Interview with
William E. Feurer Jr.
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Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Today is Friday, December 16, 2011. My name is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. We are in the library this afternoon and I'm going to be talking to Bill Feurer. Good afternoon, Bill.

Feurer: Good afternoon.

DePue: And we're talking to Bill because of your long experience in Illinois politics, but especially the timeframe fairly early in your career, where you were dealing with the Otto Kerner Administration, part of the Otto Kerner Administration. I'm excited to have the opportunity to do that, because that predates a lot of the interviews that we do, and this will be the second one that I get to talk about the Kerner folks. I wanted to start though with a little bit of your background. What is your birthday?

Feurer: August 5, 1934.

DePue: And where were you born?

Feurer: I was born in Englewood, in Chicago, Illinois.

DePue: Did you grow up there?

Feurer: Well, I spent much of my early life in Chicago, in the suburbs. Lived in Englewood, then Blue Island, a suburb, and then New Lenox, another suburb that at that time was a fairly small, sleepy, country town. From the fourth grade through my freshman year in high school, my father took a job in Mexico, Missouri, and then from my sophomore year on, they moved back to a town called Park Forest, Illinois, which was a southeast suburb of Chicago, and that's where I spent my last three years of high school and where my parents lived until their deaths.

DePue: Park Forest you said?

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: Are most of those on the South Side of Chicago?

Feurer: They were all in the South Side of Chicago.

DePue: What was your father's profession?

Feurer: Well, my father spent most of his life as a sales manager for a refractories company, which is firebrick. He sold firebrick to the steel mills, primarily in the Chicago area.

DePue: And what was his name?

Feurer: He was a senior. He had the same name as mine. I was William Eugene Feurer, Jr.; he was William Eugene Feurer, Sr.

DePue: How about your mother's maiden name?

Feurer: My mother's maiden name was Murphy.

DePue: And her first name?

Feurer: Dorothy.

DePue: Dorothy.

Feurer: Actually Dortha, her actual name was Dortha. D-o-r-t-h-a.

DePue: Which is a little bit unusual.

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: Dortha Murphy. Well, it sounds like the Germans and the Irish getting together.

Feurer: Well they did in this case.

DePue: Okay. How long had they been in the country?

Feurer: Well, they were both born in this country. My father was born in Marion, Illinois. His parents had come over as children, from Germany, married in Marion, Illinois. My mother lived in Northwest Missouri, in a town called Winston, Missouri, about sixty miles north of Kansas City, on the hard road[1] to Des Moines. Her father was a rural mail carrier in Winston.

DePue: Did they have any brothers and sisters?

Feurer: My father had two sisters and four brothers. My mother had one brother and one sister.

DePue: How about you?

Feurer: I have one sister, six years younger than I am. She still lives very close to Park Forest, lives in Olympia Fields, Illinois.

DePue: You grew up, it sounds like, during World War II. This might be a little early for you to remember much about World Word II. Do you?

Feurer: Well, I remember, one of the first memories I had was when I was six years old, my parents explaining to me about how the Japanese would bomb Pearl Harbor and how that was going to affect us perhaps.

DePue: Did your father keep his job or did he get into the military at the time?

Feurer: No, he didn't serve in the military. He had two children and at that time, you were exempted if you had two children, and so he did not go in the military.

DePue: Was the family religious?

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: What denomination?

Feurer: Well, most of my life they were Methodists, but when we moved to Park Forest they became Presbyterians, and my parents stayed in the Presbyterian church the rest of their lives.

DePue: Was the family involved in politics at all?

Feurer: Not at all.

DePue: Was that even much of a discussion at home when you were growing up?

[1] For people born a couple of decades later: H*ard road* referred to any road paved with asphalt or concrete, while many roads were still gravel or gravel covered with road oil. *(Editor)*

Feurer: Well, my mother was a Republican and my father was a Democrat, so it was a discussion at times. My grandfather on my father's side had been like a township road commissioner in Williamson County, so he was involved to some extent in politics. My father had a couple brothers who were involved in politics to some extent.

DePue: Tell us a little bit about your high school years. Where did you go to high school?

Feurer: Well, I went my freshman year to Mexico Missouri High School. Then I went to Bloom Township High School in Chicago Heights, Illinois. Park Forest at that time was a very small community. It was a pre-built community, you know by one builder, and they didn't have a high school, so we went to the neighboring high school in the next town.

DePue: Was that one of those post World War II boomtowns?

Feurer: It was. It was often sometimes called GI town. There was a sociologist named William Whyte, who had a book called *The Organization Man*, and it was about Levittown, [Long Island, NY] Park Forest and I believe a community in California, and they were the three models for his book, *The Organization Man*.

DePue: Well that's interesting. What kind of childhood did that lead to then? Was this all the houses looked the same or did they evolve quite a bit over time?

