor race. If his lieutenant governor candidate is Mark Fairchild, then Adlai Stevenson will have to get off the ticket. So Edgar's point, early in the evening, before anyone else got there, was, "Forget my race. Watch that race. If that guy wins, the elections are basically all over with in Illinois." He ended up being right, because with Mark Fairchild winning that lieutenant governor race, all of the legitimate Democratic candidates had to withdraw from the Democratic ballot. They created a third party, called the Solidarity Party; but because it wasn't the Democratic Party, it meant they had no chance of winning. And that's exactly what happened. They got completely wiped out.

One of the more interesting moments of the campaign came when—notwithstanding the presence of the LaRouchie candidates on the Democratic ticket—Jim Edgar's Democratic opponent was Janice Hart, and the powers that be determined there still had to be debates. Edgar realized that he would probably have to at least do one debate, so he did a debate with Janice Hart, and (laughs) Janice Hart went on and did her normal spiel. Jim Edgar debated her basically as if she wasn't there. Every question he got, he answered very straight and legitimately and ignored what his opponent had said. It was as if she wasn't even there. And it was kind of funny to watch, because here was Jim Edgar—as everybody knows, the straight-laced guy—and his opponent is this woman that seemed to be from outer space. But obviously, the '86 race was not a competitive race. It probably would not have been competitive even if Jane Spirgel had won the Democratic nomination; but with Janice Hart being on the ballot, it meant that Jim Edgar was going to win by a landslide. And it was; it was an immense landslide.[31]

DePue: Was Spirgel in this debate, or it's just the Republican and the Democrat there?

[31] Edgar took 67.15 percent of the vote in his blowout general election victory, tallying 2,095,489 votes to Spirgel's 521,410 and Hart's 478,361. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 4, 1986*. Edgar's discussion of the primary is in Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 22, 2009, 43-51.

Grosboll: Spirgel was not in it, and the reason is—she didn't meet the requirements that the debate people had established. (Mark DePue laughs)

DePue: More interest in the Illinois politics.

Grosboll: Yeah. It was a very crazy time period and it led to Jim Thompson, after a very tight race in '82 against Adlai Stevenson, actually having a relatively easy reelection in '86. It's why I think he may be one of the luckiest human beings ever to run for office in Illinois. Had Adlai Stevenson won that nomination, that race clearly could have gone either way. If he and George Sangmeister had been on the Democratic ticket with a clean slate, I'm not so sure that Adlai might not have won that race.

DePue: And up to this point, from what I understand, the Illinois public was getting a little bit worn out with Jim Thompson?

Grosboll: Everybody can characterize it any way they want, but I'd say that's pretty true; and I think that's a reflection of the fact that whether it's a mayor or a governor or even a president, we tend to be willing to give people maybe a second term, but once you get to ten, twelve years, it's pretty hard to sustain the public's interest in you. So whether it's that they were tired of Jim Thompson and his style, or whether it was just that it was time. (laughs)

DePue: But before the primary results started coming in, people were thinking that Thompson was beatable?

Grosboll: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. I think there are many, many political experts that believe he would have lost. The problem in making that speculation is Jim Thompson was a very good politician, he had proven to be very resilient. It's easy to say, he would have lost that race, but I don't know that we can make that assumption. I think we can make the assumption it would have been a very, very close race. It would have been a battle. It would have been a very tough race for all concerned. Again, I think he could have lost, but I'm not going to say he would have lost. We don't know.

DePue: Let's get into the last four years that Edgar was secretary of state, then. I believe it's during that timeframe that the office began issuing four-year licenses.

Grosboll: Yes.

DePue: In 1988, there was some reorganization within the secretary of state office itself. I don't know if you recall that.

Grosboll: I'm not sure which issues that might have been. We had created the inspector general's office earlier. That, to me, was one of the more significant things we had done. It merged audit and investigations together.

DePue: I think that's what this comment refers to.

Grosboll: And that was an important move on our part and needed to be done.

DePue: Especially in retrospect, when you look at what happened to George Ryan.

Grosboll: I was going to tell you, and we may talk about this at the end of this part of the interview, but when I look back at some of the things that we accomplished, high on my list is the creation of the inspector general's office. We had been operating more and more in a fashion of an inspector general's office, but then we formalized it, bringing in a very, very strong person with police background, Jim Redenbo, who was a no-nonsense individual. We developed relationships with law enforcement all over the state—in our office, you just have to do it, and it doesn't matter who the secretary of state is. When you're dealing with what's now well over a billion dollars of revenue coming in, you're dealing with driver's licenses that are worth a thousand dollars to criminals, with car titles that are worth a fortune to people that have stolen a car, you're dealing with things of great value. And most of the people who work in our office don't make a lot of money—you have to have a very tough, vigilant inspector general's program in place. So I would say that was a very significant thing we did; and as you point out, the undermining of that office and the dismantling of that office four years later has left us with some ramifications that we're still living with, of a negative nature.

DePue: Of course, the big issue, probably, in that second four years is the one we've just talked at length about, the mandatory auto insurance. But there's also the issue of the Illinois State Library, and I wondered if you could address that.

Grosboll: This was another matter that had been out there for many, many years. I can't recall the precise date, but I think as early as twenty to thirty years before, there had been a proposal to build a state library. The state library had always been housed with the secretary of state. When the Centennial Building was built, which is now called the Howlett Building, the library moved over there. And of course, when Jim Edgar became secretary of state, the library was housed in the north wing. And it was a terribly inefficient situation—books and staff and things spread all over the building. For people who wanted to come visit the state library, quite frankly it was an embarrassment. It wasn't really a place. (laughs) There was a room that was the state library, but it was not good.

DePue: Let's back up real quick. Why does the state need a state library? What's the charter?

Grosboll: Obviously if we went back to the history of it, there would be all sorts of other reasons, but in Illinois have we have a state system of regional libraries, and the Illinois State Library is at the top of that. We support regional library systems, and those regional library systems then support community libraries all over the state. If you're trying to find material through your local library and can't find it, it will go through the regional, and if the regional has trouble, it will go through the state. So there's that function. There is the function that there are many, many

things that the state library is keeping, dealing with the state of Illinois, that are then made accessible to people.

DePue: So the official repository for the state government?

Grosboll: Well, keep in mind, we have an archives. It keeps the records. But in terms of reports and studies and books and all sorts of other things, it's the state library that keeps that, and it's a marvelous facility. So Jim Edgar realized that (laughs) we absolutely needed to have a new state library facility. We had outgrown the facilities in the Centennial Building probably thirty, forty or fifty years before, and it was not, in any sense of the word, friendly to the public. So Edgar was able to talk to Governor Thompson about the idea—I believe it was when the Build Illinois program was being developed—and Edgar's point was that there should be money in there for the state library; it had been neglected way too long. There was a little bit of difficulty getting that done, but eventually the Build Illinois program included the monies for the state library. And again, I don't remember the precise amount, but it was somewhere in the vicinity of thirty million dollars.

So when the building started to be designed, it was basically done under the auspices of the secretary of state, utilizing the Capital Development Board—or we could say it in reverse: CDB was going to build it, but they used the services of secretary of state. But it was clear that Jim Edgar was going to be the person who was going to say, this is the building I want; this is what I want it to look like. So when the design was put together, Edgar met with the architects, and he basically said to them, "I want a building that fits into the Capitol complex." By the way, the location for the library, where it currently sits, had been determined a couple decades before. (DePue laughs) So the state had bought the buildings there. There was an old gas station that was on the corner there; there was an old restaurant and bar that was there. I remember as a kid, my dad took me in there—to get a sandwich, not a drink. (DePue laughs) And that area had been cleared and was ready for the building, but it was awaiting the money. So eventually it got the money. Edgar said, "Look, this building is going to fit within the Capitol complex. With all due respect to Governor Thompson, I do not want a building that looks like the revenue building; I don't want a building that looks like" what eventually became the Thompson Center in Chicago. "I want a building that fits with the Capitol complex."[32]

So when the designers went to work on that building, I remember their meeting with us, and they said, here's what we've done. We've put a mansard roof on here, which mirrors the mansard roof of the Supreme Court building. We have put columns in this building that reflect the columns that are in the Supreme Court and that are in the state capitol building. There must have been ten features in the exterior of that building that were designed specifically to mirror or to mimic similar designs of other buildings in the Capitol complex. And ultimately,

[32] For Edgar's account of planning and building the state library, see Jim Edgar, interview by Mark DePue, June 22, 2009, 63-75.

the line that Edgar used in those meetings, and would eventually use when we opened the building, was that he wanted a building that reflected the architecture of the nineteenth century on the outside; but on the inside, he wanted a building that was ready for the twenty-first century. And that's what he got. When Governor Thompson saw the designs, in typical Jim Thompson style, he sort of said to Edgar, "Jim, don't you want a building with a little more pizzazz?" (DePue laughs) But Edgar was adamant that this is what he wanted, and Thompson was very respectful of Jim Edgar.

To me, one of the most fun days of the ten years that I spent in the secretary of state's office was the day they opened the new state library. It was completed on time, and it was completed under budget. And the day they opened, it was a glorious day. They had a lot of dignitaries there and a lot of people were there. Jim Thompson came—and again, this was one of the great highlights of the time I was there—Jim Thompson got up, and he told that story. He said, "You know, when I saw the design of this building, I said to Jim Edgar, 'Jim, don't you want a little more pizzazz to this building? This is kind of old looking. Don't you want something else?'" And of course the crowd was just laughing as Thompson told this because everyone knew of Thompson's tendency to go more for flair. And the crowd was laughing. Thompson had them in the palm of his hand. Then he said, "But after seeing this building today, I just want to say one thing." And he turned to Jim Edgar and said, "Mr. Secretary, you were right, and I was wrong." (DePue laughs) And the crowd, of course, just went nuts. So in many ways, that was typical of Jim Thompson. It was typical of his preferences but also typical of his ability to turn a situation like that around into a story about himself, making fun of himself, and then being complimentary.

DePue: Still and always the master politician, huh?

Grosboll: Yeah, it was. It was, and it was a great acknowledgement on his part because Edgar had told that story to a lot of people, what Jim Thompson's thing was. Thompson told the story on himself, he told it accurately, and then he was gracious enough to say, "You know what? This is the right building for this location." The building is a beautiful building. Edgar wanted to make sure there were a lot of nice touches. I believe it was Bridget Lamont, the head of the library, was the one who had said to Jim Edgar that one of the things we could do would be to put up on top of the building the names of famous Illinois authors. The secretary liked that idea. We put a committee together to come up with the names of the great authors in Illinois. Again, it wasn't a political thing; it was Jim Edgar saying, put the experts together, have them come up with the list and that's what we'll put up there.

\DePue: There's danger when you come up with that kind of a list. (laughs)

Grosboll: There is danger, because somebody's going to say you left someone out. There will be something that someone wants to pick on. There was a little bit of precedent for this; because when the Centennial Building had been done, if you'll

notice there, up on top, there are the names of famous Illinois figures, mostly political figures. Edgar's point was that these ought to be people who are famous for their words. Abraham Lincoln—his name is up there; the point being, he was a great author. I believe there were four people who were alive, whose names were up on top of the building, who were there that day, which was kind of interesting. Gwendolyn Brooks [Illinois Poet Laureate] came and read a poem she had written for the day, and that was a very special moment.

I had my dad come up that day. I wanted him to be there, and I wanted him to participate in that. And he did. It was a great day. And because I had been somewhat involved with it—not nearly as much as Bridget and the people at the library, or George Fleischli, who had been very active in it; I nevertheless had gotten to play a role in it. The other individual in the governor's office who had played a heavy role in it was Terry Scrogum. Terry liaisoned with our state library. We were all there, we were all very proud of it. So it was a big deal to me to have my dad there. I thought it was going to be a historic moment, and it was a very fun day.

DePue: We're about at the time where I want to start transitioning into his run for the governorship, which started a couple of years before—1989, of course, is when Thompson called him one day and told Secretary Edgar that he wasn't going to run for reelection. But I think what I want to finish up with today, because we're already closing in on three hours here, is just a couple general questions to ask you to reflect on your time in the secretary of state's office. So let me start with this one: what would you look back at now and say, "That's the thing I'm most proud about"; that had the biggest impact for the citizens of Illinois, perhaps?

Grosboll: I'm going to say this from my own personal perspective. Jim Edgar might have a different list. From my standpoint, the first thing was getting the Illinois license plates manufacturing facility back to Illinois and getting it into the rehab facility in Decatur, where we employed, for a period of time, two hundred people making plates. And the reason I'll mention that one first: that's the first thing that I had to work on that was a huge issue to Jim Edgar. They had not been made in Illinois prisons for over forty years, and it was embarrassing they were being made in Texas and in New York prisons, but they weren't being made in Illinois. That was a very tough challenge, so I'm very proud of what the team in vehicle services did to bring that about.

The mandatory insurance, I think, was significant. I don't think it was as important as the drunk driving stuff, but I think mandatory insurance was a huge deal to Jim Edgar. And politically, it was a big deal, because that was something the public agreed with, and it gave Jim Edgar another big issue that he could show what he had gotten done as secretary of state. No secretary had been able to accomplish that in thirty years, and he got it passed. My role was not so much on the first leg of that—that was Joan—but I think Jim Edgar, as he looks back, would certainly say the drunk driving stuff mattered; and my role in that was the piece that I played was on the summary suspension. That was a huge piece, it was

a huge negotiation. When I look back, I'm just extremely proud of what we did there, and we reversed what had been going wrong in this state.

DePue: From what you expressed, that's what put teeth into the drunk driving legislation.

Grosboll: Yes. So I'm really proud of those things. And then I guess the other thing I would tell you from my vantage point, but I think Jim Edgar would say the same thing—I'm very proud of what we did with the people in the secretary of state's office. To this day—and I haven't been the director of vehicle services since 1984, so what are we, twenty-five years away from that now?

DePue: Yeah.

Grosboll: Hard to believe. But to this day, I still have people come up to me, introduce themselves, tell me they worked as a clerk in this section or that section, and want to talk about what a great time period in their life that was, when I was there as director. And I think the time while I was director—as well as Sam McGaw, who was the next director—many people who worked in that department, looked back on that time period as a time in which they had great fun. And I don't use that word lightly. They enjoyed what they were doing. They had great fun, there was great teamwork, and there was a great sense of accomplishment.

So I don't want to make that sound like that's my favorite thing, because I did a lot of stuff in the front office. But when I look back, in terms of the some of the most enjoyable stuff that I was involved in, it was when I was director of motor vehicles, creating a team of people—people who had been working for Alan Dixon and people who had worked for Mike Howlett, as well as some new people we had brought in—and creating a team of people who viewed that motor vehicle stuff could be really fun (DePue laughs) and that we could do really good things. And by the time we walked out of there, we had streamlined titles, we had streamlined our vanity plate program, and we'd expanded vanity plates to trucks and other things. We saved over a million dollars by streamlining how we organized our mail, how we sent things out to people. And that's totally aside and apart from replating every plate in the state of Illinois, putting mandatory insurance into place and making it work, and getting license plate manufacturing back to Illinois. I look back, and it's like, That was a fun time period, and boy, did we get a lot done. I think Jim Edgar would tell you the same thing about that experience as secretary of state: boy, did we get a lot done.

DePue: Last question for you today: you've spent a lot of time dealing with Edgar on a personal basis, close up, and you also had an opportunity to watch him on a bigger scale—running for election a couple times, dealing with the public, and different relationships. Tell me about the differences between Jim Edgar the private person and Jim Edgar the public figure.

Grosboll: There are differences. As a public person, Jim Edgar had to be out and about, meeting people, shaking hands, doing the glad-handing that we expect politicians

to do; and even though I'm not sure Jim Edgar was ever completely comfortable with being the glad-handing, backslapping type politician, nevertheless, he did do that to some extent, and that is an image people saw of him. They saw a person who, to the public, seemed to be outgoing and very friendly. In private, he very much does keep to himself. He's not a person who shows intimate feelings very easily. I don't know that the public would get that sense about him; I think the public would think that this is a very outgoing, friendly person who's very comfortable in that setting. I think for the people who know him best, they realize that's a slightly different persona than the one who wants to go home, be with his wife, pick up a book, order a pizza, and spend quiet time at home.

So again, we talked earlier about the issue of his ability to say thank you to people, his ability to be warm and personal with people. I don't think that's how he grew up. And for those of us who worked around him and sometimes kid about that, what we all ultimately ended up realizing is that Jim Edgar may not always be the best person at saying to someone, hey, I want to personally thank you for doing something. But he does it in little ways, and when he does do it—and he even kidded about this, because there were times when I said to him, "I think you need to be a little more verbal with people"; (DePue laughs) he would say, "Well, here's the thing, Al. When I do say it, people know I mean it." (laughter) And that's true, because when he would say, "I really appreciate what you've done," people would realize you must have really done a great job—that he made a note to find you and tell you that.

But I think the way it is with people who are very private, is that they are close with a couple of people; and when the doors are shut, they can be very close and emotional, but otherwise, they are not people who are like that. And Jim Edgar's in that category. He's a very, very quiet, introverted person, unless you want to talk politics with him, or talk a book. I would tell you that the most enjoyable conversations I had with Jim Edgar, are usually about books. I enjoy talking politics with him, but he knows more than I do. He knows a lot more than I do. And while I enjoy the political discussions with him—they're great—it is when he starts talking about history and books that I have my most enjoyable times with him. American history—he loves his American history. Foreign policy—he loves foreign policy. Bring up a topic on those things and he'll tell you a story or he'll tell you a book he's read, and you'll want to rush out and get that book.

DePue: I think that's a great place to finish today. Any final comments before we close up?

Grosboll: We talked a little bit about the inspector general's office and the integrity issue. I do want to just underscore that, as we leave the secretary of state's office. It is not an accident that as people look back on Jim Edgar, they view that that office was run cleanly and honestly. Jim Edgar was intent that we do that; he took the steps that we needed to do that, and he hired people who shared that sense of values with him. And it bears repeating that you have to work at integrity. You got to

work at keeping your office clean. And it just doesn't happen; you got to work at it. And he did, and I think that's why, when people look back—we had things going on that weren't right in the office, but we viewed that it was our job to get on top of it and clean it up as quickly as we could.

And that's the lesson. It's not that you're going to stop everything that could go wrong; it's that you have to be prepared to stop it when you find out about it. You have to be taking steps to send signals to people that if you do something wrong, we're going to catch you, and you're going to be fired for it. And I told you this before, and I'll say it one more time: there was never an incident in which somebody got caught with their hand in the till, somebody stealing money—and in some cases trying to tell us they were merely *borrowing* the money—that we didn't fire them or accept their resignation on the spot. And you got to do that. Integrity in government is extremely important, and if we don't concentrate more on it, we're going to see more and more cynicism by the public.

DePue: Thank you. That's a great way to finish off today. We got right at three hours, but thank you for making (Grosboll laughs) a discussion about the secretary of state's office—you're laughing now. (laughs)

Grosboll: Everybody thinks the secretary of state's office is boring; I actually thought it was a pretty exciting place. (laughs)

DePue: And that's what I was going to say. Thank you for making it interesting and fun to hear about.

Grosboll: All right. Thanks, Mark.

(end of interview)

Interview with Al Grosboll
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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Thursday, July 23, 2009. My name is Mark DePue; I'm director of oral history here at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. And we're sitting in the presidential library and having another session with Al Grosboll. Morning, Al.

Grosboll: Good morning, Mark. Glad to see you again.

DePue: I'm thrilled to see you. It's always fun to chat with you because you've got such fascinating recollections about those years. And you mentioned before we got started that you wanted to pick up with one more story that was indicative of who Jim Edgar was, from the secretary of state years.

Grosboll: I got thinking, as we were wrapping up the discussion on the secretary of state's office, if there was one incident or story that would typify my relationship with Jim Edgar or my memories of him, and I thought of this story. In the fall of 1984, Joan Walters had left for the West Coast, and I became the deputy secretary. And shortly after that, the secretary was to have a meeting with a group of labor leaders in Chicago. It was one of his first meetings with the heads of the major unions in Chicago, and we were attempting to develop a relationship there. There was a meeting scheduled for 7:30 in the morning. He asked me—I was going to be in Chicago—to stop by for the breakfast, so I did. I went over, and he was not happy because we got there before any of the labor union leaders had, but he didn't like the way the tables were set up. There were like seven or eight tables set up around the room as individual round tables for four or five people; and he was very irritated by that because he wanted one large round table so he could talk to everybody at the same time versus having a conversation with only four or five people. So he was right, but of course it was too late: the labor leaders were starting to show up; it was early morning; he was irritated by this. The staff hadn't thought this through properly.

And as the first labor union guy came in, Jim Edgar sort of shook hands with the guy; but as he did, he was sort of gritting his teeth like he was angry at the guy, because he was still upset with staff. So I remember I walked over to him and whispered in his ear, and I said, "Would you smile? You look like you're about to bite their heads off." And he kind of shook his head, like, okay, okay. And from then on, he did. He shook hands. We ended up having really an excellent meeting with these leaders, many of whom had never met him.

Meeting got over—it was in the old Bismarck Hotel in Chicago—we're walking down, and we get to LaSalle Street, and as we do he turns to security and says, "Walk on a couple steps," which means, I need to talk to Al alone. I've been on the job maybe a week or two, and I'm thinking, Oh, God, here it goes. I'm in

trouble. And he turns to me and he sticks a finger right in my face—and my job flashes in front of my eyes—(DePue laughs) and he says, "Don't you ever fail to tell me that, if you see me do that again," which was a pleasant surprise. He then said, "I'll see you later," and I said, "Okay." He turned to the right; I turned to the left to go over to the State of Illinois Building, and I thought to myself, I'm working for the right guy. And I would say that typified that relationship. I think I've said this to you before, Mark: the more people argued with him or stood up to him or said things that he didn't necessarily want to hear, I think the more he respected them. And that was a key, I think, to his success in the secretary of state's office, and overall, a key to his success in the world of politics. He was willing to listen to people say things that he didn't want to hear.

DePue: Does that mean that he was, for a politician, rather thick-skinned when it came to the barbs that you get from political opponents and from the news media?

Grosboll: I don't know if I'd go that far. I think that he and other elected officials—they're able to thicken their skin over time, but at the same time, there are moments when they all have thin skin. It's pretty difficult, when you're being attacked from all sides, every so often for one of those not to hurt, or at least one of them not to irritate you, particularly where there's a lot of hypocrisy involved. In a minute, I know we're going to talk about the governor's office; and Jim Edgar walked in and immediately was slammed with economic recession and budget problems, and some of the harshest critics were the Democratic leaders who ran the appropriations process in the legislature. They were as harsh as—

DePue: You mean the people who kind of got him into the problem in the first place?

Grosboll: Yeah. These were the people who had budgeted the previous year knowing full well that the budget was more than a billion dollars out of whack, had approved that budget knowing there was not enough money.And then as Jim Edgar and Joan Walters were attempting to deal with that budget crisis, those very same people were slamming them for their inability to handle the budget. So that kind of thing, I think, does get to you; when there's hypocrisy involved and you know it, and the media is not pointing it out. The irony was that the very same people who had passed that devastating budget, before he even became governor, were the people the media ran to for quotes—because they were the experts—without ever, ever noting in their stories that these were the people who oversaw the budget in the first place. I know I'm a step ahead there, but…

DePue: No, that's fine. In fact, I think that gets us right into the political campaign itself for 1990; and in Edgar's case—in almost every election process—it starts the year before. It starts in 1989 when Edgar announces for governor—August eighth, I believe it was.[33] Were you involved with that discussion about making that announcement and the decision to run in the first place?

[33] Jim Edgar formally announced his candidacy for governor August 8, 1989.

Grosboll: Yes and no. I was on the surface of it. I think I've told you before, Mark, that one of the things that Jim Edgar did was to separate out the political and the governmental operations. So I was involved in the governmental operation; others were involved in the political operation, and we tried to keep a pretty clear line there. But you can't be blind to what's going on, and you know that as you're working on a schedule, for example, the decisions are being made, when he's going to make an announcement, and whatever. So I know the governor's probably discussed with you the phone call he got a week or so before, when he was on his way to a secretary of state's conference, I believe, in Colorado. As he and Brenda were boarding a plane, he got a call from Governor Thompson and at that point found out that Governor Thompson was not going to run. Has he talked to you about this story?[34]

DePue: Just a little bit. We're going to get into the reaction next time.

Grosboll: But my point on this is that from the moment he got that phone call, his gears completely shifted to—what am I going to do about that. I think the first conclusion was he had to get out there immediately. He had to prevent anybody and everybody of consequence from jumping into that primary. So his brain shifted to those types of things. I got a call that morning, telling me what was going on, and I actually flew out to Colorado shortly thereafter and was at the same secretary of state's convention or conference.

DePue: And remind us again—your position at that time?

Grosboll: I was deputy secretary of state or chief of staff for the office. So Ken Zehnder and I were both at that secretary of state's conference, and Jim Edgar was there. Ironically, Jim and Brenda were staying in the condominium that had previously been the Western White House for Gerald Ford. It was the condominium that Gerald Ford had owned when he was president of the United States. So Edgar was staying in this, at this particular place where the conference was, and I remember—the whole thing that evening when I got in was making sure people didn't get in. Interestingly, one of the people, who a lot of people thought might jump in—we knew that most of the political people were not going to jump in. George Ryan, who wanted to run for governor, was ultimately going to have to accept something else. Edgar was not going to back down, and I think George Ryan knew that he could not go against Jim Edgar in a primary.

So in terms of elected officials, there were not a lot of others out there; but there was the fear that there could be somebody who was out there in the private world who might have a lot of money. One of those people was Donald Rumsfeld, who had been a congressman from the Chicagoland area, as a Republican. You may remember, he left to be chief of staff for Ford and then had gone into the

[34] Jim Edgar, interview 8, June 22, 2009, 86-88.

private sector and obviously done well there.[35] So Jim Edgar put a phone call in to him—and I think some others had too—to make sure he wasn't going to run and to just say, what are your intentions.

So I happened to be in the condominium when the Edgars stepped out, and part of my job was to cover the phones, because lots of people were calling. It was in the evening, and the phone rang, and I picked it up, and it was Donald Rumsfeld. And I told him the secretary had stepped out, and he said to me, "I'm just returning his phone call, but you can tell him I'm not running. But let's talk later on." So that was my little moment in history, (laughs) and of course, what I should have said is, "Don't ever get involved in a land war in central Asia if you can avoid it," (DePue laughs) but I passed up that moment.

But all attention turned to that, and he started gearing up and fairly quickly set the date when he wanted to do the announcement, wanted to do a fly-around. Ultimately, we did a seven-city fly-around, and it was pretty amazing. One of the interesting moments was that Governor [William] Stratton agreed to fly with Secretary Edgar that day. He was a very interesting gentleman.

DePue: And one of the people that Edgar remembers from his childhood days, whom he kind of emulated.[36]

Grosboll: Yes. I think he felt that Governor Stratton had been a very solid governor, had done very good things for the state of Illinois, so he was very proud that Governor Stratton and his wife decided to fly with us that day.

DePue: What was your specific assignment, or duty or focus, if you will, during the time the secretary of state was running for governor?

Grosboll: My main focus was to continue keeping the office of secretary of state running, to try and defend against attacks. Because Jim Edgar had a very good reputation as secretary of state, the office had been defined as having done a good job, having been clean. And immediately, part of the strategy, I think, of his opponent, was to undermine that credibility, to undermine that imagery. So there were efforts to try and find weaknesses in the office, and my job was to help try and fend off those attacks and also, just to keep our directors and our staff on the straight and narrow. Now, lots of our people wanted to help in the campaign, and we had to

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[35] Donald H. Rumsfeld served in Congress from 1963 to May 25, 1969, when he resigned to take a post in the Nixon administration as the assistant and director of the Office of Economic Opportunity. After filling a variety of other positions for Nixon, he became President Ford's chief of staff from 1974-1975 and secretary of defense from 1975-1977. *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-Present*, http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=R000508.

[36] Meeting Stratton was a big event in Edgar's early life; see Jim Edgar, interview 1, May 21, 2009, 54-56. For Edgar's thoughts about his gubernatorial role models, see Jim Edgar, interview 2, May 22, 2009, 89-90.

make it clear: you can do that, but you can't be doing it on office time. If you want to go over to the campaign at night and work on something, that's fine; if you want to walk in a parade on the weekend, that's fine; but don't be making phone calls during the daytime at the office, and don't use state resources in any way whatsoever. So that was part of my job—to make sure that we didn't have people step over the line and do something that was wrong or something that could bite us.

DePue: This is a major undertaking for anybody. Were you involved with not just saying, okay, make sure you don't cross the boundaries, but also soliciting people who might be willing to support?

Grosboll: No, I was not.

DePue: Was Edgar himself doing any of that?

Grosboll: Oh, sure, sure. Jim Edgar was working the phones. The area that I worked, since I'd had a long background with, were the environmental groups, open space, natural resource groups. I'm sure that I was probably communicating with them and trying to make sure they remembered all the good things we had done that they liked. But by and large, and particularly during the workday, I just was not involved doing the political things; it was running the office.

Now, obviously I was an observer of what was going on, and to the extent that I could help in the evenings or on the weekends, I did do that. And as the fly-around was being planned, I did work a great deal on a lot of the details of that fly-around. Part of my thing was I needed to be involved, knowing what was going on, so I could see that if there were any secretary of state employees involved in that fly-around, that they were taking time off or that they took a leave of absence or that they used a vacation day. So I knew everybody who was involved in the fly-around, and I made sure every single director double-checked that they were off the payroll that day. I made probably twenty phone calls to directors to make sure that that was done, because it would have been very easy for people to go do something dealing with that fly-around and in fact still be on the state payroll.

DePue: It's interesting, because you've described yourself in a position where you're the nonpolitical guy trying to keep the office running; but you know or anticipate that you're going to get lots of attacks, lots of suggestions, that people in the secretary of state's office are working both sides and crossing that line.

Grosboll: Right. That's right. The thing is, I can define this as trying to do the governmental side of it, but when you get involved in a campaign, everything becomes political. Every single thing you do in the secretary of state's office is going to be analyzed for its political implications. Every attack on the office is probably going to be motivated by politics. So you cannot completely divorce yourself from the political world when you're in a governmental office like that. You just can't.

DePue: What was Edgar's advice to you and his expectations in terms of how you're going to be doing this deputy director job?

Grosboll: During the campaign in particular?

DePue: Yeah.

Grosboll: I think there was a very clear understanding on his part that my job was to make sure that we did not have any embarrassing things happen, that we did not have employees selling fundraising tickets on state property, that we did not have anybody pressuring somebody to go do something of a political nature. I think his expectation was that I better not see those stories, I better not hear about people doing it, and Al, that's your job to make sure that doesn't happen.

DePue: Did he explicitly say that to you?

Grosboll: I don't know that it was ever explicitly said to me, but I clearly understood that was one of my jobs, and I think the campaign knew it too. They knew that my job was to be the burr in the side that said, so-and-so is helping you on this—did they take the day off? Are they off the payroll? So I was an irritant, but I think they knew somebody needed to be doing that.

DePue: You have a cat-bird seat of this whole operation. Do you recall when they got into the primary season, and taking on Steven Baer, who was a legitimate primary opponent?

Grosboll: Yeah. He pronounced it "bear"—Steve Baer.

DePue: Okay, sorry.

Grosboll: And yes, I do. It was one of those things where it was an uncomfortable situation. You hate to have a primary challenger. Your primary challenger is usually cutting into your base and hurting you. I don't think there was ever any fear whatsoever that Steve Baer could win. There was a recognition that probably a third of the Republican Party could vote for a guy like that, who had—sort of a coalition. It was the anti-tax, anti-abortion, anti–gun law, and anti–drunk driving law crowd. Because Edgar had been very much upfront on the anti–drunk driving campaign, we had a lot of taverns and bar owners that were organized and helping Steve Baer. Of course, this was ironic because he was running sort of as the religious candidate, and yet one of his major partners in all of this was the bar owners, the tavern owners, the beer distributors, *et cetera*. And I don't know if you remember this, but they had a bumper sticker that was being handed in bars all across the state of Illinois that said, "Anybody but Edgar."

DePue: What was the thing that he seemed to be most vulnerable on in this primary fight? Was it the abortion issue?

Grosboll: Yeah. This was a time period where the abortion issue is really rising to the surface, and, again, you're going to get a segment of the Republican Party that is driven very strongly by that issue. And that's understandable. Many, many people feel strongly about this, disagree with the Supreme Court decision. And I think in many ways it's unfortunate at a state level because it becomes the big issue, particularly in these primaries, even though governors have very little to do with that issue; and yet, we elevate the issue on these statewide campaigns as if the governor is going to make the decision.

DePue: March twentieth is the actual primary date. Baer polled rather respectably, but Edgar wins by about a 60 percent to 34 percent margin.[37] So they move into the general campaign, and then obviously you take on Neil Hartigan.

Grosboll: Right.

DePue: Now, I'm going to hear a lot about Neil Hartigan from the governor, and I already have from Carter Hendren.[38] Maybe start with this: Carter Hendren is the person who's running that campaign. Give me your reflections on him.

Grosboll: Carter is a fellow that I've known for a long time. We shared an aunt. His dad's brother married my dad's sister, so we shared an aunt together, and an aunt we both cared a great deal about. Carter was also one year behind me at Eastern Illinois University, and then he entered the internship, the legislative internship, I think the year after I was in it. So I've known Carter a very long time—very, very bright, and one of the most astute political people on the scene in Illinois. He had worked some other statewide campaigns; sort of got his sea legs involved in those campaigns, and then was very ready to go on this serious gubernatorial campaign. He was very focused, very disciplined, and I think served Jim Edgar extremely well in that campaign.