Feurer: Well, they all looked a lot the same at the beginning, but they evolved over time, so of course, it doesn't look so much like that now. It led to a very interesting childhood for me, because in Mexico, Missouri, everybody was fairly much the same, except for the African American community, they had their own high school. I don't recall even thinking about it at the time, but when I moved to Park Forest and went to school in Chicago Heights, if you took a picture of that student body it looked like a Norman Rockwell cover. I mean it was about 15 percent African American, and it was probably 30 percent second generation Italian. Park Forest had a lot of Army-Navy brats who had lived in Japan and Germany before they came to Park Forest. There was a lot of truck farmer kids from Crete and Steger and towns like that. There was an area called Homewood Flossmoor that was fairly wealthy, that had a lot of people there. There was a military school called Glenwood Military School that sent its kids to Bloom Township. So it was a very cosmopolitan type of school and a lot of fun to go to because there were so many types of people.

DePue: A good education as well?

Feurer: I had a very good education. I found when I got to college I was probably a year ahead of most of the people in my college. Not because I was any smarter. I just had been taught more in high school.

DePue: What were your academic interests in high school?

Feurer: Well, I was probably most interested in the things I was best at. I was best at things like English, history, literature, subjects like that. I had been a reader all my life and that was a substantial advantage in all the courses I took.

DePue: Did you have any extracurricular activities in high school?

Feurer: Well, my high school was a large high school; it had a couple thousand students, and I wasn't a good enough athlete to make anything except the track team. I ran on the track team for a couple years, but I was way down the list on the track team also, so I was not an athlete. I participated in a number of clubs. I was one of the editors of the school newspaper. I was the humor editor, among other things, for the school newspaper. I did some work staffing the senior class play and junior class play, some things like that.

DePue: Did you have any jobs when you were in high school?

Feurer: I did. I carried papers[2] from the fourth grade through my first two years of college, because that was a very good way to make money, because you did it early in the morning and it didn't interfere with anything. I worked in grocery stores some on the side when I was in high school.

DePue: What was the newspaper you were delivering?

Feurer: Well, I delivered both the *Chicago Tribune*, and then I delivered the local newspaper, which was then called the *Chicago Heights Star*.

DePue: Did those get packaged together when you were delivering?

Feurer: They both operated the same way. They would deliver the package of newspapers to a predetermined destination, which was normally a street corner, and you would go to the street corner and pick them up and that would be close to your route, and then you would carry the papers on your route, return to your home.

DePue: So most people on your route were getting both newspapers?

Feurer: No. It was probably even distribution, but they didn't always get both newspapers.

DePue: You graduated in what year?

Feurer: Nineteen fifty-two.

[2] "Newsboys" delivered newspapers to residence routes and were also responsible for collecting payments, usually weekly. Many boys learned responsibility while earning money, often with generous tips.

DePue: Well in 1952, one of the facts of life was that young men in the United States were going to have to face the draft or some kind of military service.

Feurer: That's true. That got my attention, of course.

DePue: And this is during the Korean War.

Feurer: Yes. I was very fortunate that the Navy had a program called the Navy ROTC, that paid fifty dollars a month, books, fees and tuition, to one of fifty-two colleges and universities if you were selected for it. I was one of the twenty-one from my high school that applied. It was a nationwide competition, so you could have twenty-one from your high school if they qualified or you could have none if none of them qualified. And of the twenty-one that applied from my high school, I was the only one that was selected for that program, so it basically paid my way through college.

DePue: Is that because you had a strong interest in going into the Navy, or you just knew you were going to have to do something?

Feurer: Well, I don't know that I had a strong interest for going in the Navy. I had a strong interest in being able to afford to go to college and my parents were not wealthy, and as a result, I was looking for alternative methods to go. I probably would have gone to college otherwise, but I would have had to work much harder, in the evenings and during the week and things like that I think, to afford to go to college.

DePue: Was going to college one of the things that your parents really wanted you to do as well?

Feurer: Very much so. My parents, when I was young, always talked about, "When you go to college…" They never talked about **if** you go to college. They were very smart in that way. I mean by the time you were a senior, you're thinking when I go to college. You never even considered the alternatives if there were any.

DePue: A lot of young men who were juniors and seniors in high school, maybe only have a hazy notion of what they want to do after they got done with college, as far as a career or a profession is concerned. Did you have a pretty clear idea?

Feurer: I thought I wanted to be a newspaper reporter or run a small weekly or daily or something like that, and that didn't change through high school or college.

DePue: Where did you go to college?

Feurer: I went to Rice University, which at that time was called Rice Institute, in Houston, Texas, for two years. I majored in English because they did not have

a journalism program, and then I transferred to the University of Missouri, which has one of the top schools of journalism in the country.

DePue: How does a kid from the Chicago suburbs end up at Rice University?