When you look at elections in Illinois and you look over the broad expanse of, say, the last fifty years, this is one of the great political campaigns in modern Illinois history. You had two powerhouses going head-to-head against each other. Edgar had become the largest vote-getter on the Republican side in Illinois history, had been twice elected secretary of state with overwhelming margins. Neil Hartigan had been lieutenant governor, had been very popular in that role, getting out front on a couple of issues that were very popular. Hartigan ran with Mike Howlett and lost to Thompson, but later then came back and won the attorney general's office pretty convincingly over Ty Fahner and clearly was the strongest vote-getter on the Democratic side. So when those two went head-to-head, this was a race of historic proportion. If you're just a political bystander

[37] Edgar defeated Baer 482,441-256,889 (62.8 percent to 33.46 percent), a margin of 225,552 votes. Robert Marshall finished a distant third with 28,365 votes (3.69 percent). State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 6, 1990*.

[38] Carter Hendren, interview 2 by Mark DePue, May 7, 2009, 20-24 & 48-50. Jim Edgar, interview 9 [get date and page numbers].

watching it, it was a great race to watch. The other thing is, the state was pretty equally split Democrat-Republican—probably a little bit more Democrat than Republican, which is usually the case in Illinois, but nevertheless, fairly even. And in addition to that, they both would ultimately spend over ten million dollars each, so they were relatively balanced on their money. So it was a great race.

DePue: Did Hartigan have the backing of the traditional Democratic Party machine, especially the Chicago part?

Grosboll: Oh, yeah. Yeah, sure. Absolutely, absolutely.

DePue: How would you define Hartigan, and how did the campaign define Hartigan, as a personality?

Grosboll: I think that one of the ways the campaign defined him was that he was a flip-flopper, that he was weak on issues. An example of that had been that throughout most of his political career, he had opposed abortion. He'd been careful not to explicitly say it, but clearly his background and his positions would have led any observer to believe that. As he entered the Democratic primary, there were major Democratic leaders telling him, you cannot run as the Democratic standard bearer and run as a pro-life candidate. And there was a considerable amount of work going on behind the scenes, and then one day Hartigan announced that he was pro-choice.[39] So that allowed for a lot of people to accuse him of being a flip-flopper. There had been other examples where he had started off one way and then had gone another route. It made him a little vulnerable to that.

DePue: And I should mention that the campaigns had some interesting ads with Professor Irwin Corey, who was talking about him as a flip-flopper.

Grosboll: That's true, although I suspect Carter told you we made that ad—it was a precursor to what happens now. Sometimes an ad is made; it's put on the Internet and is never run on television. It's done because, first, it does move through the Internet—that has value—but it also creates a sensation in the media, in the newspapers, that this ad is out there, so you don't even have to spend any money on a television ad in order to get publicity. In many ways, Carter did that, with the Irwin Corey ad. He had the ad made. They showed it in a press conference, I think. They were going to run it. They might have run it a couple of times, and then he didn't run it hardly at all after that But the newspapers picked up on it, and Carter got a lot of free publicity on that ad without having to run it hardly at all on television.

DePue: One issue was the surcharge, the income tax surcharge.

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[39] On Friday, July 7, 1989, Hartigan held a press conference at the State of Illinois Center to announce his commitment to the pro-choice camp and argue that this did not reflect a sudden change in his position. *Chicago Tribune*, July 8, 1989.

Grosboll: Right, yep. And the surcharge issue is that a year before the election—a year and a half before the election—the general assembly had approved a temporary tax, and although most people think we never have temporary taxes, that they're all permanent, the fact is we previously had a temporary tax. It had dealt with some revenue when the state was in hard times; it lasted two years, went away. This surcharge went on. It was on for two years. Mike Madigan had devised it. Half of the money was to go to municipalities to help them through some tough times; half the money was to go to education.

DePue: And to be specific here, it went from—the state personal income tax—from 2.5 to 3 percent; corporate taxes from 4 to 4.8 percent.

Grosboll: Right. Both those taxes had been there from 1969, '70, when the income tax was first passed, and it had never been bumped. And there are seven states that don't have an income tax, but of those that do have an income tax, that was the lowest in the country. It had been raised temporarily once before, it had always gone back to the 2.5. In our case, the Madigan temporary tax was to be there for two years. It was very apparent that Illinois was not getting in better shape from a recession standpoint. In fact, we were struggling even more so, and the idea that the surcharge could go off without hurting education or without hurting other institutions was a preposterous notion.

So one of the great ironies of this campaign is that Jim Edgar basically said we cannot take away the surcharge without devastating education in Illinois. Neil Hartigan pronounced that we didn't need the surcharge, and if he was governor, he would let it go away. Now, personally, I don't believe they ever intended to let it go away. It was a campaign promise, and I think it was apparent that as soon as the election was over, they would announce that the state was in far worse condition than anyone had told them, that Jim Thompson had not been truthful, and by golly, the surcharge was going to have to stay.

DePue: Why do you say it was one of the great ironies of the campaign?

Grosboll: The irony was you had the Republican saying, we have to keep the surcharge, and we have the Democratic candidate saying, oh, no, we got to lower taxes. Jim Edgar contends this and I happen to believe that it's correct. On one level, it's easy for people to say that had Jim Edgar not supported continuation of the surcharge, he would have had a much easier time winning the governorship. The thing is, Hartigan was smart; his people were smart—they would have found another issue to bang away at, and the race would have been tight right down to the last minute, no matter what. I think the surcharge did hurt Jim Edgar initially, but by the time we got to election day, I believe that voters ended up voting for him because they thought he was telling the truth, and I think ultimately those last deciders chose not to vote for Neil Hartigan because they didn't believe him. The media didn't believe it, the editorials didn't believe it, nobody could make the math add up.

Hartigan had a theme: he kept saying, "If only we'd cut everybody by 2 percent, we could balance the budget," and he would go, "2 percent, 2 percent. Every family can do it; why can't state government?" Well, the problem is that probably 75, 80 percent of the budget can't be cut by 2 percent. You're locked in with an awful lot of things, like bond payments and things like that. You can't cut that 2 percent. So Hartigan saying over and over and over again, "We'll just cut the budget," ultimately, people just didn't believe it. So while at the beginning of the campaign I think it was courageous for Edgar to say, "We have to keep the surcharge," by the time we hit election day, I think people ultimately viewed that as a strength of Jim Edgar's—that he told the truth. Edgar no more wanted to say we need an income tax surcharge than anybody else would want to have to say it, but if it's the truth, then you have to say it. And he did, and I think ultimately the public rewarded him for that.

DePue: How would you characterize the campaign?

Grosboll: It was a ferocious campaign. As I indicated earlier, both campaigns had in excess of ten million dollars. That was a time period where a candidate raising ten million dollars was quite a phenomenon in Illinois, and yet both candidates spent over ten million dollars on that campaign. Add to that the fact that both candidates were very popular. Both parties were united around their candidate. It just made for a very ferocious campaign. When you've got a race that's that tight, it also means that both sides are going to run the toughest ads they can run, both sides will have to go negative to some extent, both sides will have to say and do things that they might not otherwise have done in their lives. When it's that tight and there's that much on the line, you do what you got to do, and both sides did that. It was very competitive—that's the polite way to say it—but it was a ferocious campaign.

DePue: You mentioned the term "negative." What attacks was Edgar getting, where he felt like he needed to respond?

Grosboll: I think the governor and Carter are probably better to answer this, but the one that stands out in my mind was that because Jim Edgar had indicated that he would keep the surcharge, it made him vulnerable to the charge that he was a taxer, that he was pro-tax. And then what really complicated the campaign was Edgar had what I would call almost a casual conversation with a reporter at the *Chicago Tribune*. They were talking about overall taxes in Illinois, and Jim Edgar said something that he had probably said for thirty years, and that was that in an ideal situation, Illinois relied way too much on property taxes and that we should be looking at how do we lower our reliance on property taxes—which were like forty-eighth or forty-ninth highest in the country in terms of a reliance on property taxes to pay for schools—and to shift more of that burden to the income tax, where we were among the lowest in the country. The next day, the *Chicago Tribune* ran a headline that said, "Edgar Open to Higher Income Taxes."[40]

[40] "Edgar Opens Door to Income Tax Hike," *Chicago Tribune*, January 23, 1990.

Probably one of the most irresponsible headlines that I've seen in the state, because the impression it left was that Jim Edgar was somehow proposing to do that; whereas he had uttered a phrase that I suspect 90 percent of public officials in Illinois had all said over a period of time, which was, "We rely too much on property taxes to fund education." That was exploited by Steve Baer in the primary, who then began saying, "Edgar wants to raise your income taxes." Neil Hartigan picked up on it also.

And as that happened, Edgar's numbers were dropping pretty seriously. Then that the campaign and the nominee had to take some pretty strong positions on the whole tax issue. So for example, it was at that point that Edgar said, "We will keep the surcharge, but the income tax will go no higher while I'm the governor—or in this term." And I think he did limit it to that four-year period. But by doing that, he then ruled out the possibility that we could have had an even worse recession. There were many people who attacked him down the road, after he was governor, for having made that pledge. But I think in the political sense of it, had he not taken some strong steps to make it clear that he was not a big pro-taxer, he might not have won the election; and that's the truth. And then he kept that promise.

DePue: Another one of the things that the Hartigan campaign really was harping on, as I understand, was that Edgar and Jim Thompson, the current governor at the time—there wasn't a lick of difference between the two.

Grosboll: Right. You know, one of the great ironies in these political campaigns is how the campaigns shape imagery, and so often, the imagery is the actual opposite of reality. I used to say that I can't think of two more different people than Jim Thompson and Jim Edgar, and yet Neil Hartigan was able to brand them as if they were exactly the same. I used to say that, and then I was involved with the Blagojevich–Jim Ryan campaign in which Blagojevich defined Jim Ryan and George Ryan as being no different, and I must say that the difference between Jim Ryan and George Ryan was even more different (DePue laughs) than Jim Thompson and Jim Edgar. But once a campaign starts on a theme and they piece a couple examples together, the public perception does begin to follow that, and that was unfortunate.

DePue: Let's move on to the election night itself. And you've already mentioned that this is something that's going right down to the wire. Where were you, and what was your role that election night?

Grosboll: First off, I didn't have a formal role that evening. Our political staff, the campaign staff, who were people who were not state employees—they were paid to be on the campaign staff—were out in the field; they were tracking what was going on, they were feeding us information on numbers. I was in the governor's suite—I believe it was in the Monarch Suite of the Hyatt Hotel that night. And then down the hallway, there was an area where we were actually tracking numbers coming in. So I was kind of going back and forth where some of the number-tracking was

going on, as well as where the governor was—or the secretary of state at that time—and then back to the Monarch Suite, where we had large numbers of backers and supporters, and I was sort of socializing with them half the night.

So the interesting thing about that evening—it was a very tight race, and early in the evening, some of the numbers showed Hartigan ahead. People were panicking a little bit about that. But interestingly, going back four years previous, some of the people on our campaign staff had put together a computer program in which we knew how many votes would come out of every area of the state and how many votes were being cast in those areas. We would feed that information in, and then as we began to see the percents coming from there, we were able to project what would be happening. And in the '86 campaign, we were projecting what was happening with the LaRouchie people—the Mark Fairchilds and Janice Harts—we were actually projecting their winning those races probably an hour or two before the media picked up on it. The same thing happened on the Edgar-Hartigan race. Late into the evening, the networks were showing Neil Hartigan still ahead. Our projections had Jim Edgar winning the election by fifty thousand votes. So interestingly, it gave Jim Edgar some element of comfort even as some of the TV numbers were showing him behind. I think he was seeing other numbers that were showing that when these numbers play out in the areas that aren't in yet—because we've already seen the percent breakouts—he was going to fare fine.

And then as we got near the end—I would say a good two hours before the networks caught up with it—our numbers were showing Edgar was going to win by fifty thousand votes. Now, of course, then we started hearing that some of the Chicago wards—the numbers weren't coming in, and that some of those were being held back; and that's always a scary thing for Republicans or downstaters, when you hear that certain wards aren't reporting, because it would suggest there's a reason they're not reporting. So I think there was some nervousness about that. I think Carter can probably speak more to that, and better than I can. I'm making it sound like there wasn't that much suspense—there was a huge amount of suspense. All I'm saying is we got near the end of that evening—Carter actually had in his hand numbers that were showing Jim Edgar was going to win this race, and then those numbers pretty much played out the way Carter thought they were going to play out. But throughout most of the evening, the race was going back and forth. Hartigan was ahead at many stages during the evening, but we also knew where our votes were. Jim Edgar did extremely well downstate, did well in the suburbs, and he held his own in Cook County.

DePue: So the immediate aftermath of that, of course, is the elation, the emotional high, of finding out that you've won an election after a very, very tough race. I think he had something like an eighty-four thousand–vote plurality—not much.[41]

[41] Edgar defeated Hartigan 1,653,126-1,569,217, a margin of 83,909 votes. State of Illinois, *Official Vote Cast at the General Election, November 6, 1990*.

Grosboll: Yeah, I think that was the final number after a few more days.

DePue: Not much, so it was razor-thin as Illinois politics goes.

Grosboll: Yes, it was.

DePue: How long does the honeymoon—the realization that you're on this emotional high—last before you get to the business of, holy cow, now we've got to reorganize an administration?

Grosboll: Probably a couple of days. I think Jim Edgar turned to what he was going to do now, almost immediately, but there's probably a little bit of a period where people at least are able to breathe out. Again, I'll let the campaign people speak more to that issue. In my case, it was pretty much back to the office and tending to what was going on there. But almost immediately, Jim Edgar had to turn his attention to how does he put together an administration; how does he put together a team of people? And you don't have much time to rest; you've got to get cracking on that because you've got roughly two months, and you've got to have a team of people ready to go.

And in our case, it was particularly complicated because it was very clear that the legislature—and Governor Thompson, for that matter—had moved forward a budget in the previous spring that was an unbalanced budget. I remember the Democratic appropriations staff director stopping me in the hallway in the summer of 1990 as the budget was about to be approved, saying, "You understand how messed up this budget is, don't you?" And I said, "That's what I've been reading," Then the guy said to me, "Your boss is going to have to find a billion dollars to cut if he gets elected, and I hope you guys realize that." So that's when it was really made clear to me that neither Governor Thompson nor the legislature wanted to go into the election admitting to people that we really should have been cutting programs back and cutting a billion dollars out of the budget; they took an easy way out, and they left it to the new governor. Edgar knew that, and I think when Joan Walters talks to you, she'll talk to that. From day one, there was a recognition that we were going to have to immediately come in and start freezing hiring, freezing all sorts of things, and then cutting. And that's what we did.

DePue: What was your specific role? You're still basically who's holding this secretary of state's office together, but George Ryan's people are going to be coming in very soon; and I assume that Edgar's pulling you towards his administration, away from the secretary of state.

Grosboll: Right.

DePue: So we're talking November and December, early January. What were you doing?

Grosboll: I did have sort of a split personality then. I was involved in the transitioning as George Ryan was coming in. I met with his staff many times, and they wanted to

know about people. They had the same challenge we did; they had two months to come in and make sure they had talented people, presumably, running their departments, and that they were covered. They knew that there would be several people in the secretary of state's office that Jim Edgar would be taking to the governor's office. They needed to know kind of how all the departments were run, who could they bring in, and they had to start working on that. So I tried to give them assessments on how each of those departments were being run, the people there who were talented, Oftentimes it's not just the directors that you have to focus on, you have to focus on the middle managers and who the most talented people are that you either, A, want to make sure are there to cover your butt, or are maybe even people you want to elevate into more important jobs.

So half my time was split talking with George Ryan's people or talking to our people in the secretary of state's office, saying that you need to cooperate and work with them and make this work. The other half of my time was spent preparing, in effect, for whatever my new job was going to be. Although, I would say probably for much of that time period, I was spending 80 percent of my time on the office, trying to wrap up some things, wrap up some projects, wrap up some reports, and work on the transition. And initially, maybe 20-25 percent of my time was trying to think ahead to what I was going to be doing.

DePue: What was the job that Edgar offered you?

Grosboll: I ended up going in as an executive assistant to the governor.

DePue: When did you find out about that?

Grosboll: You know, that's a good question. I'm not sure I really remember.

DePue: (laughs) It's all a blur?

Grosboll: It might have been in December when we finally got around to it. Here's the background you need to know. Edgar, as you know, is quite a student of government. He had observed various governors and how they ran state government, and there was a model that he liked. And the model that he liked was what I'd call the Ogilvie model, and that model was one in which Richard Ogilvie had a set number of people who were close to him, who each were over major segments of state government. That's the model that Edgar went with. He created five executive assistants, and each of those executive assistants had a fifth of state government under their responsibility. And each of those people were people that Jim Edgar knew extremely well or, for one reason or another, trusted a great deal. And they were also people who knew Jim Edgar. So in my case, for example, as I eventually would go about doing my duties, I didn't have to go ask him a whole lot of questions on most of the things that I was dealing with, because I already knew how he thought, and I knew what his answer would be. He, on the other hand, knew that there were certain things he would need to talk to me about, because he knew me, and there were certain other things he wouldn't need to talk

to me about. So by having five people that he had a relationship with and trust in, that was the structure he was comfortable with.

So, in my case—this was a long time ago—I was over things such as the Environmental Protection Agency, the Pollution Control Board, Department of Energy and Natural Resources, Department of Nuclear Safety, historic preservation, professional regulation, and probably another half a dozen agencies. And then I also worked on conservation issues. George Fleischli initially was over the Department of Conservation, but there was some overlap in areas that I had worked on previously, so I worked with George on several issues there. So my job, then, was to work with those department directors and make sure that as issues arose, they were dealt with, or if there were challenges that we were trying to get resolved, how to address the challenge.

But I'm skipping over one thing, and that is that the first thing we had to do was to pick our cabinet. And Jim Edgar had to put together a group of people that he could trust in those various departments. So at the top of his administration, he brought in Kirk Dillard to be his chief of staff. Kirk had been around state government a long time—had worked around Jim Thompson and around the state Senate. He brought him in because he was a guy who could work with the legislative leaders and knew the importance of state government—understood it. He put Joan Walters in. Joan had come back from the West Coast as the head of the Bureau of the Budget, which was a very, very strong move on his part. There was a woman named Sally Jackson who came in, and I can't remember her title, but she was sort of chief of operations; so working with Kirk, she was the one who made sure that the government was actually running on a day-to-day basis. Kirk might be dealing with some of these issues from the five thousand–foot level—dealing with the overall budget negotiations with Joan, dealing with legislative negotiations; Sally was making sure that the day-to-day decisions that the executive assistants and the directors were involved in were actually getting handled.

DePue: I think she had the deputy chief of staff title, along with—

Grosboll: It was deputy chief of staff, but—

DePue: Along with Mike Belletire, perhaps?

Grosboll: Mike was one of the executive assistants. So my point on all this is that he put those positions together, he then identified his executive assistants, and then we were involved in the selection of these department heads. He put a committee together to begin interviewing people, and it was a broad interviewing process. Sally ran that interview process, and then, because of my previous job as deputy secretary, he asked me to be on that interview team. Part of that was to insure that people who had previously worked for us were being considered for various jobs. I knew their weaknesses, their strengths; I could make sure that people at least got a fair shot at things. Sometimes that worked; sometimes it didn't, but that was part

of the reason I was on there. And part of it, too, I would like to think, is that Governor-elect Edgar understood that I thought the same way he did on a lot of things; and I think he did appreciate my judgment on certain people. There were instances where the committee was going one direction for an appointment, and I thought it was a mistake and I told him. And there were cases where I thought we weren't considering some people we should have and the governor agreed. But Sally did an excellent job running that, making sure we were interviewing dozens and dozens and dozens of people and then giving recommendations to Jim Edgar. So that was actually one of the most important things I think I did in that early stage, getting to participate, and it was an honor to be able to do that.

DePue: What you just described sounds like the kind of thing that would take up 100 percent of your time.

Grosboll: No, it didn't really take up 100 percent, but (laughs) it was a big job. And the committee had an awful lot of résumés to look at. And Edgar—it was interesting—his attitude on the directorships was that he wanted us, A, to at least look at some of the people who had worked under Governor Thompson. Edgar had made a point—again, to respond to Hartigan's charge that they were the same—that he was going to change every department head. Now, that didn't mean he wouldn't consider some of Thompson's people in other roles, but he felt that after fourteen years, it was time to make a break and bring his own cabinet in. But he did want us to consider at least some people who had been serving in the Thompson administration, and we did. He wanted to be sure we looked at people who had been in the secretary of state's office. There were some people there that he felt needed to be considered for some of the upper jobs. And in addition to that, he wanted to make sure we looked to the outside world. And we did, we found a lot of people.

Desirée Rogers was a young woman who had a phenomenal educational background—young, but very bright. Today, she's in the White House.[42] And that was a person we brought in. Howard Peters was an African American who had been working in a variety of jobs at the Department of Corrections. We had picked up Howard's name and heard good things about him, interviewed him, and ultimately made him the director of corrections. Again, I could go through a series of people that were kind of from the outside world that we interviewed and ultimately said, these are people that wouldn't normally be considered, but we ought to do it. There was a woman who was helping us on the transition team named Becky Doyle. As we were looking for an agriculture director, we ultimately suggested we ought to think about Becky. She had been involved in agricultural activities her whole life, and it was a different kind of choice, but it was an interesting choice, and I think we're glad we did it.

DePue: When you say looking out at the rest of the world, did that include looking outside the boundaries of Illinois?

[42] On Edgar's staffing choices, see Mike Lawrence, interview 4, April 1, 2009, 2-5.

Grosboll: It did, although, again, we're going back so far right now that I'm not sure I can give you the best examples of that. But I think there were some examples of people—we certainly brought in some people from out of state. Our second director of revenue came from Missouri, for example. Doug Whitley. Edgar reached out to Doug Whitley, who had been running the Taxpayers' Federation for many years—probably knew the tax code better than anybody else in the state of Illinois. We'd been struggling on who ought to run the Department of Revenue, and, unbeknownst to the committee, Jim Edgar picked up the phone one day and asked Doug to come see him. And he sat down with Doug and I think basically asked him to come join the team, which probably was the furthest thing from Doug's thought process until that happened.

Another example of our approach was that with the Department of Transportation, I think Jim Edgar felt we needed to put a professional into that job. And DOT was always open to appointing people who maybe were more political, because a lot of jobs were there, but ultimately it was Edgar's conclusion that a professional ought to be there, so he reached into the ranks of DOT. There was an engineer there, a guy who's very bright, named Kirk Brown, and he elevated Kirk to be the secretary of transportation, which I think surprised a lot of people, because he didn't come from the political world. He was an engineer, and he was a professional who had been at the department for years and years. And I must say, if I was standing back—and I did do this, years later—I thought Kirk was one of the strongest directors we had and one of the best directors we had.[43]

DePue: This might put you on the spot a little bit. First of all, let me ask you about director of personnel, his selection for that key position. And something in the line of the person who people would say is his patronage chief.

Grosboll: That'd be Janis. Janis Cellini had worked with us in the secretary of state's office. Keep in mind there are certain jobs in the secretary of state's office and in the governor's office that are called exempt jobs and are jobs that, in effect, the head of the office can put anybody in there he wants. And they are the ones that one might call or define as being the political jobs—political in the sense that if you want to put in the head of the Republican Party, you can do it if you want. You're probably not going to do that, but you could. Janis was in the office. Her role was, in fact, to look out for those positions where we could do that. I was involved with those, too; because even in those exempt jobs that the law basically said the boss can put in anybody they want, it was important that they also be able to do their job and that they show up for work. It doesn't matter if it's a political appointment or not; they still got to do a job, and they got to show up.

DePue: Tell us a little bit more about Janis Cellini, because I don't think her name has come up before, but it's a well-known name.

[43] Kirk Brown, interview by Mike Czaplicki, [rest of info when transcript available]

Grosboll: Janis obviously is the sister of Bill Cellini, who is a major political figure in Illinois in the Republican Party—he's actually going on trial here shortly. I worked with Janis. I actually got along well with Janis. She understood where I was coming from; I understood what her job or her role was, that she would get pressure from county chairmen or from people to try and fill jobs. We had to tell those county chairmen that we couldn't be taking their recommendations for jobs that were covered by the code, but on the other hand, there were jobs that we could listen to them on Janis's job was to listen to that and try and deal with them, and my job was to make sure that, hopefully, she wasn't making bad decisions. But Janis was somebody I actually found was pretty easy to work with, and if I went to her and said, "I don't think this person can do the job, but here's another job they can do," she would listen to that. So I got along with her well, and generally, she got along with our other people in the secretary of state's office. That's not always true of people that are in that job. Some of them can be obnoxious and try and push people on you that they shouldn't.

DePue: So was she doing this job in the secretary of state's office as well?

Grosboll: She was. Yes, she was. She was in that role, and when we moved to the governor's office, she moved over, pretty much playing the same role for us there. I would say that every administration is going to have somebody that is playing that political role, that—if you want to call it—patronage role; and the issue is, can you work with them, and are they willing to listen? And I found Janis is somebody who usually was willing to listen. We'd have arguments on a regular basis, and we'd go back and forth on things, but she also understood this: she understood that if Jim Edgar heard that somebody was being pushed for a job and they were not qualified or they couldn't do the job, Jim Edgar would ultimately say you can't do that. So she knew if I was squawking about something like, that I ultimately had something in my back pocket, which was that I felt that the boss would back me up. On the other hand, Janis also knew that she was under pressure to try and respond to the political pressures that are outside the office, and she understood that I knew that too. So again, these are tough situations to deal with, and she was as good as anybody I dealt with on those types of things.

DePue: One of the ironies that occurred when Edgar got to the office of governor is that he came in at a time right after the famous *Rutan* decision, and that changed the rules as far as patronage hiring is concerned.[44]

Grosboll: It did, although it had changed when he was in the secretary of state's office, and we followed *Rutan* in the secretary of state's office. Every job that was to be filled according to the code and follow legal things which did not allow for political

[44] *Rutan v. Republican Party of Illinois*, 497 U.S. 62 (1990). By a 5-4 vote, the decision extended the rule of *Elrod v. Burns*, 427 U.S. 347 (1976) and *Branti v. Finkel*, 445 U.S. 507 (1980), determining "that promotions, transfers, and recalls after layoffs based on political affiliation or support are an impermissible infringement on the First Amendment rights of public employees." Justice Brennan wrote the majority opinion.

influencing We followed that, and Janis understood that if they were under the *Rutan* decision, she was not to be involved in it. Those that were outside of *Rutan*, she was involved in.

DePue: Did the county party bosses understand the ways that the rules had changed?

Grosboll: They might have understood it, but they didn't like it. And I must say that one of the things that we dealt with was we tried to the best of our ability to honor what the law said and what the court had said in the *Rutan* decision. The county chairmen did not like it; and ultimately in the governor's office, what we would hear is they would say, well, you know, George Ryan's a lot easier to deal with. And I don't want to cast aspersions here, but clearly I think there was a greater willingness on the part of George and his office to deal with the county chairmen. And we had to listen to that all the time, and we had to say, They can do whatever they want, but we got a *Rutan* law, we got to follow it, and we can't be filling these jobs protected by *Rutan*—we can't be filling them politically. But the county chairmen (DePue laughs) were not happy with that, and that was thrown back in our face a lot: well, that's not the way it has always been done, and other people aren't as strict as you guys are.[45]

DePue: Let's flesh out some personalities that haven't come up yet or maybe, I think, deserve a little bit more of a go with your insights on this; and I'm going to start with Mike Lawrence, a name that you haven't mentioned up to this point.

Grosboll: Mike was a reporter for many, many years in the press room in Springfield, and I believe he was the most talented, respected reporter in the press room. There are a couple of other reporters that I have very high regard for also, who worked in the press room—Charlie Wheeler, for example, at University of Illinois and ran the PAR program. There are other reporters like that, but I would say that Mike was the premier reporter in the press room. He had phenomenal sources and ability to flush out information—and to flesh it out, if you want to use that term. He was incredibly hard-working. He would work and work and work until he got the story and got it right. But most importantly, there's no other person that I work with who has more integrity than Mike does. He is as honest as a person can possibly be in a world of mortals, and his integrity is just impeccable. So when we were in the secretary of state's office, particularly after Mike Walters had left, who had been Edgar's press secretary—he and Joan left for the West Coast—we had done some hiring in our press shop, but ultimately, Jim Edgar was able to convince Mike Lawrence to come over and join the secretary of state's office. And Mike can tell you his reasons why he did that.[46] So Mike was in the secretary of state's office for several years; active, obviously, when the governor started the running for governor; and then when Jim Edgar became governor, Mike Lawrence came in as the governor's press secretary. That was extremely important. Mike was a guy that did not hesitate to tell the governor when he thought he was wrong on

[45] See Steve Schnorf, interview by Mike Czaplicki, [rest of info from transcript]
[46] Mike Lawrence, interview 2, March 4, 2009, 62-65.

something and to confront him, and to force the office to stay on the straight and narrow. So, personality-wise, there's nobody I have more respect for than Mike. Mike was a great guy to work with. As tough as he was and as hardworking as he was, he also had a great sense of humor and a great sense of perspective. Great guy to work with.

DePue: And the nature of the relationship between those two men, Edgar and Lawrence?

Grosboll: First off, they both had an extraordinarily high regard for state government. They both understood the roles they were in. The relationship was one in which I think they both respected each other, they both liked each other—although when you're really close with somebody like that, it's pretty easy to be irritated (DePue laughs) by somebody else's quirks; and I'm sure that Mike got on Jim Edgar's nerves and Jim got on Mike's nerves at times, and I'll let them both speak to that. But they were dealing with each other every day on things that were highly charged and emotional at times. But the most important thing was that they both respected each other, and in that type of relationship, that's the most important component.

DePue: Would you characterize that relationship as Lawrence being Edgar's most trusted or his closest advisor?

Grosboll: I don't want to put the word "most" in there—I'll let Jim Edgar say that—but certainly if he wasn't the most, he was among the two or three most trusted people that Jim Edgar had around him—top of the list. The other thing is this: these are two very, very smart men—very smart. They both know their history as an overall thing, history of Illinois—the dynamics of what makes things tick, how a story's going to be interpreted, weaknesses, vulnerabilities. They see things. Jim Edgar was a guy that I was always impressed with because he could see—as a chess player would— what was going to happen two, three, four plays down the road,. And I would like to think that I do that at times, but I don't do it in the manner that he does. Mike Lawrence is the exact same way. Mike can see a story playing out and where it will be three days later. So when you have two very, very smart people like that in the same room, which have great respect for each other, it creates a very special relationship.

DePue: Next on the list—and you've mentioned her a little bit—Joan Walters. Before she got to the crucial secretary of state position that she had, she was rather obscure, and I wonder if you can tell us what was special about Joan. Why was she so important to the administration?

Grosboll: Joan had worked for Governor Thompson in his legislative affairs shop when Jim Edgar was running the legislative affairs shop, so Jim Edgar was able to see Joan in a tough position—because when you work as a legislative affairs person, that's tough duty. You've got to be going over to legislators and telling them what we can do, what we can't do; asking them for their help at the same time you're telling them no on something else. So it's tough duty, and I think what he was able to see was that Joan was extremely tough. She'd been a housewife; she'd

raised a family of kids. I believe being a housewife and a mother trains you for a lot of things. But beyond that, Joan was extremely smart, very quick, picked up things rapidly, and again, was very tough. I think if you asked most people who worked with or for Joan in the secretary of state's office and who then worked with her in the governor's office, the one word that will always stand out is that she was tough. She could go head-to-head with some of the strongest egos in the legislature and hold her own. She—

DePue: She doesn't look that part.

Grosboll: Well, she is; and she's got a great sense of humor, and she's very fun to work around, but when it gets down to critical issues and arguing over things, Joan is extremely tough. Jim Edgar probably could not have found a better person for that time period, to be at the bureau of the budget, because we had to say no to an awful lot of people, and we had to make an awful lot of people unhappy. And Joan, when she understood her mission, was capable of doing exactly what she needed to do. Very talented person. I would also say that in the first year or two of the governor's office, there's probably no person who was treated more unfairly than Joan was.

DePue: Unfairly by…?

Grosboll: The media and by legislators. I remember when she took over, and the bureau of the budget was shaken up a little bit. Bob Mandeville had been there for many, many years under Governor Thompson. He was a guy that the media loved. He was a great guy to talk to, and a very bright fellow in his own right. So when Joan came in and immediately started doing some very tough things, some major budget cutting, I think people started challenging whether she was really up to it; was she at the same level as Bob Mandeville? It was not fair to make that comparison. And then when it became known that we were a billion dollars out of whack, instead of people asking how did that happen; how did the legislature manage to do that; how did the appropriations directors manage to do that; how did the bureau manage to allow that to happen? Instead, Joan took the brunt of it, as if it was her fault, because she was the one telling people that this budget is out of whack and we are cutting a billion dollars.

DePue: The classic kill-the-messenger.

Grosboll: Yes. We cut about a billion dollars early in the administration, got through the spring session; and then as we got to the fall, the economy continued to go south on us, and we had to come back and do another billion dollars' worth of cutting. And immediately, the negative voices were that the bureau had blown it, that it was their fault, *et cetera, et cetera, et cetera*. And one of the things they said was the person that had previously done all the projections in the bureau had been moved out to another department, and that's why we hadn't properly projected what was going to happen in the fall—which, of course, ignored the fact that that individual was the person who made the projections for the next year, even

though that person had gone to a different department. So Joan started taking it on the chin for everything that was going wrong with the state's finances, and nobody bothered to challenge who got us into the mess.

But the interesting thing about Joan is that no matter how much criticism she took, she stayed focused on her mission, and she did her job. And you know the most important thing? She had Jim Edgar's complete trust. And little by little, the state started climbing out of that hole, and little by little, we went from not being able to pay our bills to being able to pay our bills. The one little-known fact that people tend to ignore is that the state's end-of-year balance, which ended in the negative in our first year—every year Jim Edgar was governor, for eight years in a row, our end-of-year balance rose, and I don't know that that's ever happened in the state history. .

It was because Jim Edgar had a clear vision of what he wanted to do, Joan Walters had a clear vision, and the two of them worked extremely hard to make sure it happened. Every single year, Joan Walters and Jim Edgar had to go do battle with the appropriations leaders, as well as the legislative leaders, over the issue of what that end-of-year balance would be; and every year, they would say, we got money; we ought to spend it. And every year, Jim Edgar and Joan would say, no we don't; we have to build this balance. And every year it went higher, and it's only because they fought to do that.

DePue: While we're in the territory of talking about Joan Walters and that crucial budget fight, especially the first two or three years… I know that that first year it was especially tough because you're just getting there and trying to figure out where the cuts were going to be—and you characterized the criticism on her as being very unfair—yet it gets to the legislature, and they go past the point where the budget year starts, and there's no budget. Can you talk a little bit about that experience?

Grosboll: Yeah, although again, Joan can probably touch on this far better than me.

DePue: And we will go into much detail with her.

Grosboll: But the first session was really the most critical session of Jim Edgar's eight years in the governor's office, and there were multiple things going on in that session. There was Jim Edgar having said, "I'm going to continue the surcharge." By the way, an interesting thing there—all during the election, everybody was being asked in the legislature, "Will you vote for Jim Edgar's proposal to continue the surcharge," and many, many of them said no. So people would then say to Jim Edgar, "You don't even have a majority of legislators saying you'll support it." And Jim Edgar's answer was, "We'll pass the surcharge. We will continue the surcharge if necessary." So the idea of legislators saying ahead of time they won't do it is not a reflection of reality. So we move to January. The government begins making the case. It is even more apparent in the post-election time period that the surcharge is going to stay. Mike Madigan refused to do it, and the battle was on.

So first you had the issue of, will you consider the surcharge or not, or will you make it permanent? You had Edgar saying that his number-one issue in the campaign was to put caps on property taxes, particularly on the suburban areas that were rising by 15 and 20 percent a year. You had that issue going. You had the whole issue of what the budget is going to look like—and it's one thing to get the revenue; it's another thing to piece it together. And even with the surcharge, the budget was extraordinarily painful. It was a tough year. So you had all of that stuff going on—and I'm sure I'm missing another couple pieces to it. We obviously went into July, went seventeen, eighteen days into July; and ultimately, what happened was that Edgar had gotten assurances that Mayor [Richard M.] Daley was eventually going to get his members to vote for the surcharge, start getting them moving in that direction. It didn't happen, and it didn't happen, and it didn't happen. Nobody could understand why the city wasn't delivering. And finally, I think the indications were the city was finally going to move and start pulling their members to say they were going to vote for it. Speaker Madigan saw the handwriting on the wall, immediately sat down with Jim Edgar, and they cut the final deal. Again, I think the governor can fill that in far better than I can, Joan can, too, and Mike Lawrence.

But ultimately, that was an extremely important session. The surcharge was continued for education, although the piece for local government—they had to wait a period of time to get that made permanent. The property tax caps went into place. And it's ironic that Jim Edgar was characterized as being a pro-taxer. Even today, there are people in the more conservative part of the Republican Party that [think] that because he made the surcharge permanent, that he's a pro-tax guy, and yet when one looks at the great scheme of things in Illinois, the largest tax relief program in the state of Illinois is the property tax cap that was put into place. Because what was happening is these communities were having assessments rising 15 or 20 percent, and then the taxing bodies were in effect getting 15 or 20 percent more money, even though the voters had never authorized those types of increases. Property tax caps brought some sense to that. Now, one can talk about the fine-tuning that needs to be done when you have that kind of a system; but the fact is that governmental units should not be getting the benefit of 15 or 20 percent more tax revenue when inflation is 3 percent, solely because property value is rising, and that's what was happening. That was also part of that spring session that people tend to forget.

DePue: As you recall, what was Madigan's objection to making that surcharge permanent?

Grosboll: It's an interesting question, but it requires that one be able to psychoanalyze the Speaker. (DePue laughs) This is a very bright man who—again, we talked about chess-playing—has a lot of pieces in play at the same time. I'm not sure I can correctly analyze it. But my gut tells me that it was Jim Edgar's first session, and the Speaker, being the Speaker, was going to challenge him. And it's interesting because this last week, we have seen this whole situation occur with Governor Quinn and his dealings with Speaker Madigan; and the fact that we went the

whole spring session without a budget being resolved, and then finally, we just recently got some element of resolve to this year's budget.

DePue: And to put some context to this, the budget was passed without an income tax increase, which Quinn was calling for consistently up to this point.

Grosboll: Right. There were some revenue enhancers, and there also will be a requirement that Governor Quinn, cut at least a billion dollars somewhere in this budget. So it's not a very clean situation, and it resolves in no way whatsoever the longer-term issues that Illinois has. But the Speaker resolved it. One analysis of what happened, the general common wisdom, is that the Speaker came out of this recent session blemished, in that his reputation has been hurt because he didn't resolve this situation well; he let it drag too long. He has taken most of the brunt for the failure to get this budget resolved sooner or better. And one analysis was trying to say why; why did the Speaker do it? And ultimately the conclusion was Mike Madigan was being Mike Madigan, and that's about the simplest way to put it.

And I would say the exact same phrase is appropriate for 1991. The Speaker was being who he is. He was, I think, making sure that the new governor was properly challenged, and the good news for us was that Jim Edgar didn't blink. He never backed down on the surcharge, he never backed down on the budget as he saw it, and he refused to back down on the property tax issue. So I think even Speaker Madigan would say that this was a test for Jim Edgar, and he passed it. Really, when you look at the eight-year period, it was the most important single moment in the Edgar administration. Had the governor lost, I think he would have been severely weakened for the next four years, if not the next eight years. And who knows, maybe he wouldn't have been reelected if he had failed in that first session to get the job done.

DePue: I appreciate you taking this much time to talk about it, even though we are going to get into this a lot more with Joan and with the governor himself, because, as you mentioned just now, it's so crucial to his success in the long term as governor, I think, and understanding it.

Grosboll: Yes. Yes, it is. And it isn't just the issues. It's not just did he win on this or lose on that; did he get what he wanted. It has to do with the testing of the individual's mettle. And we overuse that phrase, but there's no doubt that's what was going on that first session.

DePue: And it's also interesting that you're phrasing this whole conversation with what's going on in the House with Madigan, and not in the Senate. Is that a function of the constitutional role of those two bodies, more than anything else, or is it personality driven?

Grosboll: It's all personality driven. We could be having a similar conversation about some of the governor's difficulties with Pate Philip later on. One of the ironies—and I

suspect Governor Edgar will speak to you about this—but one of the ironies is that although there was this head-to-head between Jim Edgar and Mike Madigan, interestingly, there are great similarities between those two individuals. Again, they're both very smart. They ultimately know when and how to cut a deal when it needs to be done. And I think Jim Edgar will make this point: even throughout that time period, they were very cordial with each other. They were talking to each other on the phone on a fairly regular basis, even though the media was defining this as this great battle of two great bulls ramming into each other. You can see the picture, and yet at the same time, these guys were picking up the phone and talking to each other on a very cordial basis. And, ultimately, when the Speaker decided that it was time to pull the plug and get this done, it was almost businesslike—professional, as in here's what we now have to do. (laughs) So I think Jim Edgar will speak to that; but in many ways, those two guys—there are some very strong similarities.

DePue: How about the relationship with Phil Rock, who was the Senate president, another Democrat?

Grosboll: I'm not as familiar with that relationship as I am with the relationship with the Speaker. I think that Jim Edgar will tell you that he has a lot of respect for Phil Rock, who was a guy who generally was not an obstructionist; he was a guy trying to find solutions to make things work. One might say that he was a little more of a diplomat in trying to resolve some of these issues. And that was the reputation Phil Rock had throughout his career; he was generally a man of integrity who was trying to figure out how to resolve problems and move on. So he did not stand as an obstructionist. I don't know that, quite frankly, he understood Jim Edgar as well as Mike Madigan understood Jim Edgar, but I'll let the governor speak to that.

DePue: Let's go back to some of the other lieutenants, and you'd already talked a little bit about Kirk Dillard—a person who I think is considering throwing his hat in the ring for governor right now.

Grosboll: Yes, about a week ago, he did announce for governor.

DePue: Can you flesh out that personality a little bit more, and the relationship?

Grosboll: Kirk was an interesting choice that the governor made for that first two-year period.

DePue: Of chief of staff.

Grosboll: Yes. I think that Jim Edgar needed somebody who had previously worked with the major personalities around the state legislature. Kirk had done that, having worked as Governor Thompson's legislative affairs person for a couple of years, having worked around the Senate. He was on a first-name basis with Pate Philip and Phil Rock. My guess is he was on a good relationship with Lee Daniels and Mike Madigan—enough that he knew them, he could talk to them, he could work

with them. And I think what Governor Edgar needed in that job was not somebody to tend to the day-to-day details that a Sally Jackson, that a Joan Walters, was involved in, but rather somebody that could be dealing with people at that level. And that's the job that Kirk performed, and I think he did it well. He was also a guy that knew lots of other players. He could talk to people that were involved in the corporate world, or he could talk to people in the labor world. So again, Kirk is a very outgoing personality—"gregarious" comes to mind—and at the same time, he's a very bright guy; understands state governments; understands the themes, the direction that we need to be going; what the course is, and how to stay that course. I worked with Kirk as an executive assistant to the governor, over a group of agencies. I would deal with Kirk on a pretty regular basis. I found him to be a very good guy to deal with. He respected the role that each of the executive assistants had. He might challenge, he might ask good questions, but ultimately, he, like Governor Edgar, trusted the judgment of these executive assistants.

DePue: Jim Reilly.

Grosboll: Jim Reilly came in, as I recall, for about a two-year period.

DePue: Nineteen ninety-four to 1995 as the chief of staff.

Grosboll: Right, and that covered the office during the time that Jim Edgar was running for governor. Jim Reilly was a very experienced state government hand. He had been a state legislator from Jacksonville, Illinois, for many years. Then he went to work for Jim Thompson; and I'm thinking that he started off being Jim Thompson's legal person, because he was a very bright attorney, and then became chief of staff and ran the governor's staff. He ultimately served a variety of other positions—running McCormick Place, bringing about the development of Navy Pier. So he is a guy that has served a lot of different functions—very bright, very smart. He came in, and I think the role that Jim Reilly played was to make sure that the governor's office was run very tightly during the critical period of an election year—keep the problems to a minimum, make sure people don't make mistakes, make sure we're not making policy mistakes, make sure that we're not doing anything political while you're on state time—you stay straight and narrow.

DePue: So the same role you played in the secretary of state position.

Grosboll: I think [so], in many ways. But Jim Reilly, again, was to keep a very tight control over the office and make sure we did not make mistakes. Also, to make sure that we were still continuing to move forward on whatever agenda the governor had. Jim immediately had the respect of everyone who worked around him, because he'd been there before, he knew what was going on, he knew what to do, and he transitioned in very rapidly.

DePue: But in that position, both in your own [case] and what Reilly was doing, you're not necessarily the most popular guy on the block, are you?

Grosboll: I don't know. I wouldn't call it a popularity issue; I would call it an issue of just respecting the role somebody is carrying out and respecting what they're doing,

DePue: Gene Reineke, who was the next chief of staff for about a year, I believe—1995.

Grosboll: Yes. Gene had worked in our office. I think he'd been involved with economic development issues. Gene is another guy who had been around state government a long time. I actually knew Gene when he started in state government, years and years before. He'd been around a variety of agencies; he sort of knew what made state government tick. He also had been active with the Republican Party and had worked for the state Republican Party, so he knew the political world, and he also knew the governmental world. Very disciplined. Gene was very disciplined—extremely good at delegation, keeping track of an agenda, moving us forward on critical issues. He delegated, and he respected what other people were doing. All of our chiefs of staff served an important role, and they were the right people at the right time for that particular job.

DePue: And one other here: Mark Boozell.

Grosboll: Yes. Mark came in, really, the last year of the administration. I think Mark's job was to make sure that the administration stayed focused in its last year. And I don't remember the date Mark started.

DePue: Ninety-six. I know that he came in 1996, so I assume for the rest of the administration, he was chief of staff.

Grosboll: Yeah, then it's maybe a little longer than I thought. But I think Mark's job was to make sure that even though Jim Edgar had announced he wasn't running for reelection, we still had a job to do, and it was important that the train not fall off the tracks. I will tell you another thing, and this requires me to tell you a quick story. We're having a staff meeting one Monday morning, and in the middle of the meeting, the door opens up and in walks Jim Edgar. He wanted to talk a little bit about the fact that he wasn't running for reelection. We all knew that; he'd announced that already. And I would say maybe this was a year, or less than a year, before the end of the administration and his leaving. And eventually what he wanted to tell us was this, and it was a pretty prescient statement: he basically said, look, I want to make sure that this administration ends without an embarrassment and without us doing something stupid. And then he paused and said, "I always think back to the Ogilvie administration "He explained, it's been a long time since Dick Ogilvie was governor, and yet, to this day, when somebody who worked for Richard Ogilvie says, I worked for the governor of Illinois and somebody says, who asks who, they pump their chest out, they stand up straight, and they say, "I worked for Ogilvie" and for the rest of their lives, they're going to be proud to say that. And then he said, "Contrast that with the Walker administration; where people worked for Dan Walker, but they don't go out of their way to tell anybody that that's who they worked for because that administration was not particularly well regarded and well respected." And then

Edgar said, “Here’s the thing. Twenty years from now, I want you to be able to stand up tall and say, ‘I worked for Jim Edgar’ and be held in the same regard that those Ogilvie people were.”

That made a huge impression on me, and believe me, I have thought about that as we have seen what’s happened in the last two administrations. And there are people, very, very bright, good-willed people, who worked for George Ryan, and believe it or not, there are a couple of people like that who worked for Rod Blagojevich—not very many, but a few. But there are people who worked twelve hours a day doing good things for George Ryan, and yet, when people say, ask which governor did you work with, they’re not able to push their chest out and stand up straight and say, I work for such-and-such. So I think Jim Edgar that day told us the wisest thing he ever could have told us, and I’ll never forget it.

DePue: After hearing the story, it’s hard to get back on track and say, okay, where do we go from here?

Grosboll: The reason I tell that story is Mark Boozell was here that last time period, and I think Mark understood that was one of his jobs. We’ve got a job to do, still. We can’t go to sleep here. It means that we have to avoid getting involved in a scandal—and, by the way, that’s what Edgar then talked about that day. He just said, “I don’t want to hear about any stinky deals; I don’t want to hear about people getting contracts; I don’t want to hear about anything that’s going to embarrass us, and I don’t want that stuff happening.” Mark’s job was to make sure that we didn’t have some department director who somehow cut some deal with some entity before they left state government. I think he wanted to make sure that [if] there were certain things we had said we would do before we were out of there, that they actually got done.

Mark, too, was very organized and disciplined. You would go into his office, he would have a set of notes of what needed to be done and who was doing it, and we would go through it. Reineke was the same way. So very organized people, each with a different mission.

DePue: Let’s go back to the boss then and take another look at Edgar. Now, you’ve already been talking quite a bit in our last conversation about his years as secretary of state, as the manager and the leader of that important constitutional position. I wonder if you can see any kind of a development in his style of leadership and/or management once he got to the governor’s office; and it’s that much of a bigger role for him now.

Grosboll: That’s a very good question. When he was secretary of state, he knew the details of every one of our initiatives cold. As we were negotiating tougher drunk driving laws, he knew the details of that language as well as anybody in the office. Now, there might be some technical aspects about how certain things were going to be done that he would have to talk to Gary March, who ran our traffic safety stuff; or he might have to talk to Lowell Bohn, who ran our administrative hearings

department; but in terms of understanding the details of the office and how we did our job, Jim Edgar understood the details of that as well as any human being could have understood them. There were times when I would be explaining to him what we were up to on a negotiation, and he would correct me and remind me of something that had happened two years before on the law or a court case, and I'd go back and check it, and sure enough, he'd be right. Some of it had occurred before I was even in my job. When you're secretary of state, you can do that if you want to. Most secretaries of state don't, but Jim Edgar did. He's a detail guy. When he moved to the governor's office, it meant that he did have to rely on his staff even more so than he had in the secretary of state's office. So all the more reason why those executive assistants were critical to him. He knew how they thought; he trusted them.

Now, I will also say that there were certain issues when Jim Edgar could not let loose of some of the details, because they were important enough to him that he had to understand, for example the budget issue. He do a press conference on the budget, with or without Joan there, and do perfectly fine. You know, it's interesting. One of my criticisms of Rod Blagojevich over the last several years was that he never did press conferences; he would not bare himself to those types of settings. And the point I made was that Jim Thompson and Jim Edgar never hesitated to walk up to the Blue Room, hold a press conference, and take any question about any thing. George Ryan did some of that initially, although I think as he got into some other problems down the road, he started doing it less so. But certainly Jim Thompson and Jim Edgar would go to the press room, and there was nothing they could be asked that they couldn't deal with. There might be a highly technical thing that they would simply say, "We'll get back to you on that." But they would do battle. Blagojevich would never do that, and the reason is that he didn't understand the details of his own budget. Jim Edgar could answer just about any question about the budget, and that was true of a few other areas. But on the broader stuff, he was not able to be into the level of detail like he had been on every issue in the secretary of state's office.

DePue: That gets to this question, then: do you think he was a better leader, or manager and administrator, once he was in that role as governor?

Grosboll: Better than what?

DePue: If you were to understand the differences between those two terms, what it means to be a leader versus an administrator and a manager.

Grosboll: I'm not sure it's a choice that I care to make, and I'll tell you why. First off, I'm a person who believes that the least understood role of a governor, that somehow we manage to forget, is that a governor's first job is to govern—to manage. And we sometimes have people who get into major roles, who are great mouthpieces, but they can't manage their way out of a paper bag. And when you're the governor of a state, just like if you're the CEO of a corporation, your job is to run it, balance the budget, do your job, and make sure the trains are running on time. I

would say that Jim Edgar was a phenomenal manager. He cared about the details of government, making sure that things ran well, and making sure the budget made sense. He understood that the first role of a governor is you got to understand the money and how you're balancing, how you're spending.

But on the leadership issue, obviously I give him very high marks on that, too, and the reason is that there were many, many issues that arose while he was governor where ultimately Jim Edgar's judgment was correct and he positioned himself correctly. And when he left office, the *Chicago Tribune* had an editorial that spoke to that very issue, that just basically said, when it came right down to it, on all the major issues, Jim Edgar's judgment was correct and he positioned himself right on the moral issues of the day. He positioned himself right on many things. So I believe that he was a strong leader, and it's reflected in the fact that the public had huge respect for him afterwards. They didn't respect him because the trains ran on time; they respected him because they had been listening to him over eight years, and they basically agreed with the positions and the directions that he took state government.

DePue: I'd like to turn this into a little bit more of a personal reflection on what you were doing, what you were dealing with, as one of these executive assistants. And kind of take it just right down the line, and we'll go through this fairly quickly, if you don't mind; and then the next time we meet, we'll go into a couple of these in much more detail. I think the first one perhaps you mentioned was environmental protection.

Grosboll: In terms of what were we doing?

DePue: Yeah.

Grosboll: Several things. The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 had passed federally, and every state in the nation had to be changing how they were handling clean air. Our director of EPA was Mary Gade. She had considerable experience with the federal government and Mary and her staff were to work with the business community and others to enact a program in Illinois that did everything that needed to be done to comply with the federal act. And a huge part of that was agreeing to a fee structure, that the business world would agree to, that would pay for it. And they did. So there are many, many things we did at EPA that would take up more tape than you've got there, but that was probably the biggest thing we had to do immediately—to get the federal Clean Air Act Amendments adopted in Illinois and to make the system work, I'm very proud of the fact we did that. The other thing is that I think Illinois moved forward on the brownfields issue probably as effectively and aggressively as any state in the nation. We didn't get as much publicity as other states, but I think we moved forward extremely well and dealt with that issue in an extremely wise manner.

DePue: Brownfields? Can you be a little bit more specific about what that is?

Grosboll: Instead of it being a greenfield, where you plow up a corn field to do something with, you recognize that maybe there's an old factory site that no one's touching because of contamination. If you clean it up, then you can convert it to other uses and not have to tear up a corn field. So a brownfield is basically a site that's got a level of contamination. This was an area that every state in the nation had begun to deal with, and we did a major job helping to lead the way on recognizing that the cleanup of these sites, in effect, could vary depending on what its ultimate use was going to be, that there are background levels you're aiming for when you clean up a site. A negotiation that occurred about how we would do that, and that's pretty much the way the entire national government has now gone on brownfield cleanup. But we also put incentives in to help people do it, and I think EPA did an excellent job there.

DePue: Another one would be nuclear safety.

Grosboll: With nuclear safety we're dealing with an awful lot of low-level stuff that we're policing. For example, wastes that are being dealt with at hospitals. People don't understand that there's an awful lot of low-level material that's coming out of hospitals, that is regulated, and our nuclear safety department is involved in. The bigger issue was that we were trying to find a low-level storage facility in Illinois, and we spent a good deal of time working on that. Unfortunately it ultimately collapsed, and almost no state has a low-level waste facility because of the not-in-my-backyard syndrome. So that's a whole other matter. Again, nuclear safety—our biggest issues really were dealing with things that the public normally doesn't spend much time on, but somebody's got to pay attention and make sure we're handling them correctly.

DePue: Was there any discussion during his administration about building new nuclear power plants?

Grosboll: No. You have to realize that this country went through a twenty, twenty-five year period when construction of nuclear power plants pretty much came to a complete halt.

DePue: After Three Mile Island, basically.

Grosboll: Yeah, although some people blame it on Three Mile Island; some people blame it on the *China Syndrome* movie, some people blame it on the environmental community. The real reality—and there was also Chernobyl in there—is that the cost of building new nuclear power plants became so exorbitant that it made it nearly impossible to be building nuclear power plants in this country. It's the finances that stopped it more than anything.[47]

[47] Three Mile Island was a nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania that suffered a partial meltdown in 1979.

DePue: A different kind of area altogether—or perhaps you don't see it that way—historic preservation.

Grosboll: Of course it's an area close to my heart, and I know it's close to your heart, too, Mark.

DePue: Since I work in IHPA [Illinois Historic Preservation Agency].

Grosboll: Yeah. Yeah, that was an area I enjoyed working with a lot, and—

DePue: But in a period of pretty drastic budget cuts, I would think that's a natural place to turn to.

Grosboll: And there were some cuts we made, particularly the first year, in historic preservation; but it's also an area close to Jim Edgar's heart, and ultimately we tried to move as quickly as we could to make sure facilities were opened and they were properly staffed. Never as good as we would have liked, but of course, compared to today, it looks like those were the good old days. I'm currently president of the New Salem Lincoln League, which is the not-for-profit that supports the New Salem Historic Site—Lincoln's New Salem. We kind of thought things were a little tight back in the Edgar days, but when Jim Edgar left office, there were twenty-five employees at New Salem. Today there are twelve. We used to have a massive seasonal help that would come on in the summer to help with tourists and everything. That's been cut dramatically. So they were tough issues to deal with. But I would tell you the stuff that I'm proudest of, dealing with historic preservation.

When we actually got back in a little bit stronger position financially, we were able to move forward on some sites that I think were extremely important. We were the first to put real money into the Lincoln Presidential Library. People tend to forget that we appropriated the first dollars for it. We picked the architectural firm that ultimately designed the building, we picked the design firm that designed all the exhibits, we negotiated with the city of Springfield for the site that currently the museum is sitting on, and we picked basically the entire team that would eventually put that together. So I'm proud we got that started. The other thing is we put the money in for the Lewis and Clark Historic Site. That museum was built near the end of the Edgar administration. So there were some things that we were able to do there.

DePue: The next one here—and again, another change of direction, I would think: professional regulation. What is that?

Grosboll: Now it's been merged with another agency, but at the time, it was the agency that dealt with all of the regulated professions in Illinois. If you know your Illinois history, you would know that Illinois has more regulated professions than any other state in the nation, something we should probably be embarrassed about. For whatever reason, we have defined that every profession in the state of Illinois has to be regulated. Usually that's because the particular profession wants to be

regulated in order to help keep out other people. But the department is responsible for making sure that all of the various professions are properly regulated. One of the big issues we were involved in was making sure that the fee structures were such that the fees paid for the regulation of those industries, and that the taxpayers, through tax revenues, were not paying for it. So that was one of our major thrusts there. We also had to cut back on the size of that department. But ultimately, the big key in professional regulation was to make sure that the regulated industry was paying sufficient fees to cover the total cost of that regulation.

DePue: We've been at this just short of two hours, and we're at the point where we need to make a decision. I know that Department of Natural Resources was a move that you were very intimately involved with, and we certainly don't have time to pursue that today. But one of your areas of responsibility while you were an executive assistant was the Department of Energy and Natural Resources, and you'd already mentioned you wanted to talk a little bit about Dickson Mounds. Should Dickson Mounds be something we postpone till next time?

Grosboll: We'll touch on this today, I think, and I'll tell you—this was a very controversial issue.

DePue: Before we get into that, though, [describe] the framework of that [within the] Department of Energy and Natural Resources.

Grosboll: Inside the department of what used to be Energy and Natural Resources was the state museum, and under the state museum was the Dickson Mounds Museum, located near Lewiston, in Fulton County, and it is the site of a large finding of human remains by a fellow named Dr. Dickson. Going back into probably the 1920s or '30s—I don't recall precisely—170, 200 sets of human remains were uncovered. It became quite a tourist attraction in that area, and then ultimately the state of Illinois took it over and in the 1960s built a museum. The highlight of going through the museum was to walk through the burial room and see these bones there. Late in Governor Thompson's tenure, it had become apparent that museum after museum in the country had been closing displays of human bones. Native Americans had been raising a stink about it. They were not pleased with it. This was the time when artifacts of Native Americans were being returned to the particular tribes that they were associated with, and the issue of displaying human bones, which of course were all Native-American bones, was becoming a big issue.

Unfortunately, the story that they [the Thompson administration] were going to close it leaked to the *Peoria Journal Star*, and a blaring headline came out that they were closing the Dickson Mounds Museum. None of the legislators knew anything about it. They all exploded; they said, over their dead bodies that would happen—over their dead bones, I guess we could say. And so ultimately, probably one of the funnier moments of the Thompson administration: Jim Thompson was grappling with how to deal with this; and one day, he flew over in

a helicopter to Dickson Mounds to look at it himself, and he took his young daughter Samantha with him. They went through and Governor Thompson announced shortly thereafter that he and Samantha had gone through the display room and Samantha really didn't find anything objectionable about it; therefore he had concluded that he was going to leave it open.

DePue: She's like twelve or thirteen at the time, maybe?

Grosboll: Maybe. (DePue laughs) So that reminded me of Jimmy Carter talking about Amy Carter being his influence on decisions on nuclear war.[48] So the museum stayed open because Samantha didn't find it objectionable. This all happened during the middle of the campaign, and both Jim Edgar and Neil Hartigan, who also got caught off guard, said they didn't see anything objectionable, and gee, they wouldn't close it either. Shortly after Jim Edgar became governor, we began having Native American protests at Dickson Mounds. I got assigned to work on this topic, and ultimately what I found was this: we were the last museum in the United States that had human remains on display. Museum after museum in the country had been closing. The last one had been Wickliffe Mounds in Kentucky. And we were having to call the state police out on a fairly (laughs) regular basis at Dickson Mounds because a group of Native Americans were beginning to regularly show up and protest—and then finally at one point jumped into the burial site with shovels to give the appearance that they were going to cover the remains.

So I had to deal with the Native Americans, primarily from Oklahoma. Then I put a group together from Fulton County, who were the defenders of the site and the defenders of Dr. Dickson's legacy, and then we also had to deal with the amateur archaeologists who had taken an interest in this. In the meantime, I'd been dealing with some of the state's major professional archaeologists, and the ultimate conclusion they made was that none of the respected entities believed that it was appropriate to continue displaying human remains, which are Native American remains only. Governor Edgar basically wanted me to try and resolve this.

And I'll cut this short by simply saying that we got some of the locals to agree that we don't exactly tell the story very well at Dickson Mounds. You go in, and the highlight is a burial room. And unlike Cahokia Mounds, into which we had sunk significant revenue to tell the story of the mound-builders, we didn't do that at Dickson Mounds. The museum was aging and was not a particularly good

[48] Amy Carter is President Carter's daughter and was thirteen years old at the time of one of Carter's 1980 presidential campaign debates with Ronald Reagan. It was at this debate that Carter said, "I had a discussion with my daughter, Amy, the other day, before I came here, to ask her what the most important issue was. She said she thought nuclear weaponry and the control of nuclear arms." "Presidential Debate in Cleveland," October 28, 1980, John Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project*, Santa Barbara, CA, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29408.

facility. So the ultimate solution we negotiated with the players was that we would invest four million dollars in this facility to expand it, and put on a series of displays that actually educate the public on the mound-builders . We also decided to cover over in some fashion the burial room. We didn't put dirt on them, because the archaeological community said, it's one thing to close it off; it's another thing to actually destroy the site. So since we had found examples of Native Americans who had buried other Native Americans in cedar boxes, we created a cedar cover for the entire burial site and covered it in that manner. And then we were able to get a four-million-dollar investment from the legislature—completely re-did the museum. That's how we got our resolve, and that ended the issue. And we were the last museum to close our burial site.

DePue: Roughly what timeframe was this latter part of the discussion going on, where you had the demonstrations and things?

Grosboll: Probably in '91.

DePue: So early in his administration.

Grosboll: Very early. We got the appropriation…

DePue: At the time, finding four million dollars was quite a chore, I would think.

Grosboll: It was the following spring. It was capital money rather than general revenue. And everyone was happy that the issue had been resolved. I'll tell you, one of the funnier things I had to do is go around to the legislators—and I'm going to skip names here—but I remember going to one of the legislators who had been very unhappy. They were members of the Democratic Party, and I was representing a Republican, and I went in, and one of the individuals said, "Let me tell you something. When I found out about this, I was furious. I was furious because nobody had warned me—it was in my district—and I blew my stack." And then the guy said, "But you know, I've done some reading since then"—because my opening question had simply been, "What do you think we ought to do about this?" And the guy told me all of this, and then he said, "I've been doing some reading."

So he said, "Here's the deal, Al. I don't know that I can support your closing it, but let me say this: I think I can understand it, and I'm not going to create a problem if you ultimately choose to do that." I went to another individual who represented that area, and that individual said to me—one of the better comments— "Look, Al, I don't care what you do. Do whatever you feel you need to do. You can tell the governor that. Just leave me out of it. (DePue laughs) I don't want to be part of the decision." And I said, "Okay, we'll make the decision; just don't give us any grief." And then I will mention one other person, and that was a fellow named Bill Edley, a Democrat who had won a seat that had generally been Republican, and he had a very negative attitude toward Jim Edgar and had attacked him. So I went to meet with him, and his comment to me was

very simple. He said, “Here’s the deal, Al. I don’t really care what you do. If you keep the museum open, I’m going to tell the voters that I forced you to keep it open, that I forced you to do it; and if you close the museum, I’m going to beat your brains in for the next two years, and I’m going to win reelection that way. So I don’t really care what you guys do.” And I said, “O-kay.” (DePue laughs) That guy got beat, by the way. I don’t know if it was two years later; it was either two years later—yeah, it was two years later.

DePue: In the general election.

Grosboll: And I don’t want to be mean about this, but I will say that he was the only individual who was not really willing to sit down and talk about what a negotiated settlement might look like and why it was maybe the best thing to do. It was viewed strictly as a political decision. But ultimately, I think they did an excellent job of putting new exhibits in there, telling the story much better. The sad part is that as much as we like to say that bones and dead people don’t attract us, the reality is that the attendance at that museum has dropped because the bone room is not open anymore. People don’t want to go as much. That’s sad, and I feel very bad about that. On the other hand, I think we did what we had to do there.

DePue: We’ve covered quite a bit of territory today. We’ve got a lot more to cover. I know a big issue is going to be the creation of the Department of Natural Resources. I’d also like to get your reflections on the flood of ’93 and other things on the plate. So thank you very much, Al.

Grosboll: Okay, thanks.

DePue: And we’ll pick this up again.

(end of interview)

Interview with Al Grosboll
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Interview # 5: October 22, 2009
Interviewer: Mark DePue

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

DePue: Today is October 22, 2009. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history here at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library—and that's exactly where I'm sitting right now, across the table from Al Grosboll. Good morning, Al.

Grosboll: Good morning, Mark.

DePue: It's been a long time. It was back in July, Al, that we last talked. This is actually the fifth session, and because you've covered so much of Edgar's life and experiences in government, it's been very important to sit down and talk to you. And most everybody tells me that you have some of the best stories but also one of the better memories of the years, and that's also very important to us as we capture the history. We talked quite a bit in the last session about his first administration, your role as the executive assistant and you were talking a lot about working in areas of conservation and energy and nuclear safety, and things like that. We kind of got up to 1993 and the flood, but we didn't get into it. So let's pick up the narrative there, if you will, and maybe what we need to start with is—I know you had a pretty significant role in working on the flood. Why were you so heavily involved with the flood?

Grosboll: I have to tell you—first off, this is a long time ago; it's sixteen years ago now. Some of it is very fresh in my memory, and some is a little hazy, but I'll do the best I can. Early in 1993, we began to experience some fairly serious problems related to flooding, which was also true in seven other states. Altogether, there were eight states affected by the flooding of the Mississippi in 1993. And the other piece of that you should understand is that we talk about it as the Mississippi River, the Great Flood of '93; but in Illinois, it was the Mississippi and the Illinois, because when the Mississippi backed up, it then backed up the Illinois River. A good deal of the damage that occurred in Illinois was actually related to the Illinois River, not just to the Mississippi.