Feurer: Well, by accident mostly. When I went to take my physical, I discovered that I was required to make my choices of college; first choice, second choice and so forth. At that time, I had not realized that that decision was being pushed upon me quite that early in my career, so I decided I wanted to go to the smallest college I could find, and Rice University was a small college. It had only about fifteen hundred students. It had a football stadium that seated seventy thousand but it only had about fifteen hundred students. And it was a scholarship school; they didn't charge any tuition at that time. So the fact that I had gotten my tuition paid for, it probably didn't matter if I had gotten into Rice University, because it was tuition free.

The advantage of going to Rice, as I saw it was, it was the smallest school listed of the fifty-two schools that qualified under the Navy ROTC program.

DePue: And you said you were there for two years.

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: Did you enjoy the Navy ROTC part of it?

Feurer: I did.

DePue: Did you consider that as a possible career choice for you?

Feurer: I don't think I ever considered it as a possible career but I enjoyed it. It was unusual to me. It was new and it was kind of exciting. The Navy historically, has gotten probably the majority of its people from the Midwest, probably because it's new and interesting to them and they're not used to seeing the ocean or seeing it that much.

DePue: All the famous admirals from World War II are from places like Kansas.

Feurer: A lot of them come from Illinois, central Illinois. The Superintendent of the Naval Academy was from a farm near Taylorville, named Admiral Mack, at one time. William Stockdale, one of the senior prisoners of war in Vietnam, was from up around Macomb or Monmouth. Two or three Chiefs of Naval Operations that come from Central Illinois.

DePue: But you only stayed at Rice for two years. What caused you to make the move up North?

Feurer: Well, I wanted to major in journalism and I wasn't completely crazy about Rice. I wasn't used to the climate in Houston. The college facilities at that time were not air conditioned, except for the library, and it was a very hot, humid spring and fall there, and even the cold was colder because it rained a lot in the wintertime. So I didn't get that enamored of Rice and I transferred to Missouri and was happy I did.

DePue: Well at that time especially, the University of Missouri had a legendary journalism school, did it not?

Feurer: They did and still do.

DePue: Can you tell us a little bit about that experience?

Feurer: The University of Missouri, School of Journalism, is a two-year school, so probably half the people who attended the journalism school were transfers in, such as myself, had gone somewhere else their first two years. They were very much a hands-on, turn out working reporter type of school. They published their own daily newspaper, which was not a student newspaper; it was a daily newspaper that competed with the other daily newspaper in the community called the *Columbia Missourian*. They owned their own television station, which was a commercial television station, had one or two of the major networks it served. They had a working relationship with the radio station, which they didn't own. So you did a lot of work, which I guess could be described as clinical work, at the same time that you took your normal journalism courses. It was a lot of fun, it was interesting, it was challenging, and you could major in what you wanted to do.

I was president of the journalism school student body my senior year. Not the university student body but the student body of those people who were in the journalism school itself, and I enjoyed it thoroughly.

DePue: Were you more inclined towards the print journalism or the broadcast medium?

Feurer: Well, I majored in weekly and small dailies, which was one of the number of majors they had. They had a news major, a radio and TV major, an advertising major, weekly and small daily major. One of the things that attracted me to that was during your senior year, they sent you and maybe one or two other people out to a weekly newspaper somewhere in Missouri, and the editor and publisher would just take off and turn over the paper to you and you'd run it for a week.

DePue: That's power.

Feurer: Well, it made you feel like you were big time, that's for sure. We went to Lee's Summit, Missouri, which at that time was a sort of sleepy suburb of Kansas City, but it was a lot of fun.

DePue: Was there a particular notion in the school of journalism that print was better than broadcast or vice-versa?

Feurer: No. There seemed to be a natural division among people going into their interest fields, but there were a number of core journalism courses everybody was required to take. So if you majored in news or weekend and small dailies, you were still required to take some advertising. If you majored in advertising, you were required to take some news. So they tried to give you a broad-based journalism education to start with, and then allowed you to specialize as you went further along in your education.

DePue: Well you said that even in high school, you had a strong interest in English, you were an avid reader, those kinds of things. Is that what led you more towards the print journalism side?

Feurer: I think that's true.

DePue: I think I know the answer to this, but what did you see yourself doing upon graduation then?

Feurer: Well, the commitment you make when you get this Navy ROTC scholarship is that you take a three-year tour in the United States Navy.

DePue: Does that mean you were still in Naval ROTC at Missouri?

Feurer: Yes, yes, yes. I was able to transfer. They were one of the other fifty-two schools, so I was able to transfer to the University of Missouri and continue on being in the Navy ROTC. We got commissioned probably an hour after we graduated from the University of Missouri, and then got orders to report somewhere immediately. Probably the transforming experience for my college career was not so much the schools I went to, which were very good, but I came from a relatively limited background. I think I had been in four states in my life when I started college. We didn't travel as much in those days as you do now. I think I had been in Missouri, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, were the four states. Just going to Rice, of course put me in about four more states, getting there and back.

But the main thing it did for you is we took these summer cruises, training cruises. So like after my freshman year in college, I was on a destroyer that went to Rio de Janeiro, Cartagena, Columbia and went to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. My sophomore year, I went to Corpus Christi, Texas, for some air training and then to Little Creek, Virginia, for some amphibious marine training. In my junior year, I was on the battleship *Wisconsin*, went to Edinborough, Scotland, and Copenhagen, Denmark, and then back to Guantanamo Bay again. So of course, those were all dramatic things for somebody that had only been in four states only four years earlier.

DePue: What was it like to be working on a battleship?

Feurer: Well, they were very different, of course. If you fell from the battleship, if you fell overboard, they'd be lucky if they noticed that you were missing for a week, because they had so many people there. Except you had certain assignments you had to show up for of course, all the time. But it was very interesting. It was very interesting and very educational I thought.

DePue: Did you discover that you had good sea legs, that you weren't one of those queasy Midwesterners and didn't like the ocean?

Feurer: No, I did discover that. The interesting part is that I would occasionally get carsick, when I rode in cars, and I always wondered whether that was going to be a problem for me, being seasick, but I discovered when you got seasick, you lost your appetite, and I never lost my appetite. So those two warring impulses competed and the appetite won over seasickness. I was lucky that even in the three years in the Navy, when I spent on a destroyer escort in the North Atlantic, I never got seasick, unlike most of the people on my ship. I always thought it had to do with the fact that I liked food more than I was concerned about being seasick.

DePue: I'm curious. When you graduated, I assume you got your commission about the same time?

Feurer: I did. We wore our uniforms under our robes and of course, we were all at graduation, and then the Navy people stuck around later and they had a second ceremony where you were commissioned into the United States Navy.

DePue: Were your parents more proud of you being a graduate, a college graduate, or getting that commission?

Feurer: Well, they told me what they were most proud of was the fact that I had gotten this Navy ROTC scholarship, which they said they hadn't realized was so significant until they had to pay for my sister's education six years later.

DePue: Well, that's the bottom line?

Feurer: That was the bottom line. No, they were very proud of the fact that I was in the Navy, but they were very proud that I got the four-year degree, both those things.

DePue: And in a profession where there's a clear opportunity to get employment as well.

Feurer: Well, I suppose they were thinking that. I don't know if they were thinking that far down the line.

DePue: Well, I don't want to put words in their mouths certainly. Did you go to any kind of basic officer training once you got the commission?

Feurer: No, that's—they give you that during your four years of school. You're required to take one three-hour course and one weekly course of drill and military-related things, as part of your curriculum. So those were extra courses you took during the four years of college, so you went directly to your assignment. Now, as they specialize more, they normally require that even in the Navy ROTC, students or even the Naval Academy graduates are required to go to service warfare school or some stepped up officer training in addition, but that wasn't true at that time.

DePue: You got no training between college and commissioning to that first appointment?

Feurer: No, no.

DePue: Did you have any preference in terms of there's the basic options: going into the submarine force, going into the surface Navy, going into the aviation side of the Navy.

Feurer: You could request what you wanted to do and they would try to honor those requests. Now, if you went aviation, you had to pass the aviation test, and so forth. If you went surface, they sent you to a surface ship; you could request the type of ship you wanted to go to. I requested the destroyer of course, and I was sent to a destroyer escort.

DePue: Do you remember the first ship then, you served on?

Feurer: Yeah, it was the only ship I served on. Yes I do.

DePue: U.S.S…

Feurer: It was called the U.S.S. *Maloy*, M-a-l-o-y, and it was an experimental destroyer escort based in New London, Connecticut, at the submarine base.

DePue: What was experimental about it?

Feurer: It worked with sonar equipment. A basic problem for surface ships in antisubmarine warfare is something called a temperature layer that often exists in the water, where there's a sudden change in the temperature of the water by several degrees. Submarines get under that layer and it gets very hard for a hull-mounted sonar sound wave to penetrate that temperature layer and pick up the submarine. So we experimented with having the transducer, which is the thing that shoots out the sound waves, with a hoist on the rear of the ship. We would find out where the temperature layer was and drop that transducer below the temperature layer, so we no longer had to compete and fight through that temperature layer to try to discover submarines. And we were based at the submarine base, because there were a lot of submarines that we could practice on and they could practice on us at the same time.

DePue: Did you cruise all over the North Atlantic then?

Feurer: We did very little cruising. Actually, I wound up, even though I was unmarried, being on the perfect married man's ship, because if it went out on Monday, it usually came back in on Friday, because they had to analyze the results of our tests and see how we'd done. So many other destroyers, which I thought I was going to get probably, were the kind that deployed to Europe or the Far East or the Far West or something. The ship I was on didn't do any of that. I went out over the hundred fathom curve and we'd start operating with submarines and come back in. So I saw less of the world when I was in the Navy than I did when I was a midshipman. We went to Jamaica and Bermuda and Key West and a couple of places like that, on mission-related responsibilities, but never did go overseas or do anything.