I got involved early on in the administration as the flood began to become a more serious problem, affecting more people in more counties. It was apparent from our staff meetings that we were having a little bit of a problem in terms of some of the personalities involved in dealing with the flood; and the reason was, we had a National Guard that had troops that would be sent out to help sandbag or would be sent out to watch over communities that were being flooded and make sure we didn't have vandalism or people stealing.

DePue: I should confess that I was the commander of one of those National Guard units sent over to the Mississippi, and then later to the Illinois River.

Grosboll: I wondered why you were smiling at me as I mentioned this. We also had our Emergency Management Office, IEMA [Illinois Emergency Management Agency]. And we were running into situations in which the IEMA people felt they had responsibility for certain things, the National Guard felt they had responsibilities for certain things—and in addition to that, we had a series of other agencies that had a role in this, for example the Department of Public Health and Illinois IPA, protecting water managing chemical spills. So we had a variety of people who were involved in this, and we were beginning to have communication problems. That's as nice as I can say it.

DePue: Staff-type communication problems?

Grosboll: And some turf issues. So the governor, fairly early on, recognized that and began talking to staff about what we should do about it. Historically, there was a little lack of clarity over who actually runs the show when one of these emergencies occurs. So ultimately what the governor did say was, "I want somebody in the office, acting on behalf of the governor, to become the coordinator responding to this flood and making sure that all the agencies deal with each other well." So I think the wheel spun, and it landed on my name, and I was asked to go in and be the state's flood response coordinator.

DePue: I suspect this wasn't purely by chance that you were selected to do this.

Grosboll: I'm not going to speculate too much in terms of why I was picked; but I knew some of the players who were involved, and generally my style is to try and get people to work together. I've always done that. This was a case where we had to put our foot down to make it clear to people that this was to be a cooperative effort. I think once that message became clear, everyone got it, and we did have a pretty cooperative response. But it was important that a message be sent that this is an emergency that rises to a level where the governor's office itself is going to lead the effort and everyone will report to the governor's office. So that's what happened.

And we generally thought this will be a month or two project. So early in 1993, I go into that mode; and on the day I left the governor's office in January of 1999, I was still working on 1993 flood issues. We can talk a little bit more about what some of those things were, but the flood broke into two or three stages. I think the initial stage was to save lives or at least getting people out of harm's way—move in as quickly as we could to protect people. I think the second one was to do as much as we could to mitigate the flooding; and in some cases, that meant sandbagging, it meant protecting water supplies—things of that nature. And then, of course, the third component was the rebuilding. And part of rebuilding—I guess maybe we could call this a fourth item—was the buying out of people who lived in the flood plain. I'll come back to that later.

But in those early stages, what we were trying to do was coordinate state resources as effectively as we could to make sure we were protecting the levees that were most in danger, protecting the communities behind those levees and protecting

farmland as much as we could. I do remember the first day that I went over to the command center, which is no longer where it's located. After 9/11, the state got an awful lot of money, and we built a brand-new, shiny command center, which is a far cry from the hole in the ground that we had back in the early nineties, which was in the basement of a building near the armory. And—

DePue: Just north of the Capitol building.

Grosboll: Yes. And I remember going into the first meeting and trying to get a little bit of an update of where we stood—where our troops were, in terms of the National Guard—and I immediately noticed that the National Guard and the IEMA people were not talking to each other. They were very mad at each other over issues of turf. They would not talk to each other; they wouldn't answer each other's questions. Because I was in the room, they would direct all comments to me; and there was very clearly a cold wall between those two agencies. There were many other agencies that were involved in this that I think were just sort of running for cover; they didn't want to get involved in that little contest. So that was the first meeting I went to, and when that meeting was over with, I sat down with the leadership of both agencies and made it clear that that was going to come to an end and that we had one priority, *et cetera*. And I must say, I did not see a lot more of conflict and refusing to talk to each other.

Now, any time you're dealing with an emergency like that and there's a lot of emotion rising, it's not unusual that you'll get some attitudes like that. And there is second-guessing. There would be second-guessing on why is the National Guard sending troops here instead of there, questioning of why IEMA was putting a priority on A instead of B. So both sides were questioning each other, and what I attempted to do was put them in a mode where they were questioning me rather than each other. It was important that they start working together, and I think we accomplished that. And interestingly, I think that Governor Edgar was the first person in our entire organization who recognized that we had a problem. It was not his senior staff going to him and saying, "Governor, I think we have a problem here." He realized it; he felt it.

DePue: When you say he recognized he had a problem—recognized he had a problem with the flooding or with the intermixing rivalries

Grosboll: He knew we had a problem with the flooding. He was visiting these areas that were flooding, and he was either helicoptering to them or, in some cases, driving to them. But he caught the body language, in the field, of the difference of opinion between a couple of his agencies. I don't want to overstate this, because it was something that happened very early on, and I think we nipped it in the bud; and by putting somebody in the governor's office in charge, it sent the right message.

My going into that job did not mean that I was going to be doing all the work. Those agencies did all of the work. My only job was to make sure that they were working coherently together and that we had a game plan. The first couple of months were spent almost entirely on issues of where the troops should be. By the way, not

only did we have National Guard troops out manning levees and protecting communities, but we also had prisoners from our work camps out working on some of the levees. And that was a great experience. They did a great job. The communities came out, saw that and were impressed by what these young kids were doing and how hardworking they were. So it was very interesting, in some of these rural communities, to see the attitudes that they had toward these young kids who were in jail.

DePue: One of the things you talked about here is that you're coming in and helping to get all of these other organizations—whose mission it is to solve this problem—to work on the issues; to get them so that they were working together. I'm wondering if the governor ever talked directly to the groups, or if he gave you some very specific priorities and guidance of how he envisioned fighting this flood.

Grosboll: There are a couple of questions in there. First off, he was very clear with me what he wanted, and that was that he wanted somebody from the front office working on point, on this topic. He wanted everybody working together; he wanted reports to him that were coherent in terms of where we were deployed and what spots were threatened. The Great Flood often reminded me of those stacks of dominos; and when one domino falls, the line starts falling. Because what would happen is things would calm down a little bit, we'd get a large rainstorm, and the upper parts of the Mississippi would start flooding. And we would know that in a day, the crest would rise at the next area down the river, and three days later, we'd be seeing it at Alton. As those dominos would fall, it would change almost daily what our priorities were in terms of what we were doing. So the governor wanted to make sure that not only was it clear we had a point person, but he also wanted a single point person reporting to him, telling him what was going on and where he needed to be. Oftentimes, I would be on the phone with him, and I would say, "Governor, I think you need to get to this county," or, "There's something going on. I think you should be there," and he would do that. He was up and down the river. There was not enough time in the day for him to be everywhere he needed to be or wanted to be, but he got to as many places as he could.

I must tell you, I was new to this game, so there were times when I would be talking to him about federal funding that we had an opportunity to go after—and the formulas were very interesting: for certain kinds of projects, you'd get a 90 percent federal match; for other types of projects, you'd get a 75 percent match—and on more than one occasion, he corrected me. I would be saying, "I think we ought to go after this; we'll get this type of match," and he's say, "No, Al, that's not the right formula on that. It's X, Y, and Z; we'll get this formula." And I'd go back to IEMA or whomever, and they'd say, "The governor's right." And the reason was that he'd been involved as governor in other emergencies before this, and as you now know, when he hears a piece of information about how a formula works or about how a grant thing

works, he never forgets it.[49] So here I am, fresh on the job working on this, explaining to him, We got to get this grant in, and I need his authority to move forward, and we're going to get 75 percent match, and he'd say, "Actually, Al, I think that's a 90 percent match." (laughs) So that was interesting.

So it was the two-way street. It was providing a clear direction to the people in the field, and it was getting very precise reporting back to him on what was going on.

DePue: One of the reasons I ask the question—I'm imagining that during the flood, every mayor, every county commissioner, was inundating the governor's office: We need help; we need to have the National Guard come in here; we need to have the Department of Corrections help us fill sandbags. Did he give any specific priorities or guidance in terms of how he would deploy the scarce resources the state had?

Grosboll: No, I think he assumed that the people he had delegated to this would understand better than anyone else where those troops and where those bodies should be sent. The only issue might be that if he had talked to a mayor or if he had read something in the paper or heard something, he would certainly say, "What's the story with this area? Are we doing what we can do there?" And either I or the National Guard or IEMA would say, "Here's what we've deployed. We don't think we can put any more there," *et cetera*. So he was certainly asking those types of questions, but there were not many cases where he would say, "Take those troops off of there and send them over there."

Now, I did that a couple of times. I had an incident or two—where we had some fairly significant National Guard troop buildups in an area where the danger had passed, and we had problems down the river. I then would ask the National Guard, "Can't we move those troops," and the answer would be, "Yeah, we can move those troops." I'd say, "Can we do that now," and they'd say, "Yes, we'll move those troops now." (laughs) Which seems humorous, but sometimes you have to go through that on a daily basis.

On particular days we were struggling every day to stay ahead of it. You remember the story of Sisyphus rolling the boulder up the hill, and as he gets to the top, the boulder rolls down, and he's doomed to all eternity to roll the boulder up the hill. And there were some time periods where I felt like I was Sisyphus; we were rolling a boulder up a hill, and just as we would get it to the top, we'd get another rainstorm and we'd have to start all over.

Interestingly, the flooding of 1993 did not end in the late spring, it did not end in the summer, it did not end in the early fall. We were still doing flood fighting throughout most of the calendar year. And then as we got into 1994, we had a whole series of other flooding activities occur that affected places like Havana, Mason

[49] Mike Lawrence also suggests that a conference for new governors, held shortly after Edgar's victory in November 1990, reinforced the importance of disaster preparation. Mike Lawrence, interview 4, April 1, 2009, 38-39.

County. Congressman Ray LaHood got involved in that and we worked very closely with him when that happened. So this boulder that we were dealing with, it just seemed like it was never going to end.

One of the better examples of something that occurred was the city of Alton. Alton had a major water supply in the river, and it was built fairly tall to try and protect it from flooding. But as the flood kept occurring during the summer, it would rise—it would get within a foot, maybe, of overflowing and thus destroying the water supply for Alton and that region—but we'd luck out and the river would fall back down. I started getting calls from the mayor of Alton indicating that this flooding we were having at this particular moment was such that he wasn't sure the water supply would be protected. We were talking to the water company, because it was a private company, and they kept telling us they had it under control. But the mayor of Alton, to his credit, kept saying, "I'm not sure that's true. We could be endangered within the next couple of days."

In talking with IEMA and then in talking with our water survey in Champaign-Urbana, they began to recognize that this could in fact be true; that the rising water level could surpass what we'd seen earlier in the year. So the Department of Public Health, which would step in if the water was endangered, began setting up. And we had lengthy talks on this, and we basically said, "We got to get an alternative water source set up down there so if the water system goes under, we're not scurrying with people without water for a day or two." So they did. They got a backup water system up, ready to roll. And sure enough, the water system went out and almost immediately, we announced that we had a water source, which was huge tankers of water. People could come there, could get jugs of water, could get whatever they needed. I was very proud that we listened to what the mayor had to say. He ended up being right; the water company was not accurate on this one. They didn't want to admit that their system was in jeopardy. The mayor had no qualms at all saying, "We think it's going under." And it did.[50]

DePue: Part of the strategy in fighting this, as I recall, was debates over whether or not they should deliberately breach certain dikes to release some of the pressure downstream, especially around the St. Louis area—which you've been talking about here.

Grosboll: That's right. Yeah, there were questions, because obviously the concerns were having houses and municipal areas—places like Alton and its water system—go under, versus farmland. So you're right, that was a situation in which there was a recognition that in some cases, some of those levees might have to be breached in order to relieve pressure on some of the urban areas.

DePue: Who's making the recommendations, and who's making decisions?

[50] Bob Towse was Alton's mayor. On August 1, 1993, the river overcame the 45-foot levee protecting the city's water supply. *Chicago Tribune*, August 2, 1993.

Grosboll: To be honest with you, a good deal of that was FEMA. The federal agency was probably more involved with that than I was.

DePue: With the Corps of Engineers?

Grosboll: Yes, Out of the Great Flood—when we finally get past what we thought would be weeks of flood fighting and ended up being months, there are some interesting things to come out of it. One of them is that Illinois embarked upon the largest buyout of property in the history of the state. We bought out—I don't know what the final total was. We were authorized, I believe, and we submitted to buy out something like twenty-one hundred structures. That could be a home that was in the middle of the flood plain; it could be a business. But the objective was to get people out of the flood plain so we did not have this occurring. And there were two reasons for that. One is, the more you build in the flood plain, the more you push problems downriver and make them someone else's problem. The more you build in a floodplain and take a wetland out of use, the more you hurt yourself down the road. The second thing, of course, is that it means that the next time a flood occurs, you're not going to have that problem to deal with.

The best example I can give you on that was that the town of Grafton had a mayor named [Gerald] "Windy" Nairn, whom Governor Edgar became very close with. Windy was a longtime Democrat. Early in the flooding, Al Gore came in as the vice president, spent time with Windy at Grafton. Governor Edgar was down there a lot.

DePue: What was the last name again?

Grosboll: Nairn. Windy Nairn. Windy has subsequently passed away. Windy was a great guy. He was on top of this flood. But there was a reason for it: he'd been mayor for thirty years, and this was the eighth flood (DePue laughs) that he had dealt with. And this flood was so bad that he used it as an opportunity to begin saying, "Maybe we ought to get these people who are most commonly being flooded out every two or three or five years, and maybe we ought to get them out of the flood plain," which, of course, we were encouraging. Our IEMA and the Illinois Department of Transportation, which then had the water resources division, had the ability to buy out flood plain property, so we began doing that.

DePue: With whose money?

Grosboll: It's federal money, with some state match. We provided the city of Grafton a significant amount of money that allowed them to develop a piece of property up on the bluff. It was within Grafton's boundaries, and as people were bought out along the river, they were given opportunities to instead relocate there. So I can't remember the number of properties we bought out, but we bought out quite a few.

Then later on, in the late nineties, Grafton had another flood. This was several years after the Great Flood of '93. The governor buzzed me and said, "Hey, have you talked to Windy Nairn?" And I said, "No, I haven't." He said, "Give him a call and ask him if they're being affected by the flooding that's occurring." So I did. I called

him up, and I said, "Mr. Mayor, how are things going?" He goes, "Oh, we're doing fine, Al." And I said, "Are you getting wet?" And he said, "Yeah." He said, "The river's up again, and the areas that normally get flooded are flooded." But he said, "Let me tell you a story. In those other eight floods that I dealt with, we'd get the city trucks, we'd go down to the river, and we'd move about a hundred families. This time, we're flooded again; I don't have to move anybody." And I thought, that's what the buyout's all about. So there was almost no damage incurred; no federal funds, no state funds needed to repair or to move people. They were bought out, and they moved to new locations.

And, of course, Valmeyer is another story of a similar nature. Valmeyer moved the entire community, which was a massive project. We played a fairly significant role in that, the federal government played a significant role; but the reality is that what happened in Valmeyer, and to some extent in Grafton, is really attributable to the local leadership. Valmeyer took a very strong position that they wanted to move out of harm's way. They moved their entire community up on a bluff. It would take Noah's flood to get to the new Valmeyer. So we could talk about that one all day, but the Valmeyer story is a great story. The community voted to move. We then helped coordinate funds from probably a dozen different state and federal agencies to help make that possible.[51]

DePue: You mentioned a lot of this is federal funds, but here you have a governor who has spent the previous two and a half years fighting horrendous budget battles year in and year out, trying to balance the thing, trying to fill this one-billion-dollar hole, and now you've got something very expensive like the flood.

Grosboll: Yeah. That's all true, but when you're dealing with an emergency, that takes priority. The governor, at every step of the way, when I would go to him for authority to do something, he would ask what it was going to cost? What's our share? Do we have it? Do we have access?" I would get asked those questions, and I would answer them to the best of my ability; with his correcting me every so often, because there were times he knew more about it than I did. But there were times when I knew things he didn't know, so I didn't get my clock cleaned every time I met with him. As I would meet with him on those issues, those questions would arise, but we never said, "We're not going to do this because we can't afford it." We always knew there was a way to find it; and fortunately, Governor Edgar was one of several governors that made a massive pitch in DC—a lot of pressure—to make sure that this was a 90 percent funded activity.[52] So 90 percent of most of the things that occurred in the flood fighting were paid for by the federal government.

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[51] The day after Alton was overrun, the Mississippi broke through a levee in Monroe County, Illinois, flooding seventy thousand acres of farmland and covering the entire town of Valmeyer with fifteen feet of water. Dennis Knobloch was mayor of Valmeyer, which had nine hundred residents at the time. *Chicago Tribune*, August 3, 1993; September 17, 1993; and June 19, 2008.

[52] At an August 26-27 summit meeting held in Des Moines between Clinton administration officials, midwestern governors, and local officials, HUD Sec. Henry Cisneros suggested

DePue: How would you describe his leadership in this crisis?

Grosboll: I think it is one of the shining moments of his administration. He was up and down the river throughout this. He developed relationships with mayors and other local leaders. He set the right tone, I think. And this sounds like I'm bragging, and I don't mean it that way, but I think he set the right tone very early on. He designated that the governor's office would take charge of this and that, in effect, we'd be responsible. I think that was the right tone. And then there were a whole bunch of other things he did that were smart. We brought in all of the local leaders to the governor's mansion and held a conference, and had everybody there that they needed to know, every agency; and we talked about what each agency could do, answered their questions, provided so that there was very strong communication between state government and locals. And I think they appreciated that.

I also think we provided the right leadership in terms of assisting and urging communities to do the buyouts. We did not have to be involved in the buyout of fifteen hundred to twenty-one hundred structures; that was a conscious choice we made. Other states—and I'll mention Missouri, for example—were not encouraging communities to sell out their properties in the manner that we did. We pushed that very strongly; and in fact, we actually had a little bit of problem with Missouri because Missouri was allowing people to rebuild certain kinds of things in the flood plain that we would never have allowed in Illinois; and then we had to listen to people on the Illinois side complain that they couldn't do things that were being allowed in Missouri.

I think that was leadership, and it was the right leadership. And ironically, it can be defined politically any way you want. I define it as being the essence of fiscal conservativism. Why are we paying for the flooding of properties multiple times over a twenty- or thirty-year period? We ought to buy them out; one-time hit, get them out of there, and not allow them to rebuild in the flood plain. That took leadership, and the governor was there. So I think what he did on the flood was very typical of who Jim Edgar is: very smart policies, very quiet leadership. He didn't get out there with a blow horn, talking about this and this and this; he quietly showed up, he did his thing—and again, I think it's a hallmark of his administration.

DePue: You were working quite a bit in IEMA—the bowels of IEMA, in their emergency room—I would imagine. Any personalities that stick out in your mind, this many years removed?

President Clinton was willing to waive the states' required 25 percent contribution toward cleanup costs. However, on September 2, FEMA angered the governors when it announced states would have to pay 10 to 25 percent of the damages caused by the flood. By September 25, President Clinton announced FEMA would reimburse 90 percent of eligible costs to all nine states affected by the flood. This decision was based on a new relief standard developed for extreme disasters with estimated damages of 0.1 percent of U.S. GDP. *Chicago Tribune*, August 27, 1993; September 3, 1993; and September 23, 1993.

Grosboll: You may have to help me out here on some names. But the head of IEMA at the time was a guy named John Plunk, and he was a great guy. He was a guy that was in his car, out in the field, talking to mayors all the time. Great personality; did a great job. The head of the National Guard—

DePue: Don Lynn?

Grosboll: Don Lynn was a true gentleman. He was a fellow that I found—just like John—very easy to work with. He was smart, understood the chain of command and in whenever I asked him for assistance or we would discuss a policy thing, he handled it as a professional, and as a gentleman. So both of those guys, I liked a lot. There are agencies that had a little trouble, particularly in the lower ranks, talking to each other, but both of those gentlemen, I had great respect for. But I spent a huge amount of time with the people a little lower down who were involved with a lot of the buyouts—people who were out in the field, doing assessments of flood damage and determining whether or not we should do a buyout of that property. And there were people—what I would call the middle ranks—that just did incredible work also.

DePue: You had mentioned before we got started that I should ask you about flood heroes.

Grosboll: (laughs) We had been involved in the flood fighting for a while, and I got a phone call from the Clinton White one day; and they indicated that the president was going to fly in—he was going to be in Denver because the Pope was coming into Denver. So he, Mrs. Clinton, and Chelsea were going to be in Denver, and on their way back to DC, they were going to stop in the St. Louis area and do a huge event to honor flood heroes. And my first question was, what is a flood hero? And they wanted people who had done things in the flood that were heroic. And to be honest with you, this was the last thing I wanted to be involved in. We were, pardon the phrase, up to our asses in alligators, (DePue laughs) and we were being asked to come up with basically a PR thing. But nevertheless, we were asked by the White House, and when the White House asks, you respond. So I put out the word to the National Guard, IEMA, others: "Gee, is there anybody out there that's a flood hero?"

And (laughs) I will tell you what—I almost hesitate to even mention this—but we did start working on it; and later that day, I got a second phone call in which I was informed that the White House wanted to make sure that we were identifying minorities who had been flood heroes. And I said, "Most of these areas are rural areas, and we don't have a lot of minorities in these areas." And they said, "Do the best you can. We want to make sure there are minorities represented on the stage as flood heroes."

So we talked it over, and eventually we did identify three people. There was a lady up in Niota who had taken her church and turned it into a food pantry and was running that food pantry twenty-four hours a day. There was an Asian gentleman in Alton who had basically taken his store, turned it over to the city of Alton, and allowed it to be used as the command center for Alton; so we recognized him as a flood hero. I think the White House was happy that we'd found a minority, but the

fact is what he was doing was good, and it deserved recognition. And then in Quincy, when one of the areas breached, water started flooding in and hit a viaduct just as a woman was driving her car under a viaduct, and the car was immediately thrust into water. The woman got out of the car, I think she was very scared. This gentleman saw it, got out of his car, went up sort of on top, reached down, and pulled this woman from the top of her car and got her out of the flood's way. So those were the three people that we put forward.[53]

So we all met in St. Louis. They brought their families. It was a very unusual event. The president came in, and I must say that the president did a great job. He went table to table. I introduced him to all of the people at the table. He was extremely gracious, very charismatic. Mrs. Clinton was there, and one of the most, just amazing things was that as I would introduce her to someone, she would say, "Oh, you're the one who set up the food pantry." And it dawned on me—she had read the briefings. Now, the president probably hadn't. (DePue laughs) He was just his normal, gregarious self. But Mrs. Clinton had read the briefings, and as she would meet these people, she knew their stories. It was amazing. And then Chelsea was there, and this was a young girl who immediately saw other children at our table and went right over to them to make friends. So it was a very impressive moment.

On the other hand, the president's staff was about as bad an experience as I've ever had. Before the president arrived, this young kid, probably twenty-four, -five years old, got up in front of the crowd, welcomed everybody, and began using the phrase, "This is your day," which people started mocking (DePue laughs) before the president even got there. And then—after telling everybody how it was their day and that they should be very proud and that the White House wanted them to be very satisfied with this day—announced that no one was to take any photographs and that no one was to videotape anything that occurred; that they, the White House, would do all the photographing and would provide us photographs.

I'd brought a photographer down from Springfield, who was on the governor's staff. I'd asked this guy to come on down. So I went up to this young fellow, and I said, "Hey, look. I have a photographer here." He said, "I'm sorry. He can't take any pictures." Well, standing behind us was an area where the media was, and there were fifty photographers there. So I said, "All of these people are taking photographs, why can't my guy?" And he said, "No, we don't allow it." And I said, "You know what? I'm going to have my guy sit there with the media and take photographs. If you've got a problem, you'll have to have him removed." He said, "All right, we'll allow him to go there, but he can't go anywhere else." So our photographer was there, and when the president came in, he took a lot of photos.

By the way, a couple of the young kids there had movie cameras, and they were just brokenhearted that they were not going to be able to video the president coming

[53] The Clinton administration chose two of the Illinois nominees: Rev. Donna Harris, who used her Niota church to supply food and fresh water; and Arthur Towata, whose art gallery was used as a center for sandbagging operations in Alton. *Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1993.

into the room. So I went to them, and I said, "I'll tell you what. When the president walks into the room, start your cameras. They're not going to make a scene and take your camera away." And then my wife was with me. She actually took one of the video-cameras and started videoing the event. And sure enough, they did not stop anybody. But it was a piece of absurdity to tell people that this was a day to honor them, but, by the way, you can't take any photographs.

The irony of this is that when the event was over with, I and the other coordinators from seven other states would go to DC, and we would meet with White House staff and with people from all sorts of other departments at the federal level to continue coordinating what was happening between the federal government and states on responding [to disasters]. A month or two afterwards, we were all in DC, and when the White House showed up, we said that none of us have ever gotten those photographs from flood heroes day. And it ended up that the White House lost all their photographs. So the only state that had photographs was Illinois, because we had our own photographer there.

DePue: But you're going to provide some of these photographs for our collection.

Grosboll: I will if you want them.

DePue: Oh, absolutely.

Grosboll: I probably have still got some. But that's a long story about kind of a trite event. But I do want to say this: the Clinton White House—notwithstanding that incident, which bordered on absurdity—did a great job on the flood, and I put a lot of that on James Lee Witt, who was the FEMA director. He had run Arkansas's emergency management office; he knew what he was doing; he rose to meet the challenge. He did a great job. And when he would meet with us, he would make promises, and he followed through. That was not as true with some of the other departments, but it was absolutely true of FEMA; I give President Clinton and James Lee Witt a lot of credit, they did a good job.

DePue: Did you find the Corps of Engineers good to work with?

Grosboll: Yeah, although, to be honest with you, we did not work as much with the Corps as we worked with FEMA, U.S. EPA, and some of the others. The Commerce Department was terrible. Well, it was the Economic Development Administration. We never could get answers out of them, and when they would make promises, they never followed through on it. But U.S. EPA did a good job; FEMA did a good job; HUD eventually did a good job with some of the funds that they came through on.

DePue: We spent quite a bit of time talking about the flood, but I think it's crucial that we did, because this dominated the news in 1993; you just couldn't escape that.

Grosboll: Yeah, absolutely. By the way, probably the funniest moment that occurred for me on that flood was the governor went into Keithsburg after it had been flooded a couple of times. He went back there, and he saw the mayor. We had a conversation with the

mayor as we walked the streets of Keithsburg. And there were still a lot of basements that were drying out, but they had been flooded. A lot of stuff needed to be pulled out of those basements and probably hauled away. And earlier in the discussion, the mayor had told us that they had had some work camp prisoners there, who had helped them sandbag and do work during the flood, and thanked us for that.

I had gotten a phone call from a college nearby that had offered—a bunch of students wanted to come over and help clean out, if that would be of help. So I offered that to the mayor. I said, "These college students would be more than happy to come to town; and as people are clearing out the basements, throwing things away, they'd be more than happy to help do that." And the mayor said, "Well." He said, "You know, this is a small town, and people really don't like strangers in their basement, and I don't know that they would take to that very well." He paused, and he said, "But you know, if those work camp kids are available, they'd more than welcome them." (laughter) I could hardly keep from laughing, because what he was saying was, we don't want those college kids in our basements, but you can send those prisoners back. (laughter) And the reason was that they had been extremely impressed at how hard these prisoners had worked, trying to protect their town. I thought that was a very good, very, very funny moment.

DePue: Coming out of this whole experience of the flood, how did all of that affect the governor's reputation and popularity?

Grosboll: I think it helped him a lot. There was a perception in the media that the governor had risen to the occasion. He had been all over the state when that was occurring. We were very visible, out front. We were working with DC to get more money for Illinois; we were working with mayors. So I think overall, the media response was a very positive response. You'd run into an incident where a mayor would be mad because you hadn't been to his town before you went to somebody else's town. You ran into a little of that. And then, quite frankly, as the emergency aspects of the flood sort of went down and people were left with a mess in their towns, there was a great deal of emotion out there. They'd take it out on the mayor; they'd take it out on the Corps; they'd take it out on anybody. But you're going to see that happen, and you just have to try and calm people down and do the best job you can. But again, I think the governor came out of it with a great deal of respect; and I noticed even five years later, when reviews were being done of his administration, many of the reporters hearkened back to the job he had done handling the flood.

DePue: This is interesting because '93 is dominated by the flood; then you go into 1994. Oh, it's an election year; he's up for reelection, and maybe in that respect, it's not such terrible timing; that he comes off of doing something very well.

Grosboll: Right. That's true, Mark, but first off—I know this is going to sound a little naïve—I never viewed that the flood and how we dealt with it was going to have much of an impact on the election or that it did, looking back on it. Now, it would have, had we messed up. The fact that you do a good job—that's good, that's expected of you. But if we had really screwed up and had made some serious mistakes, then I think it

would have hurt us. But I don't know that [it had an impact] on the positive side, other than the fact that it continued to reinforce the sense that Jim Edgar was a very committed guy; that he was sincere; that he was a good public servant; that he was competent. It reinforced that a little, but many of the areas we were working in were very rural, not particularly populated.

DePue: Not where the votes were.

Grosboll: Not a lot of votes. So I don't think, when all is said and done, the Great Flood—as much as I'd like to think that our good work there helped to reelect him—the reality is that election really focused on far more things than that.

DePue: Were you involved in any meaningful way in the election in '94?

Grosboll: I did not work on the campaign. The only thing is, when you are in a governor's office and your boss is running for reelection, obviously you're trying to stay on your toes, make sure your agencies are doing the right thing. Make sure that if you've made promises, that those promises are met in an election year. You don't want to goof up. So, for example, we'd indicated that we would have Dickson Mounds reopened with a new set of exhibits there in 1994, and we did. We had it done, and had that not happened, people would have lambasted us for not meeting our promise there. So we all have to be on our toes, but to be honest with you I tried to avoid doing very much political work at all.

DePue: Just a couple more quick questions on that, then. Ninety-four is an interesting political year at the national level in the United States. It's an off-year election—Clinton was not running for reelection. But as you know, he absolutely got pummeled, or the Democrats got pummeled, in November. Any reflections on that and whether or not that played at all into Governor Edgar's own campaign?

Grosboll: As you will remember, he won by a large plurality.[54] I don't know that the condition at the national level made a particular difference in the election. It may have added to his plurality. But the other thing that was happening in 1994, not only in Illinois but really throughout the Midwest, you had some pretty competent Republican governors who had fought through recessionary problems and had gotten their states back up on their feet. And the Republican Party ran very well throughout much of the Midwest. Part of it was probably a little bit of a reaction to Bill Clinton. It took Clinton a couple of years to sort of get his sea legs. He made some early mistakes in terms of what he moved into initially. And that probably did help the Republican Party, particularly in the Midwest; but there were other things going on, too. The governors in the Midwest, and Jim Edgar, had all done very solid jobs and had sort of steered their states through some pretty tough times.

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

DePue: I think we need to talk a little bit about that campaign, even though you weren't involved with it too much, because of what's going to come in his second administration and his priority in the second administration.

Grosboll: Sure, yeah.

DePue: In the spring, Dawn Clark Netsch wins a pretty heated primary campaign and comes away with the Democratic nod. She beats Roland Burris, she beats Richard Phelan—comes away as a straight shooter. But what was her main theme in her campaign?

Grosboll: The straight shooter—she had a pool-table ad, where she was shooting pool as a straight shooter. And it was a very good ad. Her main theme was to swap out property taxes to fund education with an income tax increase. And then her income tax proposal was one where she would have also completely revamped how the income tax was applied. There were several factors in her proposal, but a major part was to swap out some property taxes for income tax.

DePue: And how did Edgar respond to that?

Grosboll: Of course, we criticized her plan. Now, eventually—as we will get to in this discussion, later on—after Governor Edgar is reelected, we do propose a swap; and I would qualify this with two points. Number one: Jim Edgar throughout his political career had always indicated that he was open-minded to a swap of those things—well before Dawn Clark Netsch ever announced her proposal, Jim Edgar had been on record. In fact, he got hit very strongly in the 1990 primary for saying that he was open to the idea of swapping. He had said for many years he was open to it. So that's the first point I would make, and the second point I would make is that nobody ever wants to discuss some of the nuances of Edgar's opposition to Netsch's plan versus how he eventually positioned himself. And I don't mean to rationalize and justify this, but I do want to say that in fairness to Edgar there are some nuances that we should talk about. And the first one is this: Edgar always felt very strongly after his experience in '90, after his experience watching this education funding issue, that we would never be able to do a tax swap unless we got a handle on Chicago schools.

Chicago schools were—I hate to use this phrase, but it was like putting money down a rat hole. They were going through these boom and bust cycles where every two, three, four years they would say they were a hundred million in debt; they needed more state money. And in the case of 1995, they eventually came in and said they were 290 million dollars in debt and that the state would have to bail them out. It was Edgar's belief that we could never get the votes to do a swap unless there was a sense that we had finally gotten a handle on Chicago schools and turned them around.[55] Go back and look at Dawn's plan. Her swapping, with a massive increase of money for education, had no conditions for school reform—not a one. There was no

[55] This was not Edgar's first experience with Chicago's school funding woes. See Jim Edgar, interview 6, June 10, 2009, 66-77, for his discussion of Thompson's 1980 school funding summit.

reforming of Chicago schools, and there was no reforming of the overall school structure in Illinois.

Edgar never put forward his swapping plan until we passed a large-scale—in fact, I would say the most dramatic school structural change in the country—the Chicago school reform plan. And when he did put forward his plan, he had a whole series of other reforms on the statewide scene: expanding the time it takes for tenure, speeding up the time that it takes to fire a bad teacher. He wanted charter schools as part of the plan. So while people in a very black-and-white world say, "Dawn Clark Netsch said she wanted to swap; Edgar opposed it. He gets elected, then he supports it. This it misses a whole series of nuances, and I think it's fair to point those out.