DePue: All those sound like better places than they send the Army though.

Feurer: I think they are, that's true, and New London was a very nice place to be. One of the interesting things to me was the fact that the equipment that we worked on was virtually all built in Springfield, Illinois, at what was then called Sangamo Electric Company. They did an awful lot of sonar equipment. I wasn't that familiar with Springfield at the time, but I found that of interest later, when I moved to Springfield.

DePue: Did you like the sense of camaraderie that you got in the Navy?

Feurer: I did.

DePue: I wondered, if this is in the height of the Cold War era, now things got a little bit hotter even, once you got out, but was that very much part of the discussion?

Feurer: Well, I was in from '56 to '59, and that was toward the end of the [President Dwight D.] Eisenhower era, and actually it was one of the last eras we had where we had a substantial period of peace. So we were not involved in any sort of conflicts during the time I was in the Navy. Eisenhower refused to get drawn into combat on two or three occasions, when he had a lot of public pressure to do that, things like Hungary and Czechoslovakia, so we were really at peace that entire time. I spent seventeen years in the Navy Reserve after I got out, and there I became exposed occasionally, or at least potentially, to some of those things, but as it turned out, I never was involved in any kind of conflict.

DePue: I would like to jump ahead and take this opportunity to talk about the rest of your career, after you got out of active service in 1959. Where was your reserve unit you served with?

Feurer: Well, I started with the reserve and I was a Commanding Officer eventually, of reserve units in Decatur, Illinois, Springfield, Illinois, and then St. Louis,

Missouri. I served all three of those cities with reserve units, in different kinds of reserve units, but they all had their specialties. I was a Line Officer and so toward the end of my career, I was in those three different locations.

DePue: Well, for somebody who is not really familiar with the way the reserve structure works, especially the Navy Reserve, they're thinking Decatur, Navy, St. Louis, Navy? Well, I guess there's a river there, but it still doesn't seem big enough for the Navy. How does that work?

Feurer: Well, they depend on you to do basically your training in academic settings during most of the year; then they send you on two-week reserve tours, and there you wind up going typically to the oceans to get your training on shipboard or whatever happens to be your reserve specialty. Remember I said that a high percentage of the people in the Navy came from the Midwest, so a high percentage of them went back to the Midwest. So there was a great pool of reservists located in the Midwest, and so the Navy had to provide some accommodations to encourage the reservists to join and serve.

DePue: What were you doing? What was your specific assignment in the Navy during the height of the Vietnam era, '68 through '72? Were you Commander at that time?

Feurer: Well, I think I was a Lieutenant Commander at that time. I think I had my first—as Commanding Officer—my first reserve unit, which was in Decatur, Illinois at that time. It was called the Military Training Division, and these were typically young reservists who often hadn't been on active duty yet, so they were getting their first basic introduction to the Navy, in the weekly training that we had at these reserve units.

DePue: Were a lot of the young sailors that you had, especially '69 through '72, were a lot of these kids joining the Navy Reserve to avoid the draft?

Feurer: Well, it wasn't like the National Guard. If you did join the Navy Reserve, you eventually were going on active duty.

DePue: Okay, so it wasn't going to be a good haven for these…?

Feurer: No, no. The general feeling was that it was a poor haven, because they might call up the reservists some day, and those are people who had already been on active duty and might be going back. It turned out they never did that to any extent during Vietnam.

DePue: Did it make it more challenging for you as an officer, to have the Vietnam War going on at that time?

Feurer: Well, I don't believe it did. It may have been more challenging with the general populace, that you were still doing military things when the military wasn't popular because the Vietnam War had become unpopular. But with the

people who were in the reserve units, they didn't have to be there, they didn't have to attend. So the only people who did this were people who were still interested, and the Midwest was a fairly strong supporter generally, of the war and the administration.

DePue: When did you finish up your Navy career and what were you doing at the time?

Feurer: Well, I had just ended a tour as a Commanding Officer of a unit in St. Louis Missouri, and I was about to go to into non-pay, because it's kind of climbing a mountain, there's less room at the top, and so as you get those higher paid reserve units, you have to take your turn not getting any pay in the Navy Reserve. I had twenty years in, which is enough for retirement, and I had two sons who were like in the eighth grade and freshman year in high school, who started playing school sports, and then I was missing many of their sports because of the fact that they had shifted to weekend units by that time and I was having to spend time as an officer almost every other weekend down in St. Louis. I wanted to watch my sons participate in sports, so I just took that occasion to retire.

DePue: Okay. Well let's jump all the way back to 1959 again, and the months immediately prior to your release from active duty. Were you already at that time looking for employment?

Feurer: No.

DePue: Where did you end up for a job after you got out?

Feurer: Well, I got out of the Navy in June of 1959. I went back home to Park Forest, Illinois. I applied for a job with United Press International, which is a wire service that had the reputation for throwing their people into the fray immediately and seeing if they sink or swim, by giving you a lot more responsibility than Associated Press, which was its main competitor, and I got a job with United Press International in Chicago.

DePue: What was the beat you had?

Feurer: Well, they didn't have beats as such, when you worked for United Press International. They got most of their information from what they call stringers, who were reporters for newspapers and radio stations, who got extra reimbursement from United Press International if they would call in stories and give them stories. If there were issues that required major coverage for one reason or another, either by request because it was a major event, they would then send out reporters. But you'd be sent out on assignment, you often didn't have any idea that day when you first went in, what you were going to wind up doing and where you were going to go.

So for example, my first story, that always struck me, that I always remember was—well, my first story was looking for some heiress from Philadelphia who had not shown up for a wedding and then appeared in Chicago with a story about how she had been kidnapped. They later discovered she had just gotten cold feet and caught a bus to Chicago. We're now looking for this heiress and she was heading back to Philadelphia, and I was sent out to one of the airports to see if I could find her.

DePue: This sounds like a plot to a Hollywood movie.

Feurer: Well, it did sound like it to me, yeah. The second story I got was I was assigned to interview Louis Armstrong, who was recording a record with the Dukes of Dixieland, which is the first white group that he had ever made a record with. And to do that, I sat through about three hours of him recording before he could talk to me, which I enjoyed thoroughly.

DePue: I was going to say, both of these sound like a lot of fun.

Feurer: They were a lot of fun. What happens with you at the wire services though, once they find out that you know something about what you're doing, you can write. They move you to the desk and have you be a rewrite man, and they send the least experienced people out to cover the stories, because they count on the rewrite men to straighten things out and correct the story and turn it out, and it's absolutely true. My first month or two, I covered stories and called in stories; I'd come in and be amazed at how brilliantly they were written, when they were written by one of those persons—my byline but basically written by one of the rewrite men. But then I became a rewrite man, which I guess was a tribute you know, because they assigned me as a rewrite man to write the stories. But I was only there in Chicago about six months, and then I was transferred to Springfield, Illinois.

DePue: But working for UPI in Springfield?

Feurer: Working for the UPI in Springfield.

DePue: Was there a specific assignment that you had once you came to Springfield?

Feurer: Yes, that was much more specific. The Springfield bureau covered forty counties in Central Illinois, but its main beat was the State Capitol Building. So when the legislature was in session, you always covered either the House or the Senate: gubernatorial news conferences, political campaigns, other things associated with state government. Occasionally we'd get sent out to other kinds of stories: a flood in Quincy or a disaster, a barge breaks loose in Pekin, Illinois, or something like that, where they wanted person to person coverage. But most of the time you did it by phone if you possibly could.

DePue: Well it sounds like you got to Springfield just in time for the 1960 gubernatorial election campaign.

Feurer: You're absolutely right.

DePue: Kind of an interesting year politically, because it's also a presidential year. It's the year, [John F.] Kennedy versus [Richard] Nixon.

Feurer: Yes it was, it was a very interesting year.

DePue: So, I'll kind of turn it over to you in that respect.

Feurer: Well, I was a junior member of the three-person staff at that time, at UPI, and so I got what I was assigned and did what I was assigned to do. There was a three-way race in the Democratic primary for governor, and there was no race on the Republican side for governor, because the incumbent, William Stratton, was running again for office. But of course, the Nixon-Kennedy race was extremely interesting, and then there were always a number of collateral races that were going on, that you did some coverage on, so you just covered what was coming up in your area and what was happening. Occasionally, you'd be assigned to go with one of the candidates for a day and cover him or her and write a story about a typical day of campaigning by that candidate and what happened. And so I did see all that and of course, it was all new to me.

DePue: Was this going to the three different Democratic candidates as well?

Feurer: Yes. I didn't do any of that though. The bureau manager was the one who would go with each of those gubernatorial candidates and cover them for a day or even two-day trips and would follow them for a traditional kind of campaign.

DePue: By that time, I think [Richard J.] Daley had been Mayor of Chicago for a couple years, and he was certainly making his mark. Would it be fair to say that even in 1960, the slate-makers, where Daley dominated the process of selecting the Democratic candidates was well in play?

Feurer: I think that's fair to say. Daley didn't have the position of power he ultimately enjoyed, because he had been reelected I believe, for the second time, as Mayor of Chicago, by the time this occurred, so he's in a solid position on there. But he also had become Cook County Democratic Chairman, and because Chicago, in Cook County, had so many Democratic votes, he was obviously much more than first among equals. I mean he didn't dominate because he had 101 other counties, but a candidate would much rather have had him than any other county chairman in the state of Illinois, or even ten other county chairmen, because of the number of votes that he could appear to promise or the support that he could offer.