DePue: Since we're talking about Chicago school reform, what was the most significant structural change to the way that school district was administered?

Grosboll: If I may, let me put this in the perspective of how this all came about. Nineteen ninety-five, Edgar gets reelected; and shortly thereafter, the Chicago school system says they're 290 million dollars in debt, and they have no way of getting out from under that, and the state's going to have to bail them out. This was the third or fourth time that many legislators in Springfield had gone through this. There was a sense that we were not going to do it; that the Chicago school system had no ability to get control over this. And here was what I believe was the most serious problem in Chicago: nobody was taking responsibility. The mayor, from the time he had been elected, had basically washed his hands of the issue; and the reason was that his hands were tied in terms of how the appointments to the Chicago school board were made. It was a seventeen-member board. Slates would be put forward; he would have to pick the slate that had been put forward. If he didn't like the slate or any of the slates, he would ignore it. So he would say, "It's not my fault." The local school councils that were helping put slates together would blame everything on Mayor Daley—that's why everything was a mess. The teacher unions would blame other people. They'd gone through three or four school superintendents in a ten-year period, all of whom had left as embarrassments.

DePue: How were the superintendents selected, do you recall? The school board?

Grosboll: The seventeen-member board would pick. So Daley would say, "It's not my fault." And in fact, he gave a speech in front of one of the business clubs in Chicago in which he said, Oh, give me the authority to do A, B, and C, and we'll get a handle on this. Ultimately, we took him up on that. And initially, when Edgar announced what the Chicago school reform bill was, Mayor Daley called friends and said, "Jim Edgar's trying to screw me." One of the papers called us and said, "The mayor's folks are saying this is an effort by you to screw him." And we said, "Let us e-mail you Mayor Daley's speech on this very topic." And the speech said, Let me appoint the board; let me appoint the superintendent; let me have control over this and this and this—all of which we did in the bill. So it caused the *Chicago Tribune* to write an editorial telling the mayor basically to shut up; that he had been telling business groups that there was no line of responsibility. He wanted it, and now that he was

getting it, he was whining to everybody behind the scenes that this was just our effort to embarrass him. That was not our intention.[56]

Let's back up. Both the House and the Senate began looking into this issue and holding hearings. We got to the Easter break. I asked into our office the Senate leader on the education issue and the House leader on it on the Republican side, because both houses were Republican. I could not get them to agree on a single thing. Everybody agreed the board ought to be smaller, but they argued over how big. They couldn't agree on who should appoint the board. They couldn't agree on any of it. I went back to Governor Edgar, and I said, "We've been working with both chambers; they are nowhere." A lady named Mindy Sick, who was working with us at the time, and I told the governor,"We actually believe that we can put forward to you, a series of options that you can choose from."

We went through some of those ideas, and the governor—in probably one of the wisest things that I experienced during my eight years in the governor's office—said, "Those are all good ideas, but have you sat down with all the players in Chicago and asked their opinion?" And we said, "No, but they'd been at these hearings." And he said, "No, no, have you sat down with them?" And Mindy and I had to say, well, no, we haven't. And he said, "We got Easter break. You got two weeks. Get to Chicago, meet with all the groups, and come back and talk to me." So we did. We worked up a schematic of about thirty-five or forty questions: What size should the board be? How should they be appointed? How could we revamp the superintendent's position? What role should principals have? Do they need more authority or less authority? School councils—do they have too much power; do they need to be controlled? So we did that. We went to Chicago. We probably met with at least forty players.

DePue: Independently or in…?

Grosboll: A couple of them would be together. We had two meetings with groups of school councils. We met with the head of the Chicago Principals Association. We met with the school superintendent; we met with the president of the school board, Sharon Grant—who eventually went to prison, by the way. We met with the unions.

DePue: What union? Is it Chicago Teachers Union?

Grosboll: Yep. And so with each group, we would say we'd like to run through a series of questions. We ran through those questions. Two weeks goes by; we meet with Governor Edgar, and we say, Governor, we're going to tell you something that's really pretty interesting. On most of the issues, these groups have pretty strong agreement. They don't realize it and they won't admit it, (Depue laughs) but they all agree that principals in Chicago don't have enough authority, that their hands are tied. We need to give the principals more authority. They all agree that the current school

[56] Grosboll is probably referring to the speech Daley delivered on January 18, 1995, when he unveiled his own reform proposal at the Chicago Cultural Center. The *Chicago Tribune* editorial ran April 27, 1995.

board is a disaster and that it needs to be smaller. Even people on the board agree with that. They all agree that the school superintendent needs to be stronger and needs to have his or her feet held to the fire better. They all agree that Mayor Daley has been ducking responsibility—everybody at the mayor's office, which was the only group that had no suggestions for us and resented the fact that we had even invited them in to talk to us.

So then we went through a host of propositions that came out of these meetings, and the governor made the call: I want this; I want that. The final issue was, what's the actual authority that ought to be over the Chicago schools? The radical proposal that we put forward to him was that we needed a CEO to run the Chicago schools, not a school superintendent; that their biggest problems were financial and management issues, not education issues. You can hire someone to be your education czar, but you need a CEO to run these schools. Ultimately, Edgar went with that choice, and then city after city in the United States began following that mode. From Los Angeles to DC to you name it, they all eventually took this model that we had created—

DePue: Can we go back, before you get too much farther into this. Before you went up to Chicago, there was great disagreement, from what you've described, in the legislature itself; and the irony here is that this is the one period of time in Illinois' recent history that both the House and the Senate in Illinois are majority party Republican.

Grosboll: Right. The problem is that there were personality differences between the House and the Senate. That was it in a nutshell.

DePue: We've got Lee Daniels as speaker of the House, with Mike Madigan as the minority leader at that time.

Grosboll: And we had Senator [Pate]Philip in the Senate, and they each had education committees. And I'm just going to say there were differences of agreement; but more importantly, nobody had taken the time to actually sit down and put a proposal together and move forward. We would have liked to have developed a cooperative proposal; with the House Republicans, the Senate Republicans, and the governor's office in agreement. We could not get that. There was too much animosity between those two caucuses. We could hardly even get them into the same room. And even in talking to them individually, we could not get them to say how the board should get appointed.

DePue: I know that Pate Philip never saw Edgar as his kind of Republican. Was that part of the problem?

Grosboll: No. That's not what the problem was on this issue. The problem on this issue was that the point people on education in the House and in the Senate were having trouble communicating with each other. And each caucus, in some ways, wanted to be the point person on education; and on the other hand, they didn't want to step forward with a specific proposal.

Jim Edgar does a press conference in which he lays out all of the details of the Chicago school reform bill.[57] There was a financial oversight entity; we did away with it. There was a school board; we did away with it. In its place, we put a five-member board, a super board, with all the powers that had previously been spread among two different entities. We said the mayor gets to appoint the five members, and he doesn't need anybody's approval. The mayor gets to pick the CEO. And then we gave that board more power than any other board had ever been given. We gave principals more authority than they had been given. We loosened up the flexibility on how funds could be spent. We gave the board far more authority on how they could spend funds and where they could pull the funds from. The net result, by the way, was that they did not end up getting an additional dime over and above what they otherwise would have gotten, and they balanced their budget.

So Edgar announces this plan. It is the most extensive, far-reaching Chicago school reform plan that has ever been proposed, and I would argue it's probably one of the most far-reaching urban school system reform plans in the history of the country. And if you go back and read the papers, neither the Senate Republicans nor the House Republicans jump on board. It takes two weeks before, finally, both the speaker and the Senate president eventually get on board, wrap their arms around the plan, and make it theirs. And eventually they pass the bill almost as we had written it. Within six months, both chambers were claiming that the package was their package. They were describing it as their initiative, not Edgar's—that Edgar was just along for the ride. Mayor Daley, who had told people Jim Edgar was trying to screw him over, began depicting the plan as his plan; that in effect, he had given that plan to the legislature. And on and on it goes. And if you go back and read descriptions of that plan, you won't see Jim Edgar's name very much. And to me, it's one of the great ironies: what I consider to be one of the most dramatic initiatives of Jim Edgar's administration, and people do not want to give him credit for it.

DePue: I got a couple questions here, because I think this is a very important subject you're talking about; and one of them is pure ignorance on my part. I'm trying to understand, as I'm listening to you, why it's the state government; why it's not Cook County or the city of Chicago that's taking on this initiative themselves.

Grosboll: A couple of reasons. Number one: Mayor Daley—and whoever the mayor's going to be in Chicago—is always in a bind because they are extremely close with the CTU, the Chicago Teachers Union. It is—and I don't think I'm exaggerating this—practically an arm of the Democratic organization in Chicago. It makes it very difficult for a Chicago mayor to ever take actions that undermine or weaken the union or go against what they want. So the beauty for Mayor Daley is that he got a law that streamlined their ability to move and act against bad teachers or failing schools, gave them total authority over the finances in a way that the unions didn't necessarily agree with; so that he could say to the unions, "I didn't do this. Edgar did. The state did." You're never going to see a mayor of Chicago propose something that's going to hurt the unions. It's just not going to happen. And I don't mean that as a strong partisan

[57] April 25, 1995.

statement, it's just the reality. The Chicago Teachers Union is never going to endorse Republicans. They're going to endorse Democrats; they're going to align themselves with the Democratic mayor of the city of Chicago. And you're not going to see the mayor or other Democratic leaders buck the Chicago Teachers Union. It must come from a Republican initiative of this nature. So that's a harsh way of putting it.

But in addition to that, the reason the state's involved is because the structure of the Chicago school system for many, many years has been in effect structured by state government, and it usually came in response to the city saying, give us more money. So the state would give the city more money and then say, but we want a financial oversight panel. They'd get the oversight panel, and then eight years later, they'd say, this financial oversight panel isn't working; we want something else. So this goes back a very long time period; and again, it boils down to, you want more money? Fine, but here's how we want you to operate. That's why the state's involved.

The best story I can tell you, though, about the Chicago school reform, is that Mayor Daley—and I've been a little critical of the mayor here. I've been critical in that he has never, ever recognized Jim Edgar's efforts on this. Mayor Daley has always wanted to define Edgar as just trying to undermine the city; when in fact, I think that our proposal was one of the most important things that ever happened to the city, and I think it's one of the most important things that's ever happened to Rich Daley. It allowed him to do what he has done and have the ability to blame it on someone else, *i.e.*, Jim Edgar or the legislature. I think it's one of the most striking examples of Mayor Daley's leadership, because once he was given this power, he did step up to the plate. He took probably his most competent bureaucrat, Paul Vallas, and put him in charge of the schools. He took one of his most trusted advisors—who had previously been his chief of staff—Gery Chico, and made him the chairman of the board or the president of the board. And they then set about being very serious about this.

So Mindy Sick and I go to meet with Paul Vallas a few months after Paul has been on the job. This is after a session in which we've reformed how the structure works; Paul has been named as the CEO of the Chicago schools; the city had gone from saying they had a 290 million dollar deficit to not getting any new money other than what they regularly would have. And we go to meet with him. And I predicted to Mindy what I thought was going to happen. That Paul's going to say he's got the budget in balance—because we knew there were ways they could get that year's budget in balance. But, I said, "I think he's going to tell us that in the second year or the third year, he's going to need some help; and we're going to have to hold firm."

We go into the meeting, and after Paul praises us for our work and we praise him for his work, we get down to business. And he said, "I'm here to present our budget. I have a three-year budget that's been put together, it will be announced here in the next month or two, and I just want to give you guys a heads up. We're going to announce we have a budget that's balanced through the next three years." And he kind of stopped. And I said, "Paul, are you telling me that you're not going to be in,

asking for more money from the state?" And he said, "Absolutely not." He said, "We will expect whatever the normal amount is, whatever we would get through the normal formula of additional money, but we're not going to ask for any more than that." At that point, I became a little bit of a doubter, and I said, "Paul, are you sure you can pull that off?" And he said, "Al, we're going to have a balanced budget, and we're not coming back to the state for more money." I would point out that that was 1995. It has now been fourteen years, and I don't think the city has ever come back—they might have done some mumbling this year—but basically, they have never come back saying, we're in debt and the state's got to bail us out.

DePue: That had been the broken record for decades and decades before that point in time.

Grosboll: Yeah, and I would challenge anybody to go back, certainly over a twelve- or thirteen-year period, and find where the city ever cried wolf again. So that's the test to me. And what Paul did on the budget, for many people, appeared to be miraculous. It really was a lot of common sense. He was a fiscal guy. He shut down schools that were inefficient. They had people on the payroll called supernumeraries. He went in and basically said, we have teachers who are no longer needed, but we are required to keep them, and he got rid of all of them. We had people doing nothing. We had people called firemen. It was an anachronism that went back to the days when we had boilers and furnaces in these school buildings that needed somebody to put the coal in and keep the furnaces going. The firemen were protected by union. We still had firemen in schools where they had no furnaces. Paul got rid of them. Paul cancelled hundreds and hundreds of contracts that were just sweetheart deals with friends of friends.

DePue: All this is getting at the patronage power base of Mayor Daley.

Grosboll: Yes. But it also got to the heart of people that were head of the school board, who were making lots of money on the side. I mentioned earlier, Sharon Grant was the president of the school board. Sharon Grant went to prison for taking bribes.[58] And there were God knows how many contracts, stinky contracts, handed out to friends. Paul went through that budget and cancelled contracts. Probably the most symbolic thing was he shut down Pershing Road. Pershing Road was this gigantic Chicago school board office that was a horribly inefficient building that had become the symbol of inefficiency with Chicago schools. He shut it down and moved the offices downtown to a smaller space. Paul was pretty good at public relations, and he went to some storage buildings they had and opened it up to the media, where they would see all sorts of supplies had been bought that were completely unnecessary; where somebody wanted to sell X product to the school board, so they'd buy ten years' worth of that product.

[58] Grant, who had failed to file federal income tax returns since 1977, pleaded guilty to a single count of federal income tax evasion, July 6, 1995. Four months later, she pleaded guilty to state tax charges. *Chicago Tribune*, November 9, 1995.

It was a whirlwind, watching what Paul Vallas did. Now, Paul made enemies, eventually ran into conflict with the mayor himself, and eventually moved on. But Paul Vallas did a great job. And to his credit, I believe that the mayor did the right thing once he was given the responsibility. I just wish he'd recognize that Jim Edgar is the one that helped him do that.

DePue: And as a footnote here on Paul Vallas's career, he lost by a whisker in the primary campaign for governor against Rod Blagojevich in 2002.

Grosboll: Right. Paul Vallas could very easily have won that race. Many people I know who were active with Paul and who know that race pretty well will tell you that he lost that race for two reasons. He did not raise enough money. If he'd had about fifty thousand dollars more and could have advertised downstate, he probably would have won that race. He lost that race because he did terrible downstate. Nobody knew him. He had no money to advertise downstate; whereas Blagojevich had millions to use downstate and ran like gangbusters. The other thing that happened: Paul refused to fly. He didn't fly on planes. And had Paul been a little more willing to get on planes and fly to southern Illinois, be seen at events, show up more frequently, I think that could have helped turn it around, too. So his aversion to flying and his lack of money is the only reason he didn't get nominated and then probably get elected.[59]

DePue: That's great information about the Chicago school district and the reforms that happened in 1995. And I'm surprised, I guess, to say that it sounds like you were very intimately involved in that whole process as well, at least going up to Chicago and sitting down with folks.

Grosboll: At that stage, I was his point person on Chicago school reform, along with a lady who had started with us as an intern—and then we kept her on—named Mindy Sick. Mindy was a wonderfully bright person who just did a great job for us. Subsequently she has gone on and gotten her PhD in education.

DePue: How do you spell her last name?

Grosboll: S-i-c-k. And then she married a fellow, and her last name became Munger, M-u-n-g-e-r. I have told her I refuse to call her "Doctor," though. (laughter) She was absolutely intricate to that proposal being put together and put before Governor Edgar.

DePue: There's one piece of information we need to go back and talk about in 1994, the election year, and that's his heart troubles that emerged July seventh, right in the early stages of the main campaign with Netsch. What can you tell me about that?

Grosboll: It was a little bit of a shock to all of us, you know, to get word that he had a heart problem.

DePue: I made the mistake of saying he had a heart attack, and I can't remember who I was talking to; just jumped on me right away—it was not a heart attack.

[59] Get official returns for this primary.

Grosboll: And I would tell you that of course, in the office, it was made very clear that we were to not use that phrase, because it was not a heart attack, it was a… I don't know what we would call it. (laughter) He did have to have a procedure. As I recall, he had—did he have bypass at that—

DePue: He had a heart bypass.[60]

Grosboll: He had bypass that time, and then he had stents later on that had to be put in. When that bypass occurred, that was obviously a shock to all of us. At that stage in time, I'm not sure I knew a healthier person. This was a guy who did not appear to have any excess weight. He was a guy that appeared to be in great shape. He never smoked; he didn't drink. The problem is—Mark Twain used to make a point that he could have said about Jim Edgar. He said the problem is that this is a guy who, when he did have an illness, had no vices to give up. (DePue laughs) The poor guy had no vices. So it was very unusual. He did not smoke at all; he exercised—he liked to walk; he liked to ride a bicycle—and yet that he would have this problem. Of course, then eventually what we find out is that this is a genetic condition; it's not related to ill health or not taking care of himself. So that was a shock.

Now, the other thing I would tell you is that I think for those of us in the office, I'm not sure we accepted just how serious this was. Because he was such a vibrant guy, we just assumed, oh, okay, he's had a bypass. He'll be back to work, and everything will be fine. And eventually that did happen, but I think what we did not realize at that point was that this was really the beginning of a condition that would be with Jim Edgar for the rest of his life. But it obviously had an impact. We all had to continue doing our jobs. For the campaign, it meant they had a bit of a challenge, because now they had to make sure that the public did not have doubts about Jim Edgar's ability to continue governing. That was a bit of a challenge, and obviously they dealt with it because not very many people had concerns about his health when they went to the polls that November.

DePue: Did you visit him in the hospital?

Grosboll: I did not. I did not. I think the general sense in the office was that there were a couple of people who needed to meet with him, but otherwise, we should not be filling up the hallways of the hospital. That was my attitude. I talked to him shortly after he got out, and he seemed fine. I actually talked to him on the phone when he was in the hospital, but I did not go to the hospital to visit with him.

DePue: Let's get into the second administration. We've already been talking about it a lot because that one initiative in Chicago school reform was big, and I certainly want to come back and talk about the other initiatives in Illinois educational reform and budget reform. But before that, I think we need to talk about the reorganization of a

[60] 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, 1. See Edgar interview number ??; Mike Lawrence, interview 5, July 2, 2009, 24-27.

lot of agencies into the Department of Natural Resources, which also happened in 1995. And I had been led to understand that you were very intimately involved in that as well. So tell us, to begin with, what was the impetus for making that change?

Grosboll: I think the impetus was a sense that we had a Department of Conservation, but there were many things that related to conservation and the outdoors that were not in that department. So, for example, we still had a Department of Mines and Minerals. It was not a particularly large department at that point, but we had a Department of Mines and Minerals that oversaw mining activities, including reclamation. And, we had an Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Council, which I actually ran for three years that oversaw the reclaiming of older properties. To me, there was a relationship between those activities and conservation because many of those properties, particularly the strip properties and the older surface-mined properties, eventually became hunting areas; and many of them had lakes that became great fishing areas. Some of the best fishing in southern Illinois is in old strip-mining lakes. So there was a relationship there. There was also a whole relationship to the permitting of these mining operations and what their impact on land and water was. And shouldn't the Department of Natural Resources or Conservation care about that? We had the scientific surveys, which had been in a variety of different agencies over the years. They were in Champaign, and they reported to another agency. It was my sense that the scientific surveys ought to be in DNR so that they could help the department as they were making decisions about a variety of outdoor conservation-related issues. The water resources division, which was located in the Department of Transportation, it seemed to me should be located in a Department of Natural Resources.

So those are some examples. The governor agreed that it would make sense to have a true Department of Natural Resources, not just a Department of Conservation that dealt with parks and hunting. So I believe it was in '95 we put forward that proposal. Interestingly, there were some concerns initially when we put that proposal out there, just as there were concerns when Edgar proposed merging social service agencies into a Department of Human Services. But eventually, we won over people who had problems with it, and we were able to get that job done. So Conservation, Mines and Minerals, Water Resources, the scientific surveys, the Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Council all merged into one department.

DePue: Where was this idea coming from initially? Was it your initiative? Were you the one who had made the proposal?

Grosboll: I did, but I should also point out that over the years, there were other people that would say, why do you need a Department of Mines and Minerals? Why does it need to be a stand-alone entity? There were people, and I was among them who would say, what's water resources doing in DOT? Why shouldn't that be in conservation? So this is not as if I was operating in a vacuum.

We had had Conservation Congress, which we'll talk maybe a little bit more about, where we brought in lots and lots of conservation groups. There were things that they would discuss that related to these organization issues. And then in the first

term, we'd had another thing called the Water Resources and Land Use Priorities Task Force, in which we brought outdoors people, environmentalists, farmers, and realtors together to see if there weren't some things that we could agree on. And interestingly, there were a lot of things we agreed on, and that resulted in some pretty good things. The structural issues arose there, too. I don't recall if they made any recommendation about a merger, but some of these issues did arise.

And then the last one I can tell you about is that in the first administration, Joan Walters was heading up the Bureau of the Budget, and Joan went through a series of efforts to look at reorganizing and saving some money. Initially, she had some ideas related to the natural resource areas. Ultimately, I told the governor that I was uncomfortable with several of those proposals because we had not been there long enough, had our feet on the ground long enough, to know exactly how we should do it, and that I felt we needed more time to work out some of those thoughts. By the time we got to early 1995, it was very clear in my mind what some obvious changes were.

DePue: I would imagine, if I can interject here, that being out in the flood and working the flood issues kind of crystallized some of these things for you?

Grosboll: A little bit, yeah. For example, most of the buyouts that were occurring from 1993 though the end of the decade were through water resources at DOT. And again, it makes some sense to me that that ought to be part of the Department of Natural Resources. An example of how the merger became very helpful was because the Department of Natural Resources began dealing with the whole mining community, it put us directly into conversations with mining companies about some of their old strip properties and some of their old surface mining properties that were great for outdoor experiences. And ultimately, that led to us taking control over tens of thousands of old strip mines and surface mines that were reclaimed, had no environmental damage, but had great fishing and hunting opportunities.

DePue: You've talked about Mines and Minerals several times in here, but it strikes me that it's not necessarily going to be a happy marriage between Mines and Minerals—an agency that I believe saw their role in promoting an industry that was gradually dying away in southern Illinois, and they had a lot of pain with that—and people who are much more interested in environmental issues or reclamation issues. That couldn't have been a happy experience.

Grosboll: You are absolutely right that there are conflicts. That's not unusual that agencies will sometimes have conflicting values within the agency. By the way, it's not just a difference of opinion between coal mining people and promoting their industry versus a DNR that is concerned about our natural resources; it's also a conflict between the aggregate mining operations—those that are mining limestone, sand, *et cetera*—because they're also regulated by the old Mines and Minerals Department and now the Mines and Minerals Division. So within both of those communities, there is conflict with other people in the Department of Natural Resources. For example, oftentimes when quarries are being developed or being expanded, if they go

anywhere near a natural area, a nature preserve—that's potentially a wetland. You can influence what's going on with water and damage a nature preserve. This one, I'm particularly familiar with because my wife ran the Nature Preserves Commission. She was there eleven years.[61] And there were several conflicts that came up. Generally these came up after I left state government—my wife was there for several years afterwards. And those were huge issues that had to be negotiated between the Department of Natural Resources and some mining companies to make sure that they did not damage water table and affect a fen or a bog or a marsh or something of that nature.

So you're correct that there were conflicts, but the potential for those conflicts is not necessarily a reason not to do the merger; it merely means that the leadership of that department needs to recognize they're going to have some issues that they're going to have to manage, and that's what we hire them to do.

DePue: So we've got the idea, the concept of creating this new institution. Now, walk us through the steps of how you actually brought that about, or how the administration, I should say, brought it about.

Grosboll: Again, it's a long time ago, and I'm sure I'm going to miss several steps here, but I think once we put the concept together, we had to build support for it. So within the natural resources community, that was easy; to go out to all of the hunting and fishing groups and the natural resource entities—that could be the Nature Conservancy, it could be Openlands in Chicago, it could be Rails to Trails—all of these various groups—and get them on board. That was pretty easy, because they viewed that this was giving the department more responsibilities than it had ever had before, and that was a good thing. But we also then had to make sure that the mining companies did not go nuts about this. There was some concern, and frankly, there was some opposition from some of those players. On the other hand, there were many legislators that agreed that if we could reduce the size of the bureaucracy, get rid of a couple of agencies we didn't need, that was a good thing. But that was a challenge.

DePue: Where were the mining unions in this equation?

Grosboll: You have to realize that the mining unions and the mining operators are like one, so they have very few issues that they would ever disagree on in the legislature. You would think there are management-labor issues—generally, those get worked out. In Springfield, the labor unions and the coal association have a very strong partnership, and they walk together. So between them, there was uneasiness about losing their agency. The one thing that we agreed to was that we would keep Mines and Minerals

[61] Carolyn Taft Grosboll served in Secretary Edgar's office as assistant counsel from 1987 to 1989. After several years as an attorney with the Legislative Reference Bureau, she joined the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission in 1993 as deputy director and legal counsel. In 1995 she became the commission's director, serving in this role until 2004. Giffin, Winning, Cohen and Bodewes, P.C., *Attorney Profiles*, Springfield, IL, http://www.gifwinlaw.com/carolyngrosboll.htm.

as a division within DNR so that there would still be a mining person in charge. Now, from our perspective, we would say that meant somebody who knew what they were doing would be running that division. From the coal association and the union's perspective, what it meant was they'd still have their guy there; somebody they knew they could talk to and would be sympathetic to their position. And keep in mind it's a little difficult for a coal association or an organization to go head-to-head with the governor. The governor had indicated he wanted to do this. So ultimately what the Coal Association wanted was to make sure that there was at least a division still in existence and that it would still be somebody from the industry. That was fairly easy to agree to, and probably would have been what we would have wanted anyway. But we did agree to that. We had to go to a lot of legislators and convince them that this made sense. There were some legislators who had objections, but they weren't very strong, and they weren't particularly logical. You might have somebody from southern Illinois saying, oh, this is making coal less important. Yeah, it's sort of true; but on the other hand, was there really justification to have an entire department for a relatively small staff?

DePue: Was this an issue in the legislature that wasn't defined by party line?

Grosboll: Right. I think that's correct. It was get your support groups lined up, deal with your opponents, try and soothe over what their concerns were, talk to legislators, take care of their problems, and try and get this done. So that was our approach. And by the time it was over with, this was not a real tough vote. This passed, and was an easier task than the effort to combine the Department of Human Services. Keep in mind, that was the largest reorganization that had ever occurred in state government—to combine all the human service agencies into the Department of Human Services. Every constituent group, every interest group in the state had problems with that, because they liked having their person. If you dealt with alcohol issues, you wanted there to be a Department of Alcohol and Substance Abuse; somebody from your industry would be heading that department. So those groups were going to have a problem with it. But that shouldn't drive what state government ultimately does, the fact that an interest group wants to have their own little constituency. Same issue was there with regard to Mines and Minerals. It was a concern, we needed to deal with it, but when all was said and done, this was a good move.

DePue: I hope I get this right. I'm going to go through a short list of organizations that weren't folded into this Department of Natural Resources, and at the top of the list here is Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Grosboll: Right. You put your finger on a good topic. In some states, they have a Department of Natural Resources that encompasses not only natural resources and parks and conservation areas and nature preserves, but also includes the EPA of that state. Many states that do that are much smaller than us, and I would suggest that in those states, it probably does make sense. But in Illinois, our EPA is a huge agency with immense responsibilities, and our DNR is an immense agency, and I'm not sure we were convinced that putting all of that into the same agency would produce the best management.

DePue: I thought, though, that that was part of the plan to begin with. Am I wrong there?

Grosboll: No. I don't want to say that it never came up in discussions, but we never proposed that. Now, some of these things that we merged could have been put into EPA; but the problem is, had we proposed putting Mines and Minerals into EPA, we could have never passed that. The mining industry would never have accepted that, and legislators would have been sympathetic. There were things we did propose—one of the things we did away with—there was an old Department of Energy and Natural Resources (ENR), which was basically the agency that dealt with clean energy issues, recycling issues—things like that. We did divide that up and put some of those in DNR. One of our proposals there was we had overlap of duties. We had a waste oil program in the old ENR, and we had a waste oil program in EPA. Our thought was they ought to be merged together. We're wasting resources. Unfortunately, the legislature, responding to some industries out there that did not want to go to EPA, stopped us from doing that, and we ultimately agreed that we would send that stuff over to DCEO [Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity] now. I still think that was a stupid move, but that was one small political concession that came out of the legislature.

But by and large, we did not go along with the idea of moving EPA into DNR,; we did not propose that because we felt that would be too large of a bureaucracy for those particular topics, and that the synergies were not quite there that would justify doing that.

DePue: Another one would be the Illinois Pollution Control Board.

Grosboll: The Pollution Control Board was originally set up to be a completely independent entity, not under another thing. I don't know if you know the history of this, but in 1968, when Ogilvie got elected, one of the early initiatives of his administration was to create the Illinois Environmental Protection Act. And his vision—

DePue: In fact, ahead of the curve with what was going on even at the federal level at that time.

Grosboll: Yeah. I was at a conference about three years ago, and a fellow named Dennis Hayes, who is a major environmental energy leader in the country, got up and talked about the United States of America was the first governmental entity in the world to create an environmental protection agency, and that the United States should feel very good about that. Afterwards, I was having drinks with him, and I said, "Dennis, I have to correct you on one small thing. The United States government was not the first entity to create an EPA; the state of Illinois was. Richard Ogilvie put out the idea of an EPA before the national government did. Richard Nixon eventually came forward with his initiative, but Illinois had its up and running before then."

The Illinois Environmental Protection Act envisioned three bodies. It was a very, very thoughtful approach. They said there should be an enforcement agency, which is the EPA; there should be a research entity, which is what was called the Institute of

Environmental Quality; and there should be a judicial body that deals with the review of enforcement and acts as a district court, in some ways, on these cases, and that's the Pollution Control Board. So I would tell you that if we are honoring the original concept of an independent entity that oversees and signs off on the final rule-making in an independent manner and reviews cases, it needs to stay independent and should not be merged with another agency that could attempt to influence it.

DePue: The other one I have listed here is the Department of Nuclear Safety, and maybe that one's not quite as logical.

Grosboll: We did consider that, but keep in mind, we had more nuclear power plants that we were involved with than any other state in the country. Our concern was that that issue is so focused and so important, we should not in any way at all dilute it by putting it into some other agency. By having a department head solely responsible for that area, we were not going to have things fall between the cracks. I just always felt that was one we should keep our hands off.

DePue: The last one here is one that was included, or maybe it was already part and parcel, but it's a matter of curiosity to me why the Illinois State Museum is part of DNR.

Grosboll: That's a good question. It's a historical issue going back into probably the 1950s or '60s. You had three scientific surveys—the water survey, the geological survey, and the natural history survey—located at the University of Illinois, going back very long periods of time. We in Illinois should be very proud of those scientific surveys. Eventually, the state museum was defined almost in the same way. It was a research entity. We think of the museum as a display place. It actually is as much about research as it is about displaying things. So if you think about it as three scientific surveys plus the museum as a research entity, the four were then basically lumped together; and wherever one would go, the others would go.

For example, when I got into state government and was tracking those issues in the mid-seventies, they were under the Department of Professional Regulation. Now, on the surface, that would sound like the most absurd arrangement that you could even imagine, that the department that regulates professions and is entangled in all sorts of scandals over the course of years would be over the scientific community and the museum. I interviewed the heads of the scientific surveys and the museum back in 1974. All of them liked where they were because the department head at Professional Regulation couldn't give a hoot about what was going on (DePue laughs) in those agencies and left them alone, which I never appreciated until years went by and I realized what the person was talking about. When an agency does care about what they're doing, they can potentially interfere with the surveys; instead, they were left alone.

The surveys and the museum were eventually moved to a new entity called ENR, Environment and Natural Resources, which was where the energy programs were, where the old Institute of Environmental Quality was, doing research, *et cetera*. The surveys and the museum were moved there. Then, when we did our reorganization

and did away with that old agency, we had to figure out what to do with the scientific surveys and the museum, and we just took them and moved the four of them into the Department of Natural Resources.

Now, I happen to believe that the scientific surveys are the most important secret gem that Illinois has. They do research on topics and have a baseline of knowledge that very few people know about; but when you need to know it, they're there. When the Great Flood of '93 occurred, I brought the surveys in because they had more data on flooding issues and all sorts of other natural resource-related things than anybody else ever had. In 1976 and '77 I got involved with mine subsidence, the collapsing of old mines. I went to the Geo Survey. They had more knowledge about that than anybody in the state did, and they became extremely important to us in solving that problem.

I don't think the Blagojevich administration even knew they existed; and ultimately, in order to show that they were reducing the size of government, a year or two ago, they spun them off and sent them to the University of Illinois. So it would show you that state government is now a thousand fewer employees in state government service, but of course it means there are a thousand more employees at the University of Illinois. But it allowed the Blagojevich people to say, look how we're reducing the size of government. That may end up working out perfectly fine, but again, I dealt with the surveys for thirty-five years, and they are a professional, phenomenal knowledge. And I'd say the same thing about the museum, by the way—great professionals, generally little political influence in any of those four entities.

DePue: Any difficulties at all getting the legislation through?

Grosboll: Not ultimately. There were small tweaks here and there, but ultimately, it moved.

DePue: And last question on this reorganization. Any surprises, then, once it did begin to occur?

Grosboll: That's a good question. There are surprises. There are things that you feel good about, and there are things you feel bad about. I feel good about the synergies that were gained from this. We gained mightily, I think, by having mines and minerals in the DNR. Again, some relationships with properties that could be put into the public's use. That worked out extremely well; I think that was a very smart move. I think putting water resources there was a terrific move. There are still people who complain about it, because they were in DOT for a long time, but I think having the resources of the water people in the DNR has been a terrific boon. And I also think that the next time there's a flood, you'll see has a much bigger role in flood response now that it's got the water resource division inside it. So there are some positives that I think have been very, very good.

The negative is I still think there are times when the mines and minerals function is not as coordinated and integrated into the natural resource scene as it ought to be. Also, I'm not sure that the department and its leadership ever fully appreciated how

the surveys could be properly used, and unfortunately, now they've been spun off. So I'm a little disappointed in that; but overall, I think the move was a good one, and it moved the department into the twenty-first century. Rather than acting as a 1960s department over a bunch of parks, it now has a broader expanse and theme.

DePue: We are getting close to two hours. The time flies by (Grosboll laughs) when we sit here and chat about these things. I want to spend some time talking about other things that Edgar the conservationist was involved in. And I think that will take a little bit of time to kind of lay out. But then, I think to do justice on the last couple years of his administration and some opportunity for you to reflect on that, we probably should pick that up in a following session.

Grosboll: That's fine.

DePue: So, Edgar the conservationist. How did he approach this whole subject, and how did it fit into his larger vision for government?

Grosboll: I think that the best thing I can point out that speaks to Jim Edgar on conservation was his attitude that, when we hired a DNR director, or a Conservation director, initially, we needed to bring somebody in who was not a political person. Without criticizing past appointments, there was a sense within the conservation community that the Department of Conservation had been too politicized at times, and that people had been brought in to run it, or into major positions, that did not have natural resource training or background. So the first thing that Jim Edgar did was to make it clear to the committee used to screen appointments—and I was on that committee—that this was not going to be for a politician. So, eventually we did, and we hired Brent Manning. Brent Manning's entire background was natural resources, and he had very strong professional credentials.

DePue: And is he somebody who had worked his way up through the—

Grosboll: Not in the department. He had been at Ducks Unlimited and had a very strong educational background in the natural resources and then had spent his professional career working with natural resource issues. Was very familiar with hunting and fishing, was very familiar with wetlands issues and other conservation matters. So we brought in Brent to be the director, and that sent a signal to the entire conservation community that he [Edgar] was serious about this. In addition to that—and I think this gets overlooked at times—his number two was a fellow named John Comerio, who had spent his entire life in Conservation and had worked his way up through the entire organization. So there were people, I think, who very much appreciated that we recruited Brent Manning; there were many people that appreciated that we had elevated John Comerio in that number-two spot. People matter, and you send signals when you bring on people. Brent had no political background at all. He'd not been a legislator; he hadn't worked in the political world. Nor had John Comerio. So that's the first thing: we brought a team on that were viewed as being professionals.

DePue: Let me ask you this. I would think that part of the struggle that Governor Edgar and people in the administration are going to have here on this particular issue is you want to do things that are promoting and enhancing the economic vitality of Illinois; at the same time, you're doing things that oftentimes would seem to be at odds with economic growth.

Grosboll: In what sense?

DePue: Especially in environmental issues, if you're pushing hard on environmental issues—and reclamation of mines is a good example; that's an expensive proposition, and who ends up paying for it?

Grosboll: That argument can be made, but I would argue that when one looks at an expanse of time—and we're going to switch here just a tiny bit to environmental enforcement issues—when one looks at that, I would argue that our economy has not been hurt by better environmental enforcement. We have improved quality of life, we have improved work settings, we have created new businesses—just look at Johnson Controls. By having proper environmental regulations and proper controls, we have not hurt our economy; and I would argue that in fact, over time, we've strengthened our economy by having a cleaner environment.

With regard to the DNR, the one argument that could be made along those lines is that oftentimes what's involved in conservation issues is acquiring property that can be used for open space; and yes, some people would argue, gee, that's taking the land off the tax rolls—and there's some legitimacy to that point, to the extent that it means that you should be certain when you do that, that you're taking the right properties and putting them to the right use. But if you look at where Illinois stands in terms of its public spaces made available to its populace for outdoor recreation—every year a survey is done where they rank the fifty states. We are ranked—and will be there for a very long time—forty-eighth in the nation in terms of the amount of public space per person. We're at the bottom. So while that argument can be made that, gee, aren't you taking property off the tax rolls; that's true, but it's not as if Illinois has a record of having taken immense parcels out of production.

I would also argue that there's an offsetting economic value, and that is that the more we become known as a state with good recreational opportunities, the more tourism dollars we bring to Illinois. So there is a plus and a minus to this, but what guides me is this we have, on a per-person basis, not that much property available in Illinois for open space and recreational opportunities. Less than 1 percent of Illinois' terrain is in its natural condition, pre-European condition. Less I think it's about 0.7 percent. And the effort to protect that remaining 0.7 percent, it seems to me, is a very reasonable policy that we should have.

DePue: I'm sure a big part of the reason for that ranking and that very low percentage of land that's not been altered in any way is because we're sitting on some of the best farmland in the world, by far.

Grosboll: Well, Mark, it's also due to the fact that we do not have vast federal lands in this state, either. This statistic gets thrown out every election. Whoever's on the outside says, Illinois is an embarrassment; we're forty-eighth in the country on this. The sad news is we're forty-eighth, and we're going to be forty-eighth for a very long time, because we do not have vast federal properties, we have a large population; and when you take the large population we have, and the fact that we don't have large national parks and large expanses, it's almost impossible for us to move up to forty-seven or forty-six or forty-five. So we're doomed to be at that number, but that doesn't mean that we still shouldn't care about it. But we don't have a Yosemite. We've got Shawnee National Forest, but other than that, we don't have Yellowstone, we don't have the Rockies—we don't have those things.

DePue: Going back to this issue of balancing conservation and environmental concerns with economic concerns. Again, I would think that businessmen in the state would say, if you keep saddling us—this would be their language—with all these expensive environmental programs and other things, that just makes us less competitive with other states. Now, this is all in reference to asking my question about the Clean Break program that I think the governor started in 1995. Does that ring any bell?

Grosboll: Yeah, is this the—

DePue: Cooperation of small businesses to help them meet the environmental standards.

Grosboll: Yes, it does. Again, it's a little cold in my mind, but it was a program we started to reach out to the business community, to try to work more cooperatively with them. We did forgiveness programs, where entities, if they knew they were in violation of some issues—we would be willing to sit down with them, help them figure out how to get into compliance with environmental regulations without penalizing them. So we took several steps to work as cooperatively as we could with the business community in smart ways, but also we took environmental enforcement very seriously. If you go back and look at the records, you will find that the Edgar administration received more money and got more money out of offenders than any administration in Illinois history. But I would argue that we were justified. We had incinerators that blew up, that scattered stuff all over—they were eventually fined, and fined pretty heavily, for doing that. But it's not all about going out and banging people over the head because they violated, it's also about trying to sit down with them and help businesses, particularly smaller businesses, get into compliance without necessarily saying, we're going to fine you first. For those businesses that would come forward and say, we need some help here, we would try and do that.

DePue: And that's what the Clean Break program was about?

Grosboll: That was part of the program.

DePue: How about conservation congress? You had mentioned that.

Grosboll: Now we're switching back to the conservation arena. I thought, Mark, you were going to ask me how do we, in the middle of a recession when we don't have a lot

money, do lots of good things related to conservation? I thought that's where you were heading earlier on a matter. So—

DePue: You can always go there even if I'm not headed there.

Grosboll: I do want to go there, because the point I would make to you was many of the things we would have liked to have done in conservation or in the natural resources arena were restricted because of our lack of money; but there were a lot of things that we were able to do that didn't necessarily involve money, and one of those was a conservation congress. The governor and the director of conservation, Brent Manning—and another fellow who worked in the whole conservation arena in the front office, particularly in the first few years of the Edgar administration, was George Fleischli—all felt that we needed to reach out to the conservation community. Those were all the hunting and fishing groups, it was the nature conservancies, it was Openlands in Chicago, a lot of park districts that are heavily involved in this. We always forget about the local park districts, but really, the local park districts and forest preserves in many ways are doing great things, so we need to have them involved in this.

The idea was that we needed to hold a conservation congress where we would invite players from all over the state to come in, meet in the House chamber, and literally act almost as a legislative body, discussing priorities, discussing where we ought to go, and in some cases voting on things and voting on where they thought the state should be going on these issues. That was a great success. Now, I can't remember how many of those we held, but we held a couple of them, because we would spread them over a couple of years. I would also mention that those came to a bit of a halt after the Edgar administration, and the Blagojevich people never held a conservation congress, which to me was a terrible mistake. But what the congress did was allow people to voice all sorts of concerns, get their two cents' worth in, and feel like they were being listened to—and they were.

So out of the Conservation Congresses would come many ideas. Again, some of the reorganization ideas that we eventually took up were discussed in those Conservation Congresses. For example, having the conservation license plates to bring in some additional revenue and creating a not-for-profit foundation that would receive private funding to be used on conservation matters. That was one of the Edgar initiatives that became law—again, I hate to be critical here, but that was a program that began collecting hundreds of thousands of dollars privately and rolling it back into state programs. They built up a pretty healthy endowment. The Blagojevich administration turned that into a political operation. The director of the department hired his neighbor to run it, whose experience was running a small engine repair shop. That guy began running it, and as the auditor general of the state points out, nearly bankrupted the organization and ate up much of its endowment, which is a tragedy. And we'll get that back on its feet, but that's an example of how you can have a great idea and then somebody ignores it and destroys it, almost.

DePue: Was Conservation 2000 something that came out of the Conservation Congress?

Grosboll: There are two things that led to Conservation 2000. In the—

DePue: Can you explain quickly what it is to begin with?

Grosboll: Conservation 2000 was an initiative that Governor Edgar put forward. I don't remember the year, but it was probably '93 that we put it forward—could have been '94. Conservation 2000 was a one hundred million-dollar initiative on Jim Edgar's part, to span a five-year period that put a bunch of dollars into the natural resource arena. A lot of that was to help develop partnerships in various regions of the state. A lot of it was to acquire some land or at least some conservation rights; but it was to try and put together a series of programs throughout the state that would improve our natural resources.[62]

DePue: Now, if '93 is correct—I'll have to go back, and we can get that corrected in the transcript—that's in the middle of a budget crisis, and he's coming up with initiatives like this?

Grosboll: Right. We basically said, if you take a hundred million dollars, spread it over a five- or six-year period so now your annual commitments are significantly lessened, and then if you recognize that about half of that money was bond money and could simply be rolled into our annual five hundred million dollars of bonding we would normally do—that meant, in terms of the general treasury, it was a few million dollars a year. So by spreading it over a period of time and building the program up and escalating it, and by using bonding on some of those pieces that qualified for bonding, it didn't represent as large of a hit in terms of the GRF [General Revenue Fund]. That's how we did that. By the way, part of my role in this was to figure out how to craft it in a way that was acceptable to the governor and tolerable to him in terms of what he could defend, and at the same time would accomplish great good, which it has done.

There were two things that led up to Conservation 2000. One was we did have a Conservation Congress, and out of that came many ideas about how the state ought to be cooperating with local entities and how we ought to be building on the strengths of local groups. The second thing was that we had a Water Resources and Land Use Priorities Task Force, and it also made several recommendations that related to concepts that were embodied in Conservation 2000. Those two groups both had a series of ideas, we molded those together, and out of it came Conservation 2000.

Here's the most interesting thing about Conservation 2000: we started that program with the idea that over this period of time, we would commit a hundred million dollars to these programs. Here are two things we didn't predict: one was that we are now in 2009, which is eleven years, twelve years later from when that

[62] Edgar labeled this major initiative in his 1994 "State of the State" address. Rep. Tom Ryder (R-Jerseyville) introduced the program as House Bill 3477; but in July, Speaker Madigan buried it for the year while Edgar was in the hospital, recovering from his bypass surgery. The legislature finally approved the program in 1995. *Chicago Tribune*, April 10 & July 21, 1994; Illinois Department of Natural Resources, "Conservation 2000," http://dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/.

program was to have expired. Conservation 2000 is still going. It is still receiving annual appropriations to continue supporting these local activities. So the program has not been a hundred million dollars; it's gone far beyond that hundred million dollars and continues to be in the budget as an annual appropriation. The second thing is that we envisioned Conservation 2000 would spur some partnerships with local groups, local volunteers, local conservation groups. We had no idea the strength of those groups. A year or two later, I went to a conference in which all of the Conservation 2000 partnerships were there. I was stunned to see how many people were volunteering their time to be part of local partnerships that were using Conservation 2000 dollars to restore the edge of a river, to put into place conservation practices; to talk farmers in a region into doing a better job of conserving vulnerable areas. So those partnerships just became incredibly strong and very helpful, and most of them were free; they were volunteering their time.

DePue: It sounds like a lot of that money then ended up being focused on various grants or organizations and agencies.

Grosboll: Yes, that's true; that's true. And a lot of it ended up in non-governmental things. It was groups of people that would submit to restore a little wetland in their area or a prairie or plant a thousand trees, types of projects that were important to them in their region. So Conservation 2000 is one of those things I'd like to tell you, that's what we envisioned. We envisioned that eleven years after this program was to have expired, it would still be going. I did not envision that. I did not envision that there would literally be thousands of people who would be part of these Conservation 2000 groups and still be doing good work sixteen years after we announced the program.

DePue: I wanted to finish today, then, with a little bit of a discussion about some of the land that the state of Illinois acquired during this timeframe.

Grosboll: A minute ago I mentioned to you that there were many things we could do that did not necessarily represent money, cost to the state of Illinois, and I want to just give you two of those right off the bat—three of them, really. There were federal properties that were becoming available during the Edgar administration. The first of those was at Fort Sheridan, and Fort Sheridan was a little bit different, but when Fort Sheridan closed down—

DePue: Part of this is because of the BRAC [Base Realignment and Closure].

Grosboll: Yes, there was a BRAC policy going on. And Fort Sheridan had been operating all the way back into the mid- to late…

DePue: It certainly goes back to the late nineteenth century.

Grosboll: Goes back into the latter part of the nineteenth century, that's correct. So great tradition, great history there, but it also had some great natural resources. The last slice—

DePue: It's lakefront property. (laughs)

Grosboll: That's right. The last slice of beach on Lake Michigan, in which there was any possibility of still having an influence over, was at Fort Sheridan. So I was the governor's representative on the Fort Sheridan committee that was set up by Congressman [John] Porter. I worked on that project and eventually, that shoreline was protected. There were other open space issues that were protected there also, but the biggest one was at what was originally the Joliet Arsenal, which had been operating since I think World War I as an arsenal. It was a massive piece of property. It seems to me it was somewhere in the vicinity of—

DePue: I've got nineteen thousand acres.

Grosboll: Yes, it was in excess of nineteen thousand acres. And the governor and our Department of Conservation made it a priority, not for us to take possession of it, but to become advocates for that property and that it would be made available to the public. We worked on that issue for a couple of years. We worked two different congressmen, Congressman Sangmeister and then Congressman Weller. We worked in DC and with support groups that backed us up on this. Eventually what was resolved—there was a piece of it, about eight hundred acres that went to a federal veterans' cemetery. There was a piece, about three thousand acres or something along those lines, went to an economic development group up in the Joliet area. And then over fifteen thousand acres—might have been fifteen five or something—was designated as open space to go to the United States Forest Service. And that was what we advocated. We, the state of Illinois, shopped it. We went around, we talked to fish and wildlife, we talked to all sorts of entities, and eventually we were able to get the Forest Service to bite. They took an interest, and with the support of locals, conservation groups, the *Chicago Tribune*, the media, and with the strong support of the local congressmen and our U.S. senators—we were able to get the Joliet Arsenal, over fifteen thousand acres, turned over for public use. Massive restoration has been ongoing on that property for well over a decade now.

DePue: Part of that native prairie restoration as well?

Grosboll: Yeah. In fact, I was there about a month ago, and there's just beautiful prairie restoration, wetland restoration and there are some forests there. The Forest Service also does grasslands, and they have charge of several national grasslands. So it makes perfect sense, it fit into their agenda—and again, there's great work occurring there right now, on what eventually will be probably the largest tall grass prairie east of the Mississippi River.

DePue: Wow. Savanna would be another one, I think, high on the list.

Grosboll: After or late in the Joliet Arsenal project—which, became known eventually as *Midewin*, the Indian term for "healing lands," the Midewin project had come along quite a ways and late in that process, we also became aware that the Savanna Depot was going to be disposed of, up in the northwestern corner of the state. The Savanna Depot was about thirteen thousand acres. Again, we started a negotiation. As in the case of Joliet, a lot of it had to do with debate with the local communities that thought

it all should be economic development. We pointed out to them that thirteen thousand acres was a lot of property for economic development. Eventually a deal was struck in which the locals agreed to accept three thousand acres for economic development in some of the more built-up areas, and then U.S. Fish and Wildlife would take over ten thousand acres. And again, that has occurred. We were—

DePue: And this is land that is adjacent to the Mississippi River, is it not?

Grosboll: Yes, it is. You've done your research. That's exactly right—tremendous piece of property with great prairies. Now, there's still ordinance and clean-up that's occurring on that property. It has gone way too slow, but eventually the Savanna property is going to be a gem that people forever and ever are going to be able to enjoy in this state. The role of the state in both cases was to lead the charge for these properties to go into public hands. We did not buy them; we did not have to pay to do this—we didn't have the funds—but what we were able to do was make a strong case in both instances and work with the congressmen in the area to make the case that this should be made available for public recreational purposes. And those are two great, great victories that Governor Edgar can feel very proud of.

DePue: The next one on the list is Site M.

Grosboll: Yep.

DePue: And this one's going to play out a little bit differently, I would think.

Grosboll: This is a different project. Site M is a property I was fairly familiar with. I live in Menard County, which abuts Cass County. And probably thirty-five years ago, Commonwealth Edison, through a variety of other names, began acquiring huge expanses of property, both on the western edge of my county as well as the eastern side of Cass County. At the time, there was discussion there'd be mining going on there, because there is coal under that property; but there was also some suspicion that it could very well have been another nuclear plant, which is why ComEd probably was involved with it—or at least a power plant. Sometime in the 1990s, the ICC (Illinois Commerce Commission) began making the utilities address the issue of their holdings; and if they were not using them and had no intention of using them, ratepayers ought to benefit from the sale of that property.

DePue: And I think—just to interject here—the reason Commonwealth Edison started to cool on the whole issue is because the coal that they would be mining was high-sulfur coal, and they wouldn't be able to burn it.

Grosboll: That, and if they did have intentions of putting a nuclear power plant in, the cost of building nuclear had begun to soar so greatly. Again, everybody wants to say, the environmentalists fought it. That's not what happened. What happened to nuclear is that the cost of soared so high that nuclear stopped in this country. And even to this day, I think there's a sense that nuclear is going to be part of our future, but the cost of these plants is exorbitant. So we'll see whether or not we begin to see nuclear start to build now. But if they were thinking of nuclear, the cost made that not acceptable;

and if they were thinking of Illinois coal, there was a recognition that that coal was dirty; and quite frankly, it was cheaper for them to ship in this exceedingly cheap coal from the west.

So the utilities began to look at their properties, and Commonwealth Edison had no plans for that property and realized it was time to get rid of it. So they made it known that they were going to dispose of their property, and I believe the property at Site M—I'm drawing a blank here whether it was 15,500 or if it was more than that, but—

DePue: It's 15,600 acres.

Grosboll: All right. I'm not too far off. So you had 15,600 acres there that they wanted to dispose of. George Fleischli, myself, Brent Manning, and John Comerio met several times to discuss this, with a sense that we needed to move forward on it. This was the largest single opportunity the state was going to have to get hold of a beautiful piece of property—timber, rolling hills, great wildlife, overlooks, opportunities for lakes, for horse trails, for bike trails.

DePue: And if I can interject here one more time, I happened to be working on this project when I first started working full time for the Illinois National Guard. At the 1990 timeframe, the National Guard was very interested in getting that property and they ran into some very significant resistance from a handful of farmers who were still farming some of that land.

Grosboll: That's exactly right. It had been looked at potentially as a training ground for National Guard. Obviously the same opponents were still there—a sense that if the state took it over, then people who had been farming this on contract wouldn't be able to do that. That was an issue that had to be dealt with; but the governor made a very strong commitment that he wanted the property, that he wanted us to do this, and to begin working on it. The first challenge was to get the property bought. Now, George Fleischli was the point person for the governor initially on this issue, and he was a very strong proponent of this. George did a great job on it. I have one role that I got to play on this, but it was an important role, and it was great. George was out of town on something. The Department of Conservation had been negotiating with Commonwealth Edison, and finally, at a point of frustration or a point thinking that they could call our bluff, Commonwealth Edison informed the department that they were done negotiating. We were given the opportunity to make one more bid, and if they didn't like it, they were going to sell the property to somebody else.

So the department came over and saw me, since George wasn't there, and said, "Al, we're in a box here. They are telling us we get one more bid, and if it's not right, they're going to sell it to somebody else." And I said, "Let me be real clear, guys. The governor's not going to be very happy if we don't buy this property." So I said, "Let me call Commonwealth Edison." So I called and talked to one of their vice presidents, who was a fellow I had worked with on many other issues. His name was Don, and I said, "Don, you know we've been negotiating on this property." He said,

"Yes, I'm aware of that." And I said, "Today we were given an ultimatum to give one final price as a take-it-or-leave-it." I'm not sure he was aware that was a final statement. And I said, "I want to just make this real clear to you; if we're given a take-it-or-leave-it and then this is not resolved in our favor, Governor Edgar is going to be very unhappy. This should not be a take-it-or-leave it; this should be a continuing discussion until we reach an agreement on the price." There was a bit of a pause, and he simply said to me, "Thank you for calling. I'll take care of this." And he did, and within a day or two, they reached an agreement on the price. They kept negotiating, they reached an agreement, and we bought the property.

So my one role on it (laughs) was to call ComEd and just tell them: "If you take this attitude, in effect, you're going to regret that." This was just a hardball tactic that their negotiator decided to take—not a bad negotiating point, but it was a mistake in this situation.This was the largest acquisition the state had ever made. Eventually, as you know, the legislature, after Edgar was out of office, decided to name it for him.

DePue: Site M, Panther Creek; Jim Edgar Panther Creek.

Grosboll: It is the goofiest thing. On the issue about the farmers, we did not cancel all the leases. In fact we continued to need farm leases, and we'll need them for a very long period of time. So partly, we were able to soothe over all that. We also had to do some pretty hard talking to Cass County officials. They were a little concerned about the implications of this. On the other hand, I think Cass County has embraced this park, realizing that it is a great magnet to get people into the area.

DePue: Let's finish off with this, then. Why is Governor Edgar so passionate about this subject? What is it about these parks, these forest preserves, these things, that really sparks his passion?

Grosboll: I don't know that I can give you a complete answer on that. He does like the outdoors. He loves to ride horses. He's a great bicyclist. He grew up in Charleston, Illinois.[63] Growing up in an area that's more rural, more open—you have people that use the outdoors and I think it was part of the culture that he grew up in. And I think he just appreciates the fact that these things have a positive impact on our quality of life. So I've heard him speak about that, and they're his words, not a speech-writer's words. (DePue laughs) I mean, there's some things where you give the governor a speech and say, "Governor, here's the message of the day"; and he'll tweak it here and there, but he goes out and says what Mike Lawrence has written in a speech. There are other days where he goes out and basically says, "I know what I'm going to say," and he says it. And this is one of those topics where Jim Edgar, from the very beginning of our moving into the administration, had strong feelings about. We don't have a lot of time left, but I do want to say that there's a lot more that he did in this arena.

[63] On the importance of bikes to young Edgar and his childhood friends, see Jim Edgar, interview 1, May 21, 2009, 43-44; Tony Sunderman, interview by Mark DePue, May 21, 2009, 2.

DePue: Go ahead, go ahead.

Grosboll: Aside from the federal properties we were involved in at Fort Sheridan, Joliet Arsenal, Savanna Depot, and the large state property at Site M, there were other things. The Cache River in deep southern Illinois is one of the great natural resources in Illinois. It is a Louisiana swamp in Illinois. In deep southern Illinois, we have cypress and tupelo trees. That property has been protected because of a lot of private citizens who stepped in and, before that area could be destroyed, started doing work to protect it. People like Henry Barkhausen, who is ninety years old now, and forty years ago, as a private citizen, began helping to organize efforts to save the Cache River and Heron Pond, eventually building coalitions.[64] Ducks Unlimited, Fish and Wildlife, the Nature Conservancy, the State of Illinois, and a variety of other organizations—such as the Save the Cache River organization—took great steps to save the Cache.

Governor Edgar wrapped his arms around the Cache River endeavors. We invested money there also. The Cache areas expanded fairly dramatically. We had a role in that. Then the last thing he did before he left office was to put three or four million dollars in the budget to put a wetlands interpretive center at the Cache River. Because here's this magnificent site, but there was no interpretation—no building, no displays, nothing. And the governor felt we needed to have a visitors' center, an orientation center, to explain what these wetlands are all about. And then he named it for Henry Barkhausen, so it's the Henry Barkhausen–Cache River Wetlands Center. So Cache River was extremely important.

He was really into hiking and biking. The number of trail miles in Illinois for hiking and biking were doubled during the eight years Jim Edgar was governor.

DePue: A lot of that was old railroad rights-of-way.

Grosboll: A lot of is old railroad, but it was other things, too. One story I want to tell you, though, about hiking and biking trails: Jim Edgar's attraction to those goes all the way back, in my recollection, to when he was secretary of state. I went in to him one time to tell him that some people I knew were working on a project to deal with a mosquito problem in Illinois. The [Asian] Tiger Mosquito was a threat. It was causing some health concerns, and part of the problem was that the breeding ground of mosquitoes, one of them, is tires—old, abandoned tires. And we had abandoned tire piles all over the state, so the Pollution Control Board—and the chairman at the time, John Marlin—wanted to put into effect a program to start cleaning up tire problems. And Illinois did put a tire recycling program into effect and began cleaning up these piles. Well, one of the ways they wanted to do it was to increase the car title fee, which at the time was three dollars. If you'd bought a car, you paid three dollars for a

[64] Henry Barkhausen served as director of the Illinois Department of Conservation from 1970 to 1973. "Biographical Sketch," GLMS-46, Henry N. Barkhausen Collection, Historical Collection of the Great Lakes, Center for Archival Collections, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH, http://www.bgsu.edu/colleges/library/cac/ms/page43237.html#sketch.

title. And John wanted to have the legislature put in a bill that would increase that from three dollars to five dollars; and that would have represented an increase of something along the lines of six or seven million dollars—seven million dollars to go to this tire clean-up thing.

So I went in to the secretary of state at the time, who was Jim Edgar, and I said, "Hey, there's this proposal starting to float that would do this. How would you feel about that?" And he said, "Two dollars for cleaning up tires?" He said, "They don't need all that." And I said, "It is a lot of money; you're right." He said, "I'll tell you what. If we raise the car title, they can have fifty cents of that two dollars. That will give them a million and a half, two million, to start their tire program, and I want the other dollar and a half for something I care about." I said, "Well, Jim, what do you want that other dollar and a half to go to?" And he sat behind his desk—or he was standing at the time—and he thought about it, and he scratched his chin, and after about ten seconds, he went, "Bicycle paths. We don't have enough bicycle paths. I'm tired of getting on my bike in Chatham and Springfield and there are no bicycle paths. I want that to go to bicycle paths." (laughs) So I went back to the proponents of this and said, "Guys, you can have fifty cents out of the two dollars. The other buck and a half, Jim Edgar wants for bicycle paths." Most of them liked bicycle paths, too; and they weren't totally thrilled with this, but they took it, and we ran with it. That's the bill that passed.

And then eventually, when we were in the governor's office, we created a new program in which every time you buy a tire, a dollar goes to a tire recycling program. The fifty cents that was going for tires, on the title thing, we took off and the entire two dollars of the title now goes for bicycling and hiking paths. So his like for those things and his belief that we ought to do more about that went all the way back to those secretary of state days. (laughs) But that program all stemmed from him sitting there—I'd say that it took him ten seconds to say, "Bicycle paths." (laughter)

DePue: Al, I think that's a good way to finish off today, and we've got a little bit more—I would think maybe about an hour or so. But these stories we've talked about today, whether it be Chicago school reform or the formation of the Department of Natural Resources—some of that stuff is crucial to understanding Illinois' history and where we're at today.

Grosboll: Oh, well, thanks.

DePue: So thank you very much.

(end of interview)

Interview with Al Grosboll

ISG-A-L-2009-017.6

Interview # 6: November 6, 2009

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Friday, November 6, 2009. My name is Mark DePue, the director of oral history at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. And we are back with our last session with Al Grosboll this afternoon. How are you today, Al?

Grosboll: Well, I'm doing pretty good. It's a Friday, so if I'm a little slow with my answers, you'll understand why. But I'm ready to go again.

DePue: Probably should mention also that we're here at the library, which is where we've done almost all of these interviews. It certainly makes it convenient for me, and I want to thank you for that, Al.

Grosboll: Glad to be here. It's a great facility, and I enjoy coming in.

DePue: And that's one of the things we're going to be talking about a little bit later, because Edgar had a role in setting up this institution and the museum.

Grosboll: Absolutely.

DePue: But I wanted to start today with educational reform. Now, last time we talked, you spoke quite a bit about what was going on in Chicago early in Edgar's administration; but now we've gotten to the point where he's been reelected. He's beaten Dawn Clark Netsch. The debate in that election was very much about taxation—property taxes versus income tax—and he took a position during all that. And then shortly thereafter—I probably should let you say whether or not his main focus, in his second four years, was on education.

Grosboll: I don't know that I want to say his main focus, because that makes it sound like there was nothing else at a major level; there were some other major level things, such as some of the human service initiatives.

DePue: Reorganization, yeah.

Grosboll: But it's certainly fair to say that as we moved into the second term, the state's finances started to improve. I think it's a fair statement to say the budget numbers were beginning to stabilize. After three, four years of very tough budgeting, we were in a situation where those numbers were starting to improve, and it put us in a position of turning our attention to some of these issues that had a big impact on money.

As far as education, I would say that as we entered 1995, there were really two things that Jim Edgar realized needed to be done or that he personally wanted to jump into. One of those, and I think it's the first one, had to be the Chicago school reform. A lot of the other things that lots of people wanted to talk about on school reform and school funding reform would not have been possible had there not been significant reform of Chicago schools. And we talked about this in the last session. It was so common for people to basically say, we're not about to do something dramatic to raise more money for education if all we're doing is throwing it down a rat hole—and as I mentioned in the last interview, that phrase was used a great deal.

DePue: Rat hole?

Grosboll: That's right. And that was the sense that we had to get a handle on what was going on in Chicago schools—had to get accountability, had to get a line of responsibility—because there was nobody taking responsibility for Chicago schools, either their finances or their academic performance. I know we don't want to belabor Chicago school reform again, since we did talk about it at some length, but the point I'm really trying to make here is that the rest of the things we're going to talk about on education funding reform and other reforms, would have been very difficult had we not first dealt with Chicago school reform. It was one of the most serious problems, I believe, that existed in Dawn Clark Netsch's approach to education funding reform. There was a sense that, in her proposal—the underlying theme of swapping taxes was not something that we were entirely averse to, but the notion of doing it without expecting reforms first, was wrong. I felt strongly at that time about it, and I feel even more strongly today, knowing what we've accomplished since then. So, having said all of that, the governor did turn his attention to the issue of reforms. Now, everybody wants to talk about the swapping issue, but there are many, many other things that are also going on at that time period. For example, we had an initiative on charter schools. Several Republican legislators in particular were interested in charter schools. That was something that Governor Edgar was very strongly interested in, and the reason was that everything we had seen on charter schools in other states was that it was a way to bring some creativity and innovation into the school systems. And the beauty of charter schools is that if a school does good things and shows some things that are

pretty creative, then you take that, and you replicate. If, on the other hand, that charter school does not appear to be able to do what it's supposed to do, you close that school down. And that may sound rather simple, but the point is you can't do that with our other schools. If they graduate 22 percent of their students, if 85 percent of their students can't meet the federal levels that are expected of them, there is not a darn thing we do about that—and that's unfortunate. Now, I do believe Chicago school reform did help, and I think Paul Vallas helped, as have some of the subsequent CEOs that have run the Chicago school system. So if you're going to put more money in, we've got to look for some innovation and reforms; and we needed to do dramatic work in Chicago.

The charter school program was eventually adopted in Illinois. It was a pretty modest program, to be quite frank, and that's a reflection of just how strong the teachers' unions are in Illinois. So even though charter schools, at least at that time period, were not absolutely opposed, for example, by the IEA—considering the fact that their former president had developed the concept of charter schools (laughs)—eventually the unions have taken a position of fighting them very strongly. Even though they are public schools—they often work within the public school system in a manner that's acceptable to the unions—they have become something that's been very difficult for the unions to accept.

DePue: At the risk of putting you in the role of devil's advocate here, why is it that the unions are opposed to charter schools?

Grosboll: Yeah. (laughs) I'm not sure I'm the best person to tell you this, other than the fact—

DePue: But you certainly have an opinion on it.