He had had some bad luck though as county chairman. He had slated for example, a candidate for governor in '56, against Stratton, on his second term. The first candidate was a fellow named Herbert Paschen, and Paschen had gotten in trouble because he was a Cook County officer of some kind and

he had a flower fund, and he'd taken the flower fund money and gone to Europe on a trip. He was forced to drop out of the race after people got aroused at that. And then he nominated a judge named Richard Austin, I believe. Austin was a very legitimate candidate but got in there late and wasn't well-known and got skunked by Stratton in the second election, which of course, was part of the Eisenhower landslide, who was an extremely popular candidate. He just killed [Adlai] Stevenson the second time they ran against each other.

So he had also lost his candidate for Cook County state's attorney to a Republican named Benjamin Adamowski, which I believe happened in '56, and as a result, there were a lot of people not very happy about the fact that the state's attorney was now, but they were not happy that the had a Republican state's attorney up there, who could make a lot of mischief for Democrats as a Republican. In those days, the state's attorney could make a lot of mischief for the person in the other party, no matter what. So he wasn't as solid a political figure and as dominant as he became later.

DePue: What do you remember about the Democratic primary for the governor's position in 1960?

Feurer: Well, I remember that the organization Democrats—there's two major branches of the Democratic Party, probably the liberal wing and the organization wing, which aren't quite the same thing. And I remember there was quite a bit of concern among the organization Democrats, because it became fairly obvious that Kennedy was going to be the candidate in 1960, and Kennedy was a Catholic and an awful lot of Illinois was not Catholic. In the primary, the three candidates for governor, two of them were Catholic and one, Kerner, was not. So there was a lot of feeling that Kerner should be the nominee, because having two Catholics heading up the ticket—for president and for governor—they felt might be just a very hard sell in the state of Illinois.

DePue: But much of the Democratic vote in Chicago would have been Catholic, wouldn't it?

Feurer: It would. It was a substantial amount, but that wasn't enough to carry the day. In the end, as you recall, Kerner won by something like five hundred thousand votes, over Stratton. Kennedy won by something like eight thousand votes, over Nixon.

DePue: And it's forever after been contested, how much Kennedy actually defeated Nixon by in that respect. What did you think about the allegations then, coming out of the election, that Daley and the machine in Chicago made sure that Kennedy won the state of Illinois?

Feurer: Well, I'm sure they did their very best to make sure he won the state of Illinois. Whether they did anything illegitimately or not is another question.

DePue: What was the view in the press room as far as voter corruption in Chicago? Were you generally skeptical about it or accept it as reality?

Feurer: I think the downstate press room felt that Chicago dominated; Cook County, and particularly Chicago, it dominated Chicago, and that if there was some hanky-pank going on, I don't think that anybody would have been surprised if that happened. I think the feeling was is that DuPage County and Kankakee County for example, were dominated by the Republicans and if there had been some hanky-pank going on there, I don't think anybody would have been surprised either. I wasn't here at that time, I wasn't in Springfield, but I remember in 1952, a Democrat named Eddie Barrett was running for Secretary of State, for reelection and was a popular candidate, against Charles Carpentier, who was a new candidate. In DuPage County, under Elmer Hoffman, who was executive director I think, of the Sheriff's Association, reported very, very late and had Carpentier, who was from the Quad Cities, running dramatically ahead of Barrett, which happened nowhere else in the state of Illinois. And I think at that time, Daley was quoting saying he would no longer ever be anything other than last in reporting his vote, because he felt he reported the vote early in Cook County and that they knew what the target was and they exceeded it. So how true that is, I don't know, but that was the story.

DePue: I have read a little bit about the Kerner Administration and Otto Kerner in particular, and it sounds like he was both viewed as Daley's guy, a loyal, dependable representative of the Chicago Democratic machine, but also something of not closely tied to the Democratic machine, and that sounds very contradictory. Can you reflect on that?

Feurer: Well, I think what happened in the 1960s was that Daley ran Chicago and Kerner basically ran the rest of Illinois. I think it was something that was very beneficial to Daley, because Kerner never had any particular interest in the political process or very little. He was not interested in becoming a political boss or using it as a springboard to something else, or being actively involved in running party affairs.

During the sixties, when they would have the State Fair, they would have Democratic days and Republican days. Daley always made a point when he was down here, as he always was at the Democratic day, to talk about Governor Kerner being the leader of our party. Kerner never made any effort to suggest he was the leader of the party or made any pretense that he was the leader of the party. If he was asked he'd say Mayor Daley is the leader of the party in the state of Illinois. The Democrats had a Democratic State Chairman who was Jim Ronan, well respected, who also was not the leader of the party, who was a ward committeeman in Chicago. Daley was the leader of the party

and I think it's quite true that if Daley really wanted something, the legislature could get it, or was interested in it, Kerner would support it. And I think if Kerner wanted something, Daley would try to support him.