Grosboll: Well, a little bit of an opinion. Part of it is that when some of these charter schools have done well, it creates a contrast that does not look favorable on the standard, let's say, Chicago public school system because charter schools basically are in Chicago. The system allows for there to be charter schools in the suburbs and in the downstate areas, but there have been very few charter schools in those areas. The place where they have been used and demonstrated has been in the city—and that makes sense. You've got a large system; you've got the flexibility to do these charters and try and innovate. If you're dealing in a small school system, how do you break out a block of your small school district for a charter school? It's much tougher. In the Chicagoland area, Paul Vallas was very aggressive in moving forward on charter schools. He did a good job with it—as did Arne Duncan, for that matter. And what would happen is the charter schools would succeed, and the numbers would show that charters, magnets, and schools of that nature were producing some pretty impressive results. It creates an automatic comparison of people saying, "How come they're doing so much better and our standard public schools aren't?"

There are some answers to that, by the way, and they're fair answers. If a kid is in a magnet school or in a charter school, it does mean that their family is invested in

that child and invested in getting the best education for them. Whereas you have kids in the public school system, in which the parents are not engaged, *et cetera*. The teachers understand that, and they've made that point, and it's a fair point. But nevertheless, it seems to me that should not be a reason for people to oppose charter schools. I didn't come today to argue the—

DePue: Yeah, let's go ahead and move by there.

Grosboll: —plus and minus, but we did move forward on the charter schools. I think that was extremely important, and I think we saw some very positive results from that.

(break in recording)

Grosboll: I'll turn to Ikenberry now.

DePue: Another big thing that was going on in 1995, as far as the schools were concerned—and I guess Edgar is rethinking in a serious way, maybe now taking a step back and looking about how to solve the state's problems on education. He establishes this blue-ribbon commission.

Grosboll: He does, and notwithstanding the debate that he and Dawn Clark Netsch got into in the '94 election, Jim Edgar was a person who probably for thirty years had indicated an openness, under the right circumstances, to some kind of swapping as it related to schools.[65] But again, part of that had to be a structural change in terms of how we developed who should get money, and a structural change in terms of expecting some overall reforms in Illinois related to education. If we're going to put more money into schools, for example, what do we want from that? How are we going to see some things that will improve the schools? If we're going to put more money in, what type of a formula do we use to make sure that money goes to the most deserving schools? If we're going to put money into a school construction program—which Illinois had hardly ever done, or certainly not much—how do we do it in the most fair manner?

So he decided that—particularly as we were beginning to see results on Chicago schools and believing that we were going to see some pretty strong accountability there—he does move forward on the next step, and the next step is the creation of the Ikenberry Commission. He asked Stan Ikenberry, the president of the University of Illinois, to chair it—a very respected gentleman and a very, very fine educator. I think at the time, one of the premier university presidents in the country. And President Ikenberry agreed to do it. We also involved the City Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, which provided professional assistance, staffing assistance. And we began working on the project, and we worked on it for a very long time.

[65] By "swapping," Grosboll is referring to replacing a portion of state education funds derived from local property taxes with money generated from the income tax. Edgar had made such a proposal as early as 1977, during his first term as state representative. See Jim Edgar, interview with Mark DePue, June 9, 2009, 23-28; Fred Edgar, April 22, 2009, 54.

DePue: What do you say to the critics at that time who said, Okay, the governor runs on a particular platform but wants to do the very thing that his opponent was proposing, and so he comes up with this Ikenberry Commission as cover?

Grosboll: You know what? People had that concern, and that's fair. In the political world, we get caught up all the time on issues of consistency. We could quote Emerson here and say "consistency is the hobgoblin of small minds," but what he actually said was "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of small minds."[66] But the main point that I would argue—and I contended at the time, and still contend— [Netsch's] plan was more extensive in terms of overall tax reform. She was doing a whole series of other things, in terms of tax breaks and other things that were going on in her system. Our approach was limited solely to the issue of education swapping. That was it. And secondly, ours was preconditioned on reforms. We got Chicago school reforms before we ever put forward anything associated with Ikenberry. Part of the overall Edgar approach was, we're going to move forward with this, but we also want some reforms. And one of those was to expand the time it takes for a teacher to get tenure. Most teachers in Illinois were getting tenured after two years. We felt that that needed to be changed; that it was wrong for a person after two years was literally tenured for the rest of their life. Edgar was not fighting the principle of tenure; what he was fighting were the conditions it takes to reach tenure. Another—

DePue: What was the problem with that?

Grosboll: Our problem was that we were tenuring people too early, without having had sufficient time to make sure that they were quality people. The second problem we had was that in looking at the number of teachers in the public school system who get fired, what one pretty quickly finds out is that unless they are literally caught stealing money or in a motel room with a student, nobody gets fired in this state. Ironically, a couple of years ago, a reporter in the press room did an extensive study of all nine hundred school districts in Illinois and did a multi-part story on it and ultimately concluded the same thing, which is that there is almost nobody getting fired in Illinois. And part of the reason for that is that the system is so complicated and so costly, that a school district can hardly afford to try and fire someone. So one of the other things we wanted was some pretty dramatic changes to speed up the processes involved in getting rid of a teacher. Those were other things that we wanted to see as part of it. It's not an attack on good schoolteachers, but if you have a bad schoolteacher, it ought not be so difficult to get rid of one.

DePue: What was your personal role on this educational debate?

Grosboll: The Ikenberry Commission ultimately was staffed by a woman in Chicago who worked with the Civic Committee, named Dea Meyer who did an outstanding job working with our office and working with President Ikenberry. My role was to liaison with Dea and with President Ikenberry. I participated in all of the meetings

[66] "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines." Ralph Waldo Emerson's famous line is from his essay "Self Reliance" in *Essays: First Series*, first published in 1841. http://www.emersoncentral.com/selfreliance.htm.

and everything along those lines. Mindy Sick and I participated in all of the work, all of the meetings, liaisoning with them, and just tracking where we were and where this was headed.

DePue: You've talked about some of the issues. What were some of the other reforms that the Ikenberry Commission was chartered to address? Or the issues, I should say.

Grosboll: I'm a little cold on some of this, to be honest with you, but for example, we wanted to deal with what it would take to determine the appropriate amount necessary to educate a child in Illinois and to come up with what we ultimately called the foundation level. And the foundation level was to be determined by doing an examination of high-quality school districts that were low-cost school districts. So they were getting the job done for an amount of money that seemed to be, shall we say, a good result for the buck. In fact, we brought on a consulting firm that began studying school districts in Illinois that seemed to be doing a good job and identifying what it cost and what the results were. In doing that, they eventually came up with a formula, and the state has pretty well followed that approach ever since 1995. About an every-two-year basis, that examination is done. And the purpose of that is not to set a maximum that schools shouldn't need more than; it was done for the purpose of saying no child in Illinois should be going to a school that is receiving less than this foundation level. Initially when that study was done, the conclusion was that if a school district was not spending 4,225 dollars per child for basic costs—I'm not counting low income or other factors in the formula, just the basic core cost of the school—they're probably under-funding. There were many, many school districts in Illinois, particularly downstate, that were spending significantly less than that $4,225. And again, we examined that issue in terms of where those schools were and what the product of those schools were, and we concluded that study was pretty accurate; that those schools were having a very difficult time doing the basic level of educating.

DePue: Was busing figured into that equation?

Grosboll: Busing amounts in Illinois are an add-on. If you have a set number of children that are bused in rural areas or wherever it happens to be, you get additional funding for that. There's a formula. The same thing if you're dealing with children who are below the poverty line. If they're qualifying for free meals, there's an extra factoring for that, and your school gets extra money for that. Children that have disabilities—you get extra money for that. All of that is on top of what we call the foundation level. So the core concept that Ikenberry came up with was we need to have at least a minimum level that we develop based on researching quality schools; set that minimum, and ensure that no child goes to a school that isn't getting at least that level of funding. That's the heart of the foundation level, and I think because this issue got so caught up in the debate about property versus income tax, swapping, many people missed the bigger issue. This was really about, from our standpoint, providing a level of equality so that we did not have children who were going to schools that were so low funded that the job couldn't be done.

DePue: There's a couple of different directions that I'd like to go from here. One of them is the issue of the expenses involved with an urban school versus a rural school, and Illinois is a classic example of having both. Isn't it a lot more expensive to run a school district in a place like Chicago than downstate?

Grosboll: Yes, but again, there were factors in there that took that into account, and in particular took into account issues such as poverty numbers, *et cetera*. Probably 90 percent of the kids in the Chicago school system were qualifying for federal free lunch.[67] And once that happens, those kids then kick in a whole other formula of additional funding. But yes, there are some discrepancies. Those are dealt with in that formula. But that was the first principle that Ikenberry dealt with: how do you deal with that. And that was a charge that Governor Edgar gave them: how do we get to a point of ensuring that we are seeking and striving to ensure that we don't have school districts that aren't getting the bare necessities of money.

DePue: Maybe you just answered this question, but the perception in the public today is that the Ikenberry Commission started with looking at this notion of swapping between property tax and income tax, and then eventually moved towards what you've been talking about. Is that the case?

Grosboll: No. They had multiple charges; it's just that what the media wants to talk about is one issue, and that's taxes. And we'll talk here in a minute, a little bit, about how explosive that concern and that issue can be. But Ikenberry dealt with many, many things, one of which was to develop this formula and to build that into the statute; that there had to be a process for developing a foundation level, and that the state should then honor that foundation level—which, by and large, the state has for thirteen or fourteen years now.

DePue: Speaking of the commission, I think it was March of 1996 that the commission issued its report, a long-awaited report, and what I've got, at least, is that they recommended a 1.5 billion-dollar property tax relief and four hundred million dollars in new state education funding. So in part, that kind of is, if you will, a bit contradictory to what we've just been talking about here.

Grosboll: No, it's a part of it. Part of it, ultimately, was that if we were going to raise enough money to meet the demands of the system and the new formula, we were going to have to raise more money than we were going to provide in relief. So you can't reshuffle the deck unless you're prepared to say, "We don't need any new money; all we're going to do is take money away from some districts and give it to other districts." If you oppose that concept—which I do; I think it would be wrong to say we're going to take money away from richer districts, almost all of which is local property taxes It's not state income taxes or state revenues, so I don't view it as contradictory, I view that ultimately what Ikenberry recommended was determining

[67] For FY2001, 82 percent of students enrolled in Chicago public schools (that reported data on the National School Lunch Program) were eligible for the federal school lunch program. As of FY2010, 86 percent are eligible. Illinois State Board of Education, "Free and Reduced-Price Meal Eligibility Data," http://www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/eligibility_listings.htm.

the amount of money that was needed to fulfill the governor's objectives on providing quality schools. And then we got to the issue of how do we do it; and ultimately the conclusion was to do an income tax, raise enough money that would allow us to do significant property tax relief, and at the same time, raise the level of the school funding. That was our goal, and that's what we proposed. Unfortunately, because of the explosiveness of the tax issue, we didn't even get out of the gate on this. And I don't know if you want me to turn to that.

DePue: I think this is perfect. We're talking March 1996. To put this into a larger political context, it's primary season. It's not a gubernatorial year. We're electing a president, I believe a senator that year, and congressmen, but more importantly, all of these legislators at the state level, who all now are going to have a voice in this process.

Grosboll: Right. I know where you're heading with that, and part of your assumption is that people who support raising more money for education and providing property tax relief—that that's a bad vote. And the point that I would make to you, and the point that I would raise to legislators, is that if you go back over the course of the last twenty-five years, and you look at the circumstances in which income taxes were voted upon and the leadership of the state stepped forward and explained why. Governor Thompson twice raised the income tax, one of which was temporary, rolled back; another one was the last one he did before he left office, which Speaker Madigan basically drove. And then Governor Edgar made part of that permanent, and the next year, he made the other part permanent. You look at those votes: not a single legislator lost their office because of that vote. And I've dared many, many people to tell me any human being who lost their seat because of a vote when they were able to show what it was for, why, *et cetera.*

But let me go to what happened. Throughout 1995, or at least from the point after Ikenberry was appointed, Governor Edgar was briefing the speaker of the House, who was a Republican, Lee Daniels, and the president of the Senate, Pate Philip, another Republican. Throughout that briefing process, he was telling them generally the direction it was heading; and as the Ikenberry Report was wrapping up and a date was determined when we were going to present it, the governor was very clear to President Ikenberry that we could not drop that without briefing the two leaders of the chambers. The day before it was to be dropped, the governor made a point of being in the suburbs so that he could personally visit with Speaker Daniels and then personally meet with President Philip. And I think that was the right thing to do. Had he not done it, he would have been criticized for not giving them a briefing beforehand. Well, the problem is that one of them took the entire package and handed it to the *Chicago Tribune*.

DePue: One of them.

Grosboll: One of them did. And—

DePue: Can you tell us which one?

Grosboll: I'm not going there. (DePue laughs) So the next morning, we awoke prepared to go and methodically walk through the report, explain the processes and what we wanted; instead, the *Tribune* had the entire document, and the way they treated it was a headline probably as big as any headline I've seen, that said, "Edgar Drops Tax Bombshell."[68] And it was not about education reform, it wasn't about the foundation level—it wasn't about any of that; it was all about taxes. So by the time Governor Edgar and President Ikenberry got to their first press conference to lay it out, the reporters, being very aggressive, had gotten on the phone, had called the leaders, had called all sorts of other people, and had them all saying, "Oh, no, we'll never vote for that," because, of course, there were people screaming at them, yelling.

So this is one of those classic examples: if you brief people ahead of time, (laughs) you take the gamble they're not going to leak it to undermine you. If you don't brief them, then you will be criticized the next day for having not told them what was going on.

DePue: In your mind, then, it was released specifically to undermine the proposal?

Grosboll: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Sure, that's why you do it. Well, you do it because you've given [it to] a reporter who's not going to forget that you're the one who gave him the story, so you've earned a few points with that reporter. But secondly, it's a way to completely undermine, because instead of Jim Edgar and Stan Ikenberry being able to present and to spin, it was spun by someone else.

DePue: I want to take just a couple of minutes for you to kind of back up a little bit and talk about the political landscape, because this is at the tail end of a two-year timeframe when the Republicans controlled both the Illinois Senate and the House. It's the only two years when that was the case for the Edgar administration.

Grosboll: Yes, that's right.

DePue: That's going to change in just a few months down the road.

Grosboll: Yep, that's right.

DePue: So how did the two political parties and the leadership in the Illinois House and the Senate line up in terms of their general feeling towards the Ikenberry Commission Report and school reform?

Grosboll: I need to take it one step further back, though. If you go back to the elections of 1994, education was a huge issue out there; and notwithstanding the argument that Jim Edgar and Dawn Clark Netsch had over her plan, everyone was basically saying we've got to do some things to improve the school funding. Legislators said, this is the year we're going to do it. Whether it's Governor Edgar or governor candidate Netsch, they were talking about what are we going to do to improve

[68] "Edgar Readies Tax Bombshell," *Chicago Tribune*, March 21, 1996.

schools? So we get into 1995 and 1996, and we haven't done anything. The governor has told them his idea was to create this commission, let a respected person like Stan Ikenberry work on it. Throughout that process, there is skepticism on the part of Republican leadership in both chambers as to whether or not they want to go anywhere close to that issue; maybe some skepticism as to whether or not we even really need to put more money into education. There is a difference of opinion. It's an interesting time period, because the Republicans control all three entities—the two chambers and the governor's office—and in fact do cooperate on many issues. People look back on it and say they butted heads. That's not really true. We passed a lot of education stuff such as Chicago school reform, charter schools, *et cetera*. We passed reforms in medical malpractice. We passed a whole series of reforms related to business. Illinois had had a terrible situation that had occurred from the 1970s on issues of unemployment insurance. We took steps to remedy that and worked together to do it. There were many things we worked on, but throughout that time period, we were still butting heads about the budget. Edgar wanted more surplus built; each year, the legislature didn't want to build more surplus, they wanted to spend it. Each year, Edgar was trying to hold the line on spending overall; the legislature was ready to spend more. So we butted heads on a lot of issues, and we cooperated on a lot of issues. People like to characterize it one way or the other, but it was actually both, in a way. That's the way it should be, (laughs) to be honest.

I've told you this before, Mark. When the governor and the legislative bodies are hand-in-hand, you'd better guard your billfold, because you want there to be some conflict going on and give-and-take. Throughout that process, though, Edgar was getting most of the things he wanted. People have forgotten this. We didn't have a single appointee that was rejected during that time period. His reorganization efforts all moved through even though people said they were going to stand in the way of those. In addition, our reorganization of the natural resources area and ultimately the reorganization of human services were instituted. There were a couple of other smaller ones. All went through. There were things we were getting along with as well as things we weren't getting along on. There was a continuous disagreement and arguing over the issue of education funding. That's true, but you know what? You respect people that disagree. Now, you don't respect people who in good faith meet with you and then leak documents to hurt you. So if we can get back to that, I'll just sort of finish out.

That day (after the Tribune broke the story on the Ikenberry proposal) —using a horse analogy—we never even got out of the gate, because before Edgar and Ikenberry could even do their press conference, legislators were calling up to make it clear they were going to vote no because the spin was it's all about taxes. That was all it was about: taxes, taxes, taxes. It was a very, very difficult day. I would also say that the Republicans got elected in 1994 saying they were going to deal with the education issue, and at least in the House, two years later, they lost control. And Governor Edgar and I don't totally agree on this, but I happen to believe one of the reasons they didn't hold the House was they didn't do what they were supposed

to do on education. And to use a phrase Governor Edgar used about other things—they didn't do their job. And I believe that.

DePue: Let's move forward with this educational issue, then, to keep a focus on just that. There was a time when Edgar is going to use some of his own personal reputation and, even more blunt, his personal capital on this.

Grosboll: That's right. We get through the end of 1996, and this issue has not moved forward. And in, I believe, January of '97—is that when you've got Edgar doing his education speech?

DePue: Yeah, the State of the State speech where that's one of his top initiatives.

Grosboll: He does speak to the chamber and basically says, we need to move this forward. We start a major push. Edgar takes his campaign funds, and puts it into ads explaining why we need to move forward on this. Again, back to the issue of the politics of it: most of the polling in Illinois showed that the public agreed with him. The public was behind him on this issue. The media, editorials, others were behind him. Many of the major civic leaders were in agreement with him.

So eventually this issue comes to a vote in the Illinois House. By now, the Republicans have lost their two-year control of the House, and Speaker Madigan is back in the speaker's chair. So we begin moving this issue forward, and eventually we do pass it through the House. Every Republican, except for seven, vote no or take a walk, and the bill passes and goes over to the Senate. It would have done a swap; it would have provided additional money for schools; it would have established the foundation level; it would have put in a series of reforms, increased time for tenure, *et cetera*. It goes to the Senate. To make a long story short—you need to have thirty votes over there—I would say we had somewhere in the vicinity of forty-four votes, had the bill been brought to a vote. And the reason I say that is that there were a series of Republicans who would have had to have voted for the swap. They would have voted for it because over the course of many years, they had said they supported that concept. Many of them were in school districts that would have benefited dramatically. Many downstate districts, their schools would have gained millions of dollars through this, and they would have been hard-pressed to vote no on it. However, the president of the Senate—

DePue: Pate Philip.

Grosboll: Yeah. And in fairness to Pate, part of the reason he didn't want it to come for a vote was that he had some members who couldn't vote either way on it. They couldn't vote for it because they were in some difficult districts and they would have been hammered back home for voting for a tax increase. On the other hand, those very same people were in districts who were screaming about property tax relief, and that legislator would have been voting against property tax relief. So part of the concern that Senator Philip had—again, I hate to be fair here—was that he had

people who couldn't vote either way on it without potentially jeopardizing their seat.

DePue: Well, let me be unfair here. That's exactly the kind of thing that turns the public's attitude to very cynical towards politics.

Grosboll: I didn't say I was making a judgment about it. (DePue laughs) I'm saying that that's the reality. So ultimately, had that bill been called for a vote, I believe we would have gotten forty-two, forty-three, forty-four, forty-five votes in support of it.

DePue: And you needed how many again?

Grosboll: Thirty. The way it was ultimately dealt with was it was never called for a vote. Many of the legislators, particularly the downstate Republicans, were under the impression that there would be a compromise, and there'd be a swap; that compromise was going to come down the road. Well, there was no compromise in the works. It was a yes-or-no. And it wasn't driven by us. Had there been an approach that would have said, we'll do a swap, but we've got to do A, B, and C, we'd have been at the table. But later, of course, it was characterized that Edgar wouldn't negotiate. (laughs) We would have fallen over ourselves to be negotiating, but there was no opportunity to negotiate. I think a decision was made by the Senate Republican leadership that the best vote for them was no vote, and that's what ended up happening.

DePue: Was it before or after this vote that he [Edgar] spent his own personal capital to try to sway public opinion on it?

Grosboll: It was before. And again, here's one of these things where afterwards, when the dust settles, people say, Edgar wasn't able to get that done. and it's an example [where] he just couldn't get the results. Aside from the fact that, as I'm going to explain later, we got a lot of results out of this, the point I had made to people is no other governor ever tried to do this. No other governor made the effort. You can go back as far as you want here; nobody even made the effort. So what ends up happening is, because Jim Edgar tried something that his predecessors had not tried and the people who came after him did not try to do, he gets more criticism for trying and getting halfway there than the others do for never even having tried. So I don't have a problem with the fact that he made the effort; he put everything into it, we passed it out of the House, we got to the Senate, we had enough votes, and it didn't get called. Jim Edgar did everything he could have done, and I don't know that we can ask more of him than that. Now, in terms of his ability to get the job done, I would argue that what ultimately happened in the next step clearly refutes the idea that we couldn't, quote, get the results, get the job done.

DePue: And the next step is calling the special session at the end of '97?

Grosboll: After this thing failed I think a lot of legislators took considerable grief back home for it not passing, and a lot of the downstate Republicans—because again, keep in mind that the push for property tax relief, at least at that point in time, was a very

loud rallying cry in downstate areas, in farmland areas. Plus, there are areas that didn't fund schools as well as some of the other areas of the state. So when many of the downstate Republican senators went home, they got a lot of grief for this. People always define Senator Pate Philip as being this autocratic, dictatorial president of the Senate. That's actually not true. He was a guy who was good at listening to his members. He knew exactly where his members were, what their challenges were, and I think the leadership on the Senate side—on the Republican side—recognized that they had a problem and were going to have to do something.

I can't recall and can't tell you precisely how this started happening, but eventually it became clear that the Senate Republicans were very much interested in coming back to the table to talk about something we could do for education. I participated in a lot of those negotiations. It was very clear that we were not going to be able to get Senator Philip to budge on the issue of income and property.

When I talked to Governor Edgar about it, what he basically said to me was that at a minimum, we had to get the six hundred million dollars necessary to fully fund the foundation level changes we wanted; that those revenues could not come out of the state's reserves; that we would have to identify where the money would come from—and that burden, he said, is not on us. That's on the Senate Republicans. We had put our idea out there; they rejected it. They're going to have to come up with it. Third, he said, we've still got to have reforms in this package.

So I went to work with the Senate Republicans, and I spent a lot of time with their staff guy, a very talented bright fellow named Keith Snyder. He and I and a couple of others began working on this and ultimately agreed we would go with the six hundred million. Now, I say six hundred—that was the amount at the beginning of the year. Some of that had been put in the budget in the spring. So what we're talking about was what it would take in the fall, which was close to five hundred million, to get it ramped up to the full amount. Again, a lot of time has passed, so my numbers may be a little bit off here; but at least the overall goal was that to get this done, we needed a six hundred million–dollar package overall. They were to buy into the idea of that; they were in agreement that they would put into the statute the foundation level; they were in agreement—we simply said, "The formula is the formula we wrote".

And the reason that was important is because the formula can be played with so that it ended up helping suburban schools, which did not need as much help as the downstate schools. Our point was we know this formula; we devised it. Keith Snyder and the Senate Republicans ultimately accepted the formula as we wrote it. So after a very lengthy process of negotiating, eventually the funding sources were developed. As I remember, it was some taxes related to phone service and some taxes related to cigarettes.

DePue: Let me read through the results here. Before I do, though, this is all determined in the special session?

Grosboll: It was all being negotiated in the summer and into the fall; and then that's right. I think we called the special session to do it.

DePue: Would the same rules apply, then? That, technically, was the veto session, where the percentages are a little bit different.

Grosboll: In terms of the votes required?

DePue: Yeah.

Grosboll: I think that's right, yes.

DePue: So they reached an even higher threshold in being able to pass this legislation.

Grosboll: They did, but if we had the Republicans on board, then that was no longer the big issue.

DePue: And it was December of '97 that Edgar is able to sign this landmark educational reform. And you were right on: 485 million dollars in new funds for education.

Grosboll: Added on to whatever we passed in the spring.

DePue: Correct. The baseline, then—or you'd been calling the foundation levels, 4,225 dollars for every schoolchild in the state, going up to 4,325 in 2000.

Grosboll: Yep, and then another hundred the next year.

DePue: And 4,425 in 2001. A billion and a half for school construction—no small thing.

Grosboll: That's a billion and a half in state funding. It was over three billion in total funding. It was a three billion-dollar—

DePue: Federal match?

Grosboll: No, the locals had to put up a match, and that match ended up being a little over fifty percent, on average.

DePue: Here's another thing you had mentioned, emphasized quite a bit before: teacher certification and tenure reform—no small thing—funded by cigarette tax, phone tax, riverboat casinos, and penalty for late filers.

Grosboll: Yep, that's right. So I was saving the school construction one, but since you touched on it, I will. The school construction program—Illinois, maybe twenty years prior, had had a blip of school construction, where we put maybe two hundred million dollars into school construction. I don't even remember the why, but the state had done it. The state had never really entered into that territory. An assessment had been done by the state board of education, which determined that Illinois had well over ten billion dollars of school construction needs that were not being tended to. School referendums were failing because school referendums are

paid for by property taxes, and again, the public had serious problems with that. Governor Edgar had a very strong belief that it would be a good thing to create a state construction program. Both the Senate Republicans and the House Republicans were in agreement; and in fact, many of their districts didn't care about operating money, but they did care about construction money; they needed help building new buildings.

The suburbs, where operating funds were doing pretty well in the 1990s. The economy was starting to move; property values were rising—in fact, the issue we had dealt with early in the session was how to slow down these extravagant increases in property taxes. So they were doing okay, but they were busting at the seams in terms of their school populations. They needed newer and bigger schools, but they were having a terrible time passing a referendum to do it. Downstate, they had a little different problem. The downstate problem is that many school districts were operating in school buildings that were seventy-five, eighty, a hundred years old, and having a very difficult time passing referendums to modernize the buildings. Oh, and then the third one, of course, is Chicago. They just had a massive hole in terms of what they should have been doing with their schools and were incapable of doing. Another incredible success story was once we did our thing, it automatically guaranteed Chicago would get 20 percent of the funds, which was the right amount. Paul Vallas used those funds, used a series of other creative financing mechanisms; and between Paul and Arne Duncan, they did a massive reconstruction of Chicago schools—another untold story that people had missed.

So the school construction issue was another really important piece. School tenure—we put in it would go to four years. And the other issue was teacher certification. We did not have very good rules in Illinois that basically would require people to go through recertification processes or show that they had additional education, updating. We put in requirements that said they had to go through those processes. So a lot of things. I left out a piece, and that is I kept telling you about all the work we were doing with the Senate Republicans. Part of this was that Governor Edgar had met with Senator Philip, and ultimately, I think they had reached an agreement of generally how we would proceed.

DePue: Is that a one-on-one discussion between them?

Grosboll: I was in on a couple of meetings with Senator Philip; but I think prior to that, the governor and Pate had talked, at least on the phone, to the extent that they each understood. We would give up for the time being on the swapping issue; Pate, on the other hand, would buy into the things that we cared about—which, quite frankly, many of his members cared about, too. So once that agreement was reached, it was let's hammer out some of the differences we've got, then sit down with the Senate Republicans, make sure they're in accord. So that's what happened. The only real arguing occurred on how to raise the money for it, and it was Edgar's belief that we would not allow the state treasury—in terms of our surplus, the end-of-year balances—to be used to pay for any of this; that it had to be targeted, new revenue. And it's a good thing we did that.

The school construction program, just to turn my attention to that for a moment… The school construction program basically said, we're going to use a formula; and the formula basically says if you're a wealthy school district, we will give you up to, I think, 25 or 35 percent of the funding. If you are a poor school district, we will fund your buildings all the way up to 75 percent—and in some cases, I think we even could go to 90 percent. I can't remember quite the circumstances. Ultimately that passed, and over the course of the next few years, allowed for over three billion dollars worth of school construction; the largest school construction program in state history.

We knew that was not enough money, but we knew two things would happen. Referendums would start passing, because school districts were able to say, we're only putting up 40 percent of the money, and the state's putting up the other 60. Referendums in the next cycle—85 percent of them passed. So it began saying to the public, we'll partner with you to get this job done that needs to be done. So that helped. The second thing we knew would happen is that this program would be so popular, it would be very difficult for the legislature not to continue to keep funding it. And sure enough, within two years, George Ryan added 1.1 billion dollars of state money to the program. That added over 2.2, 2.3 billion dollars total. And then in his last year, the fund was running low, and the legislature and the governor threw another billion dollars into the program. Now, under Blagojevich, there was not another dollar put into the program. But if you think about it, in total now, the state put up something like 3.5 billion; and when you look at the overall expenditures, over eight billion dollars was spent on school construction as a result of this program.

DePue: We've been talking about education for quite a bit here, and it's central to the understanding of where we're at in politics today, so it's been a great conversation. But this is, as you mentioned yourself, by no means the only thing that's going on in the second half of Edgar's administration. So let's pick up with a quick discussion from your perspective on the reorganization Department of Human Services, if you could.

Grosboll: I was not directly involved with that. There were other people in the administration who were very active. Howard Peters, for example, was very active in this. Joan Walters, who'd been at the Bureau of the Budget—was very active in. The governor himself was very personally involved in this particular topic. We had a variety of human service agencies in state government, and many of them were dealing with the same clients; they were dealing with related problems and issues; they had delivery services that were involved, and ultimately, the belief was that we ought to consolidate many of these services. It would be more efficient, in terms of saving us money, and it would be better for the clientele we were serving. I hate to use the term "one-stop shopping," but the point is there were multiple services that could be provided by the same entity or agency.

Governor announces the plan. It is the largest reorganization of any entity in state history.[69] Immediately, interest groups all across the board started complaining; part of the reason is many of those interest groups liked having their own separate department because oftentimes, they could influence that department more. Somebody from their organization maybe had been named to run that department, or they thought they could get a person from their organization to run it. They liked smaller entities that represented their distinct interests. So lots of the interest groups got upset. It's understandable. One would have expected them to not be happy with it.

DePue: And from my records here, part of what you're talking about is the old Department of Rehabilitation Services—

Grosboll: Yes.

DePue: —the old Department of Alcoholism—

Grosboll: Yes.

DePue: —and Substance Abuse; the old state welfare system.

Grosboll: Yes. So first you had that happening; secondly you had many legislators saying this was never going to pass, they could never vote for this, *et cetera*. Again, for people who say Edgar was unable to get things done, I say, "Then how did we pass something that legislators said we'd never pass?" Ultimately we did pass it and got 99 percent of what we wanted in that reorganization. The other reason why that was critical was that there was massive welfare reform occurring in the nation. We had been moving forward on a series of issues, but it was becoming more and more important that these programs be better coordinated; and I think in Governor Edgar's view, this was a way to help that happen.

DePue: And of course, he had done some of that welfare reform himself in his first administration—

Grosboll: Yes, he had.

DePue: —in the process of tackling the budget problem.

Grosboll: Yeah. I'm assuming you've talked to other people or may talk to other people who were more directly involved in that topic.

DePue: Yes.

Grosboll: I also believe one of the just totally unheralded stories of the administration is that we did tackle the welfare reform issue. We did dramatic things in that area. We did it on a scale far larger than many of the states that were being portrayed nationally

[69] Edgar formally announced the plan in his sixth State of the State speech. *Chicago Tribune*, January 10, 1996.

as leading on this issue. The irony is that we were doing many of the exact same things that states like Wisconsin were doing, and others, except doing it for a population that was, what, eight times larger? And the other thing that I think the governor, when he retired from office, could feel very good about was we did welfare reform the right way. We did it recognizing that people who were going back to work needed to be trained; we needed to help provide transportation, and we also needed to help them deal with issues of taking care of children. All of those types of things were dealt with, and I think that's one of the reasons why the governor did get major recognition from national human service groups for the way we did it.

DePue: Let's turn our attention now to another subject I know is near to your heart and especially to Governor Edgar's—one he doesn't get much credit at all for—and that's the founding of this institution, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

Grosboll: Yeah. Let me, if I can, just give you a little bit of a history on this. There had been rumblings about a presidential library for a very long time. I think the first person who really didn't just utter some words but actually worked on this topic was Sen. Dick Durbin who in the 1980s, had taken some fairly significant steps trying to push the idea that there ought to be a presidential library here.

DePue: No, that would have been when he was a congressman.

Grosboll: He was a congressman at the beginning of that, that's right. And that was sort of beginning to swell up a little bit in the late eighties early 1990 time period. And when Jim Edgar got elected, I know that Dick Durbin—who again, was a congressman at the time—talked about it, and Governor Edgar had to say, "Look, we don't have the money now to do this." As a little bit of time went by, the issue sort of settled down a bit, and it laid dormant for a couple of years. Periodically, Congressman Durbin would discuss the fact that he still felt we should do it, and I think he deserves a great deal of credit for having kept at that idea.

As we got past the election and as the economy improved in Illinois, Jim Edgar began to feel that he had the ability to begin spending some money and do some things that he really wanted to do. And we could talk about a bunch of other little fun things that we got into, but he ultimately felt it was the right time to commit funds from the state of Illinois to begin the process of building this library. So, on Lincoln's birthday in 1997, he spoke to the Abraham Lincoln Association—which he attended most years he was governor— and announced that he was going to commit money in the budget that he would present in March of 1997, and that we would put in the first dollars to begin building the presidential library. Now, initially—

DePue: The library or the library and museum?

Grosboll: Back at the time, it was a little ambiguous. We subsequently have come to realize that they're both a library and a museum. And I don't know which term we used at the time. It was only later—particularly after we went out and visited all of the presidential libraries in the country—that we realized most of them are divided into two pieces: one is a library for historical research, the other is a museum for the presentation of things about that person. So Edgar had never opposed the idea, but he felt that you can't promise to do something if you don't have the resources. So finally, at that point in time, he announced that we were prepared to do it.

In the meantime, he sent me down to talk to Mayor Hasara, who had indicated she would be willing to donate the location of the old police station, which is where the museum now stands; and in addition to that, the city of Springfield would be prepared to commit ten million dollars of their TIF [Tax Increment Financing] dollars. So, ironically at the time, we were thinking that if we were building one building, if it was a forty million–dollar facility, we'd put up ten million, the city would put up ten, we felt we could get ten out of the federal government, and then we'd raise ten from the private community. As you know, ultimately this was expanded to be a museum; a library; a transportation visitors' center and it ended up being 150 million dollars. But back at that time period, the idea was at a minimum, we needed to get this facility built, and we were prepared to commit the first dollars to get it moving. I think at that speech, he said, "We're going to commit ten million dollars." In actuality, looking back at the numbers, when we went to the legislature, we eventually got something like 3.4 million dollars for the first phase. I joined with the Historic Preservation Agency (HPA), and ultimately we visited all the presidential libraries in the country, just to take a look at them.

DePue: "We" being…?

Grosboll: Susan Mogerman, who was head of the Preservation Agency, and some of her staff people. I can't remember the whole group, and it changed depending on which facility we went to. But ultimately, HPA visited all of the presidential libraries. I maybe went to four or five of them. And out of that came some pretty interesting things. But to make a long story short, that first year, we did in fact commit the funding to begin that process. We selected the architect that would design the building itself, and we also selected the designer that would do all of the internal storytelling. And that was one of the things we had learned on those visits. In most cases, they built a box, and then they turn to somebody and say, okay, now tell the story about this president. The thing we learned was, figure out the story you're going to tell first, and then build the box around the story, and that's ultimately what happened with the museum building. So to me, this was very significant.

This is the one area where it is upsetting that Jim Edgar got left out of much of this story, and there were attempts to sort of erase the role he played in this. But the fact of the matter is, the announcement for this was Jim Edgar, the first dollars for it was Jim Edgar, we secured the land, we secured the ten million-dollar commitment out of the city, we selected the architect, we selected the designer, we set up all of the panels that would begin doing the back-and-forth designing of the story. A book

was put out that talked about the library and about that process, and the implication was that Governor Ryan had set all these things up. That was all done before George was even elected. Now, to George's credit, he did a very good job moving this project forward. They went out, they did seek private funding, they did seek federal funding, so give credit where credit is due. My only point is, don't erase the role that Jim Edgar had in this. This library was moving, and this library was going to be built because Jim Edgar said, "We're going to build this building" and laid the foundation to get it done.

DePue: So this proves that old adage, the old proverb, "Success has many fathers"?

Grosboll: It does. And, you know what? My attitude is, when you have a great success like this, there is plenty of room for lots of people to feel like they did their job. There are very few things that I'm going to compliment Rod Blagojevich about, but the one thing he ultimately did do—and I think it is the only thing that I can think of (DePue laughs) He brought in Richard Norton Smith to run the library. And partly that was a reaction to the Ryan administration, at the tail end, attempting to move a series of their staff members in to run the library. They were not historians; they were, quite frankly, not qualified to run the library and museum. There was a huge reaction to that, a major push from the Chicago media to bring in professionals. Ultimately, Blagojevich realized that the smartest thing he could do politically was to do exactly what the editorials were saying, and at that point he brought in Richard Norton Smith. And Richard Norton Smith was probably *the* right guy at the right time to bring in here to get this thing kicked off, and that's what happened.

DePue: There are three areas that we still want to cover. We've been at this—I think this is our sixth session—quite a few hours. This has all been great information and insight into the administration. The last three things that I want to talk about, and you might have a couple more to throw in there, are: a couple issues that tarnished the reputation a little bit, especially the MSI issue; the decision that Edgar made to step down; and to ask you some general reflections. Anything else, before we venture into the scandals? Every administration seems to have something in the background that they have to kind of look over their shoulder; in the case of Jim Edgar, it was primarily this Management Services of Illinois issue that really started to percolate in the mid-nineties but hit full steam about 1997. What can you tell us about your perspective on that?

Grosboll: The good news is I'm fortunate enough to say I know very little about this, but I do have a few perceptions on it that I can share with you. The first is that it is very difficult for a person to be involved in a large operation such as state government, where you've got a fifty billion-dollar budget you're dealing with on an annual basis, and you're dealing with sixty-five thousand employees—that at some point in an eight-year period, you're not going to run into something embarrassing or someone who embarrasses you. Every administration's going to face a little bit of this, and in this case, MSI was one of those embarrassing things. The good news is that—

DePue: Can you provide a real quick thumbnail of what the issue was?[70]

Grosboll: It's a little hard for me to tell you exactly what it was, other than the fact that MSI was providing a series of services in terms of collecting money, as I remember. They—

DePue: Through the Department of Public Aid, primarily.

Grosboll: Yes, it was Public Aid, and they were attempting to collect funds. And in the process of that, it was MSI's belief that they were not being properly reimbursed and that they wanted a different reimbursement formula, scheme, whatever. But what appears to have happened—and again, I'm not the expert on this—is that they manipulated people that they were dealing with on a daily basis and did so in an improper, illegal manner, or at least according to the federal government and—

DePue: And the charges that ended up in court dealt with things like trips, very lavish gifts, free meals, packages that arrived at the door around Christmastime, and then some—

Grosboll: So they manipulated people, and the ultimate result was that the formulas were changed so that MSI got more money, which they believed they deserved, but which we—state government and the courts and others—ultimately believed they did not deserve; and that the manner in which they manipulated that system was illegal. Obviously, anytime you get hit with a scandal, it's damaging, it's hurtful, it's embarrassing; but the two things that I would say of a positive nature are: number one, at no point did Jim Edgar know what was going on, or was Jim Edgar implicated in terms that he did something wrong. Now, that doesn't relieve the administration of responsibility.

DePue: Are you suggesting there was none of this when-did-he-know-it—

Grosboll: No, no.

DePue: Or what did he know and when did he know it?

Grosboll: No. He ended up testifying in that trial, but he didn't testify because the prosecutors called him. It wasn't because the prosecutors thought he knew something or whatever. He was called by the defense. The questioning was almost irrelevant. So

[70] In December 1993, MSI renegotiated its three-year contract with the Department of Public Aid to identify people receiving Medicaid coverage who also had private insurance. MSI reimbursed the $409,000 it had received in 1993 and was repaid at the new rate, receiving $4.5 million. From 1991 to 1995, MSI received $16.2 million from Public Aid. In May 1995, Mike Lawrence received an anonymous letter that outlined improper dealings between MSI and public aid officials. MSI provided gifts to officials and padded contracts, billing work that was never performed or had been performed by Department of Public Aid workers. On July 29, 1997, Edgar testified at MSI's co-owners' trial, becoming the first sitting governor in seventy-five years called to testify in a criminal case. He testified again, this time by videotape, on January 14, 1998, at the trial of James Berger. The *Chicago Tribune* provided steady coverage of the slow-developing story.

there was never an implication that Jim Edgar was personally involved or that he somehow profited or that he somehow directed something. So to me—

DePue: Do you recall how it was that this came to the public's attention in the first place?

Grosboll: That's the second point I want to raise, that nothing in this implicated the governor himself; and as I say, that doesn't relieve us of responsibility. When it happens under your watch, you're responsible. People who worked for you made mistakes and suffered consequences. But the other good news in this is—and to me, it is the most important lesson that public officials and future public officials can learn—somebody within the department realized what was going on and sent an anonymous letter to Mike Lawrence. And I assume you've talked to Mike about this?[71]

DePue: I have.

Grosboll: A letter was sent to Mike, explaining what was happening, who was doing what, how they were doing it. Mike then turned that over to the proper legal officials for investigation; and that, to me, is the most important lesson for any future elected leader, because when you get that letter in your hand, you basically have two choices. You do the right thing and you turn it over to the legal system and to prosecutors, or you sit and have a debate about, how do we want to handle this? There is no handling. When you become aware of potentially illegal activity, you only have one course of action, and that's you turn it over to prosecutors or investigators, and that's what Mike did. And I think in many ways, Mike Lawrence served the governor better than anybody could have served him by doing that. It's what Jim Edgar would have wanted, and it's what I think Jim Edgar greatly appreciates.

DePue: What was the mood within the administration, though, when the inevitable happens and the news media get a handle on this, and the story spins in directions that maybe the administration doesn't want it to go?

Grosboll: I have to be honest with you. I don't view that there was a view of panic or a view of we're in terrible trouble. Let's keep in mind, Jim Edgar was a state official for eighteen years; this was in the latter part of his tenure there. You see many things, you experience many things. The last thing you want to do is panic because some people really screwed up badly and there's activity. You basically go about your job. You realize, eventually the court system is going to sort this out, the guilty parties are going to be found guilty, and they're going to be dealt with. Had I felt that Jim Edgar had been involved in it or had directed it or was implicated in it, I would have been panicking, as would other people in the administration. But I don't think people close to Jim Edgar were—you know what? Let me just speak for myself. I never felt any panic, because I never felt there was something that ultimately was going to be some horrible story in this. What was bad was that

[71] Mike Lawrence's description of the events is in his July 2, 2009 interview with Mark DePue, 53-66.

people broke faith, and they were going to lose their jobs; some of them were going to go to jail. They broke the public trust, and some of that was going to rub off on us, but you know what? That happens when you're in office for eighteen years; somebody's going to embarrass you and do something bad.

DePue: It wasn't too long after that—we're talking about this really came to the forefront in 1997. One year later, in 1998, Edgar is obviously facing some important decisions, and maybe it was even before—

Grosboll: It's '97.

DePue: That's when MSI really broke.

Grosboll: No, but I mean his decision on whether or not to run for reelection…

DePue: Yeah, and that's what I was getting to. So go ahead and take us through that process, the process of struggling with what to do and the future of his career.

Grosboll: I think all of us who were close to Jim Edgar maybe have somewhat different perspectives on this. My perspective is that, first off, Jim Edgar was not a guy who believed you should get elected to the governorship for life. I think he believed that people have a period of opportunity where they can do their thing, and then they should step back. And I knew this about Jim Edgar long before he got into the debate about whether or not he was going to hang it up in 1998. So we got to the summer of 1997, and it was the time period in which he was going to have to decide whether he was going to run for reelection. He had been secretary of state ten years; he had been governor for eight years. And his choices were that he could simply retire, having done what he felt he could do. Two, he could run for the United States Senate, a seat which I think I can say with some certainty he would have walked into. He would have had the Republican nomination for the asking, and—

DePue: Who was sitting in that Senate seat at the time?

Grosboll: Carol Moseley Braun, whose negatives were about as low as a senator's can be. She had made some mistakes that were very troubling, including embracing a Nigerian dictator, and just had done some things that made her very vulnerable. And she did, of course, eventually lose that seat.[72] So Jim Edgar knew he could have the nomination for asking; and quite frankly, without a great deal of work, could have been elected to that Senate seat. That was his second option. And the third option was to run for reelection. So I think he was going through all of those and trying to figure out what to do. Now, swirling around this was that his children were grown and he was starting to have grandchildren, and he was clearly very much into having grandchildren. The grandchildren were in Colorado.

[72] Peter Fitzgerald defeated Moseley Braun in the 1998 general election, 50.35 percent to 47.44 percent; but get the secretary of state's official totals(??).

DePue: And his ticker.

Grosboll: Yeah. Another issue in all of this was that he had some medical issues, as you know, some heart conditions. I think that was hovering around, and I think that was particularly of interest to Brenda—her concerns about that. I think that Jim Edgar believed that if he ran for reelection, he would win reelection. I think he believed that if he ran for the Senate, he would win that seat. But I also believe that he felt he had a lot of family issues going on, he had his health condition that he and his wife were both somewhat concerned with, and at that point in his life—let's see, how old would he have been at that point in his life?

DePue: Fifty-two.

Grosboll: Fifty-two. I think there was an issue of whether or not it was time for him to go out and make some money. This was not a guy who grew up with financial resources; this was not a guy who, quite frankly, had been in the business world or somewhere and accumulated much wealth. If there was an opportunity he was going to have to head off in another direction, this was probably the time to do it.

DePue: One of the things that you did not mention as an option: the man obviously had a very successful gubernatorial career. Was the presidency ever in the mix?

Grosboll: You need to ask him that question, but I don't think so. I think his read of the Republican Party was that Jim Edgar would have been a fine candidate if he'd been nominated, (laughs) but it was going to be very difficult for a person with his more moderate background to run for the presidency or even the vice-presidency. Keep in mind that around that time period, a little later, [Pennsylvania governor] Tom Ridge was mentioned and ended up being vetoed as a candidate because he was pro-choice. Here was a veteran, a conservative on a lot of financial issues, a very impressive guy—couldn't get the vice presidential nod either. So I don't think Governor Edgar was viewing, this as an option. I think the options were fairly clear to him. But, again, he could better answer that.

DePue: Okay. But I intervened here before you got to the story, the real story here.

Grosboll: This is an interesting time period for me because on August 5, 1997, my son was born. So I was in the hospital with my wife and our new son. I have to be honest, I can't remember whether it was on August sixth or August seventh, but I'm in the hospital, and my phone rings. My wife and my one-day-old baby are there, family members are there, and I get a call in which I am told that the governor is going to make up his mind on what he's going to do and wanted to know if I could break away for a little bit—I think it was the next day—to meet with him and a few other advisors at the state fairgrounds to discuss the his future. So I said, "Well, I'm going to have to ask my wife." Eventually I did. My wife said, "Yes, get out of here." I think she was probably tired of me (DePue laughs) hanging around the room, anyway.

So I think it was the next day. I went to the fairgrounds. They had a small trailer—a nice setting to have this discussion—in which it was big enough for about seven, eight of us to fit in. The governor and at least six of us—it's six that I can think of—and it was people like Mike Lawrence and Joan Walters and myself and a couple of the other high-ranking people in the administration. And he basically said, "Here's the deal. I'm going to make up my mind very quickly on what I'm going to do. You people have been with me a long time. You've got as much at stake here as I do. I want to hear your opinions on what I should do."

DePue: Brenda there as well?

Grosboll: You know, I believe Brenda was sitting there. Now, she had her own views. I don't know that she jumped in. The governor wanted to hear these six staffers say something. So we went around the room, and it was a phenomenal discussion. Two people basically said, Governor, you have given enough; you should retire for your health, your family. It's been eighteen long years. You should retire for yourself. Two people said, "You ought to run for the U.S. Senate," and two people said, "You got to run for reelection." So the result was that as we went around the room, each person got, I don't know, five, seven, ten minutes to make a speech, and we each did. And all of us did a great job of giving him very strong reasons why each option was valid. And I'm hoping that it accomplished two things for Jim Edgar: one, it helped to clarify various ideas and issues, and he could attach himself to those that he felt the strongest about; secondly, I think it was saying to him—because all of us said this—no matter what you do, it's going to be the right decision. Do what you need to do, and we're going to support that. And I think everybody there prefaced their comments by saying, "Governor, we want you to do what you want to do, and we'll back you on that."

I will tell you my personal position on this was—and I had come prepared—that Jim Edgar needed to run for the United States Senate. He had spent eighteen years in state government; he had a phenomenal list of achievements and accomplishments. But I also felt that you can stay too long. You can get into a rut. You can get into a rut personally; you can get into a rut politically. Jim Edgar had done an awful lot of things. Had he stuck around, then he would have done a capital program; rather than George Ryan doing a capital program, Jim Edgar would have had a capital program. That would have been fun. Jim Edgar would have moved forward on some other education issues. But by and large, I felt that it was time for him to move on, and I laid out to him what I thought were some of the most potent arguments a person could ever make. (laughs)

I said, "First off, to be a member of the United States Senate is one of the great honors in American life; it's the greatest club on Earth." I said, "You love to talk those issues; it will give you an opportunity to play a role in it." I said, "In terms of your family and in terms of your children, what greater gift could you give for your grandchildren than the opportunity to grow up in a situation that as they become more conscious of who their grandfather is, he's in the United States Senate. They're going to live and breathe that and see that. What a great gift." He loved to

travel. I said, “You know, you’re a U.S. Senator; you’re going to get to travel.” (laughs) He loves foreign policy issues, and he reads foreign policy stuff all the time. I said, “These things you’re reading about? You’re going to be there. You’re going to get to participate in that.” And I also made a political argument. My political argument was, “You have provided very sound, moderate voices for Illinois politics, and I think people have really appreciated that; and the Republican Party has gained because you have always approached things in a very down-to-earth, practical manner. The United States Senate could use a Republican like you.” There were a few other arguments I made, but needless to say, I was very impressed with my arguments. But I wasn’t sure if the governor was impressed with my arguments. So a few days went by, and the governor did make his announcement; to cut to my punch line, he of course announced that he was not going to run for anything and that he was going to retire from political life.

He then went back to the Capitol building and went back to work after he made the announcement he wasn’t going to run again. And as he was walking out of the Capitol that night, I walked out with him; it was just the two of us, and he asked me if I was okay. I said, “Governor, I always have told you that you needed to do what you need to do, and what’s best for you and your family.” I said, “I’m very proud of you. I feel you’ve done that.” And then I made a terrible mistake. I said, “Governor, let me ask you, how close were you to running for the Senate?” You know, I really felt you could have been a great senator, and did my arguments sway you? Did it have an impact? And he didn’t even hesitate; he said, “No, I was never really thinking about that.” (DePue laughs) So I should have never asked the question. And you know what? Particularly now, having discussed the United States Senate with him a lot in the last ten years, it’s just very clear: Jim Edgar is a guy who believes in state government. He has an incredible amount of faith in what state government can do and why it’s important in people’s lives. He’s not a federal guy, and that’s just not something he personally wanted to do. And I know a lot of people find that astounding, but that’s just who he is. But I wish I’d known that before I made my pitch. (laughter)

DePue: You can’t help but wonder; if you had been convincing and he had made that decision, of course, he would have been sitting in the seat that Barack Obama had six years later.

Grosboll: Yeah, I know.

DePue: —this could change things.

Grosboll: It sure did. It sure did. But there are lots of those issues of what would have happened if this or that happened. But you know what? Jim Edgar needed to do what was right for him and what was right for his family, and I’m confident that he did that.

DePue: Are we ready to move on, or are there one or two more things you’d like to mention about his administration? Because the last question—

Grosboll: I'll mention that sort of in the wrap-up or whatever. I do need to take a break here.

(pause in recording)

DePue: We took a very quick break, and we are back for some final comments and reflections from you, Al. And let's start off with some obvious things. Tell me what you think about the close to twenty years that you were working with the governor, and his accomplishments during that timeframe.

Grosboll: I feel very strongly that Jim Edgar left office with a string of impressive accomplishments. And I know that in some of the critiques, when he left office there was a sense of, well, yeah, he was a good guy, but, you know, did he really accomplish much—which is kind of the way the media always likes to approach these things.

DePue: Can I provide a little backdrop for this and read a quote from a Peoria newspaper. "At the end of his administration, Edgar takes stock. We got a lot done. Two terms in office, sky-high public approval, a legacy of rescuing the state from fiscal quicksand, and how did Governor Jim Edgar—how is he being remembered? Competent, steady, a good caretaker. It's not the stuff of legend. With his stiff manner and even stiffer hair, Edgar has never inspired gushing sentimentality." And I'm jumping a little farther into this article. "Edgar and the legislative leaders deadlocked, delaying action on the new budget. Finally, weeks later, they cut a deal that gave Edgar most of what he wanted. But those victories"—and we're talking about the budgetary battles in the first couple of years—"so early in his first term, proved to be the defining events of his eight years in office. 'As governor, he was not someone who seemed to have large plans,' said House majority leader Barbara Flynn Currie." "We couldn't be this vision kind of person that everybody talks about; we had to manage," was the way Edgar responded to that. Maybe that's the appropriate backdrop to some of your comments about accomplishments, then.

Grosboll: Yeah. First off, I have two reactions to it. These reviews that occur immediately afterwards are always biased a little bit by personality issues of the times, and I think that when people stand back, they do see things more clearly. And I want to just respond to a couple of those. First off, this point about, he was a good manager. People tend to forget that the most important role of the governor is to govern; that's why we call them governors. They are to run the business of government, and that is no small thing. And people minimize that as if it is some trite little thing: Oh, yeah, he was an okay manager. Managing is the number-one chore, and management means hiring competent people and putting competent people in roles to carry out jobs. It means honoring things that we have said to the public we're going to do—not just talk about them, but we're actually going to do them. It means balancing budgets so that you don't get into emergency conditions where you no longer can do the most basic things you're supposed to do. So let's not trivialize management. If Rod Blagojevich had had one ounce of management skill, we wouldn't be in near the trouble we're in right now in this state. So management matters, who you hire matters—how you oversee things matters a great deal.

That's my first point, and my second point is this: you know what? I'm prepared to take Jim Edgar's record of accomplishment—not just his management skills and his leadership skills—and put them up against just about anybody. I would say the one governor of our lifetime that stands out is Richard Ogilvie, principally because of some massive things he did that really brought us into the twentieth century. But other than that, when you look back over the list of the last ten governors or the last couple we've seen, I'm prepared to take Jim Edgar's accomplishments and compare them to anybody.

And let me give you an example. Representative Currie is somebody I have tremendous respect for, but her point about Jim Edgar not thinking big—well, let me give you a couple of bigs. The biggest tax break in Illinois history is property tax caps. It was the biggest idea of a twenty-year time period about what to do about a serious problem in Illinois—rising property tax revenues being collected simply because assessments were rising. Jim Edgar in the 1990 campaign said, "We're going to tackle that issue, and we're going to get a handle on it." Nobody believed he would accomplish that—nobody did. And he did. And, by the way, when conservatives talk about Jim Edgar and, "Gee, he wasn't anti-tax enough," my point to them is, "Tell me another governor in Illinois history that brought about as much tax relief to the people of Illinois—and the right kind of tax relief—as Jim Edgar." Reorganization of state government. The biggest reorganization of state government was done under Jim Edgar. Nobody had as significant of a reorganization as Jim Edgar did with Human Services—and again, for the right reasons. In terms of school reforms, again, my question is, "What other governor accomplished as much in terms of school reforms as what we did?" In terms of writing the Chicago school reform bill, for which Jim Edgar should be given the credit; and in terms of what we ultimately accomplished with the school foundation law, six hundred million dollars—the largest amount of money ever added to schools in a single year—and the development of a school construction program. Again, that had never been done in the history of the state.

I could go on with a series of other things. I could talk about, for example, the things we did in natural resources—just to quote a fellow who was very active in the conservation movement, head of the Conservation Congress at the time, who said, "Jim Edgar set the standard on conservation by which all future governors will be judged." And that quote, by the way, continues to be quoted by various people out there. So we could go into a lot of issues, but the fact of the matter is when you actually look at results and things that matter, I think his record stands out. Even in terms of buildings, people say, oh—just to pick one—Jim Thompson, he built buildings, because he built the Thompson Building in Chicago and he built the Willard Ice Building here in Springfield. You know what? I'll match the Illinois State Library building and the DNR building at the fairgrounds, which Jim Edgar built—those two buildings all match against any other governor's two buildings, because what they represented was they were very thoughtful; they were stable, just like him, feet-on-the-ground–type buildings.

DePue: There is one consistent theme throughout his time as secretary of state and governor that I was picking up from what you were talking about, and I want to get your reaction to this; and that theme is that Jim Edgar was the kind of person—he faced a problem, and his way of dealing with the problem was to bring the voices on either side of the issue together and to hammer out a workable solution. Now, an—

Grosboll: Absolutely.

DePue: —example is the mandatory auto insurance. It finally passes—well, let's get these people together and make it that much better.

Grosboll: Yeah, that was right. The interesting thing about Jim Edgar was he did realize that the old political saying is, "There are no enemies, only future allies." And there's truth with that. People that you're battling today, you may actually need to make something work. And again, the people you're opposing are not bad people. The insurance industry—these weren't bad guys, we just disagreed with them very strongly on a matter; and once we won, we were willing to say, Come into the tent now and let's make this thing work.

But the bigger one, Mark, that really needs to be talked about, is the welfare reform issue. This is an issue that, if handled badly, would have been terrible. Welfare reform was a major movement in this country; and I would say, that when you look at the numbers, I think Illinois did as well if not better than most states—if not all the states—in terms of implementing welfare-to-work and welfare reform programs that were not punitive. There were some people who felt that this was punitive: we're going to punish people. By God, we're going to pull out the rug from people. That's not what welfare-to-work was about, it's not what it should have been about, and Jim Edgar understood that. So what'd he do? He brought all these disparate players together to work together in terms of, how do we make this work? And eventually Jim Edgar got recognized for that. Again, this issue of thinking big—we did humongous things, just immense things, in terms of welfare reform, and did them the right way. So I'll stack that up against any governor. That's the largest dramatic change in terms of how we dealt with people in those situations, and we did it the right way.

DePue: And how do you respond to—I'll read this quote again: "With his stiff manner and even stiffer hair, Edgar has never inspired gushing sentimentality." The style issue.

Grosboll: Well, he did have stiff hair, so I'll accept that one. His manner was a little stiffer. He's not a great orator; I think he'd be the first to tell you that. But if he didn't inspire things, then why did he leave office with the highest support among the public of anybody leaving office that we know of? Why are his numbers so strong today? Why do people look back and still think very highly of him? I think it's because—whether you want to call it inspiring people or just simply that people had confidence in him—they respected him. So we can play with these words that somebody wants to use, but it sort of flies in the face of what we know—and what we know is the public had tremendous esteem for Jim Edgar.

DePue: You're obviously a partisan on this issue.

Grosboll: No, I'm a neutral party.

DePue: (laughs) But looking back at all your long association with the man and your own service during these years, what is it that you're most proud of?

Grosboll: It would be easy to get bogged down here talking about some specific programs I got to work on, but the thing that I am the absolute proudest of is the fact that I worked with him the entire eighteen years that he was serving statewide; and I actually worked with him when he was in the legislature, too. For me, when I look back, I'm able to hold my head high; and when I say I worked for an Illinois governor and people say who, I'm able to say I worked for Jim Edgar. And I can hold my head high, knowing full well that unless I'm dealing with an extreme partisan, that person is going to say, "Really? What a good guy. He was a good governor." That's what I'm most proud of, is that I was associated with the right person. And more than once in my time working with Jim Edgar, I found myself saying, "I'm working for the right guy."

DePue: What was it about Jim Edgar, then, if you could crystallize it, that made him that kind of a guy?

Grosboll: There are several things. He's a very smart guy, extremely bright. It is belied a little bit by the fact that he's a downstater, a little slow-talking, a little bit of a drawl. He's not always the most articulate person, but behind that is an extraordinarily smart fellow. He knows his history. He knows Illinois history incredibly well. He knows how things came about in the past—why they worked, why they didn't. There are things that I dealt with him on, where I would be discussing something—I pride myself in knowing a lot about Illinois history and a lot about Illinois politicians and success stories and failures; and yet I would find him correcting me and telling me some esoteric thing that happened twenty-seven years ago or thirty-two years ago that he remembered in great detail, and oftentimes I would find out he was exactly right. Very few times did I ever get to correct him, and that was very irritating. (laughs) But a very smart guy, and that's important. It's not the most important thing, but it helps that the guy you're working for is very smart and very insightful.

He's a guy that grows. I think that's one of the most important things of an elected official. If you don't grow, if you don't go beyond your personal experiences and aren't willing to see how other people see things and how they live—not to see that maybe a perception you've had is wrong—that's a terrible hindrance. I'm not sure I've ever been around any political person that has grown as much as I saw Jim Edgar grow, and that rubs off. You feel better about yourself when you see that kind of growth.

The other thing is—and I know this sounds very hokey—he absolutely believes in the concept of public service, and not only about himself; when we would discuss

issues of state employees, he had an attitude that if a person is a state employee, they need to be respected. These are not just people you throw around and lay off to make some political points. There are human lives involved here, and if a person has come to work for the state and performs good public service, we ought to respect that. He really, really respects the institution of state government and stands by it and knows what it can do. So those were important things.

And then finally we get to the characteristics that I think probably hold up over time in terms of public perceptions. This was a guy that over the course of nearly two decades in the public eye, always maintained dignity. That sounds like a simple thing, but it is not. And over time, people see it; they feel it, they feel it about somebody. Dignity matters, and in a world in which we're sometimes racing to the bottom on the dignity chart, I think people greatly appreciated the fact that he always conducted himself with dignity; he minimized the political games, the name-calling, and things along those lines. Every so often, he slipped into it, and I think he almost always regretted it when he did. He sought to conduct himself with dignity. He was a man of integrity. I don't believe Jim Edgar ever uttered a sentence in his political life that he thought at the moment was untrue. There are times when you say things, and then later on you realize you either misspoke, or you realize that you're not going to be able to do something that you thought you could do. I don't know that Jim Edgar ever uttered a sentence that at the time, he didn't think was true. And that's a rarity right now in the political world. He's an honest person. He's a very honest guy. And I can utter all of these words, whether it's honesty, integrity, dignity; the real bottom line is not what Al Grosboll thinks of him, it's what the public thinks. And what the public views is a very honorable guy with a lot of integrity and a guy who conducted himself with dignity. So they're the final judge, and that's what they saw.

DePue: How much is the public perception of Jim Edgar impacted today because of the last two governors we had, (Grosboll laughs) George Ryan and Rod Blagojevich?

Grosboll: Yeah. It's funny. People kid about this. I've had people say to me, "Your boss is looking better every day." (DePue laughs) It is an interesting thing. I think that the problem with political reporters is, first off, the political reporters are a very jaded bunch. They're all pretty good people, by the way. Most of the people I dealt with in the press corps were good people who acted with a pretty good deal of integrity; but they do get jaded, and (laughs) they view that everything is politically motivated, that, quite frankly, everything coming out of everybody's mouth is BS. So for example, when you were reading off, Jim Edgar leaves office, sort of the attitudes—you're just going to get that kind of jaded attitude. But even members of the media that I have talked to, it's very clear that they have a different attitude about Jim Edgar and have come to appreciate him more.

There is one more thing, Mark, that's interesting, and that is that oftentimes people get judged not only based on who they are but the other players in history that they're surrounded by. When people have said, "Your boss got a bunch of things done, but there are certain things he didn't get done," part of that's who the

other leaders were. (laughs) Jim Edgar can't change who those leaders were. Pat Quinn cannot change who the leadership is in the House and the Senate. They are who they are, and he's going to have to deal with it. And part of his reputation is affected by and molded by who those other people are, and you have to deal with it. In Jim Edgar's case, for better or for worse, his reputation, his accomplishments, his record are affected by and molded by Mike Madigan, Lee Daniels, Pate Philip, and some other players. That enters into it, and you got to deal with the deck you're dealt, the cards you get.

DePue: That suggests that perhaps you do have a regret or two in terms of what he wasn't able to accomplish. Care to share any of that?

Grosboll: First off, I must tell you that most of the things that I worked with him on got accomplished. Whether the media or the public fully recognize or want to acknowledge that, it's the truth. The things we wanted to do in environmental protection and getting quality people into quality jobs, important jobs, we did. In terms of the reorganizations in the natural resource field, we got those done. In terms of Chicago school reform, I'm extremely proud of what we accomplished there and the leadership we showed. And school funding reform—I'm very proud of that. Does Illinois need at some point to do something about how we tax? We should. But even the proposal we put forward was not perfect, and there's never going to be a plan that's perfect; but somebody will come up with another idea, and we'll see where it goes.

But yeah, I would have liked to have done a little more in terms of reforming how we pay for schools. I believe we we're forty-eighth or forty-ninth in the country in terms of how much we rely on property taxes to pay for schools.[73] That's a mistake. I don't know how we're going to correct it. Would we have liked to have done a better job there? Yeah. But you know what? We tried; nobody else has even tried.

DePue: We've been at this for quite a while, but this is important. I know that when Governor Edgar first came up with the concept of doing a series of interviews on his administration, what he had in mind was not just talking to him but talking to the people behind the scenes who were really involved with the nuts and bolts, the heavy lifting of governance, to get their perspective. That's why you were always high on that list of people to be talking to, and that's why it's been such a pleasure for me to sit down here and spend all this time with you and get an insider's view of how governance works in the state. So thank you very much, and I'll give you the last word.

Grosboll: Well, Mark, thank you. It's been fun to talk about these things. I have to tell you, I hadn't thought about many of these things for ten years, so it's been kind of fun to

[73] For FY2009, 65 percent of revenue for Illinois public K-12 schools came from local government, the highest of any of the states and trailing only the District of Columbia's 87.7 percent. Illinois also ranked last in revenue provided to public K-12 schools by state government, with 27.5 percent. National Education Association, "Series F-School Revenue," *Rankings & Estimates: Rankings of the States 2009 and Estimates of School Statistics 2010* (December 2010), 37-43. http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/010rankings.pdf.

go back and recall some of it and to talk about it. And obviously my perceptions are slanted from my biases, but I want you to know that everything I've told you is absolutely true. (laughter) But thanks a lot. This was fun, and I hope whoever listens to these things appreciates that there were a lot of very interesting people who worked for Jim Edgar, and it was a very interesting time period. He was a fascinating guy as governor, and he's still a fascinating guy. I enjoy talking to him. There is nobody, to this day, whose perception is as good as his. I still enjoy talking to him about what's going on in the political world and his perceptions.

DePue: Thanks very much, Al.

(end of interview)