DePue: Who was Daley's go-to guy in the legislature?

Feurer: Well, it depended from time to time, over the course of the eight years in which Kerner was in there. For example, the Leader of the Senate most of that time, the Democratic Leader of the Senate was a guy named Art McGloon, who was a very canny, bright lawyer from Chicago, Irish, but he never had thirty votes. He never controlled the Senate the entire time that Kerner was in office, so the Senate was Republican that entire period of time. But he of course was a strong supporter of Daley and then his predecessor was a guy named Donald O'Brien, who also was a very bright, smart, canny, Chicago lawyer, Irish. Both of them were Irish. In the House, the go-to guy, Paul Powell, was the Speaker part of that time. The main guy for Daley was a guy named George Dunne, who later became Chairman of the Cook County Board, D-u-n-n-e. He was again, a very bright, smart, non-lawyer but Irish and so forth, and then after that it became a guy named Jack Touhy, T-o-u-h-y, who was there the year of the orange ballot. He was Speaker of the House, because that was the year the Democrats got 118 members of the House, and so he was sort of Daley's guy. Daley dealt directly with the Chicago delegation when he talked about things that he wanted for Chicago and so forth, and Kerner dealt directly with everybody else and the Chicago delegation when he wanted things that he could get.

DePue: We're a little bit ahead of the timeline. What I'd like to do is to have you talk a little bit about how you became part of the Kerner Administration.

Feurer: Well, the Bureau Manager of United Press International, when I arrived, was a fellow named Chris Vlahoplus, that's V-l-a-h-o-p-l-u-s. He had been with the International News Service, and United Press and the International News Service merged and became UPI, and Chris eventually became Bureau Manager at UPI.

In 1962, the Assistant Press Secretary for Kerner was a guy named William Brooks. He resigned to go to work for one of the oil companies. Brooks had been the editor and publisher of the Mount Sterling newspaper in Mount Sterling, Illinois. Kerner then hired Chris Vlahoplus to be the assistant press secretary, and he went over there and served in that role for about a year. Then the Press Secretary, who was named Richard Thorne, who had been a publicist for Kerner, resigned to go to work for some foundation in mid-1963. Chris Vlahoplus then became the press secretary and they needed to fill his spot as assistant press secretary. Chris Vlahoplus was somebody I had worked for and he recommended me to Kerner and I was hired. Kerner knew me only slightly, knew I was the tall, young guy that worked for UPI.

DePue: How much did Kerner know about your politics?

Feurer: Nothing. Kerner asked me, several months into the job, he said, "Are you a Democrat or Republican?It doesn't make any difference, but I probably ought to know." I said, "Well, I'm a Democrat," and he said, "Well that's always easier."

DePue: Well, I guess, that surprises me. I wanted to ask you about the development of your own political views, and I know that's a dicey equation, when you're talking to somebody who also is a journalist and has embraced the profession of journalism, where you're supposed to be objective. If you can, take us back to the high school and your college years, where you were developing that, if you will.

Feurer: Well, I wasn't developing it then. Frankly, I concluded I was a Democrat after I watched the legislature in session for a couple years. You kind of pick your poison then or you find that your sympathies are going one way or the other. When you work for a wire service or when you work for a newspaper, you try very hard not to let any bias show or not to show any bias. We were really trained to do that at the wire service, because we had all sorts of Republican newspapers and Democratic newspapers, and Republican radio stations and Democratic radio stations, and some that weren't anything.

DePue: Back in the days when having Democrat or Republican on your masthead meant something?

Feurer: Well, sometimes it meant something, but by the time we came along it was much less important. *The Chicago Tribune* and a couple of others sort of waved their party flag pretty strongly, but most everybody else was drifting to the center.

DePue: Is that something that when you went to journalism school, they emphasized quite a bit?

Feurer: They emphasized accuracy, getting the story right. I don't recall the politics being much of a discussion.

DePue: Well, I mean that accuracy would be akin to objectivity, to keep a bias out of the reporting. Was that something that was emphasized?

Feurer: No, I don't remember that happening. It may have happened subconsciously and I didn't realize it. You know the fifties were kind of an era when people didn't have strong opinions on a lot of things, and I think that was sort of reflected in the journalism curriculum. I suspect ten years later they would have emphasized that kind of thing a lot more than they did when I was in journalism school.

DePue: That's interesting. What was the appeal to you, of going to work for the Kerner Administration?

Feurer: Well, it was just new and interesting. It paid a lot better than UPI paid, which was another factor. When you're a journalist, it doesn't take you too long to realize you're not going to shape the world much, no matter what you write or what you say. I remember things like reapportionment, which were extremely complicated, which we wrote thousands of words about. People would say to me some day, "What's that reapportionment thing all about?" Well, I can understand, it was confusing, it was complicated, and you realized how limited your impact was.

DePue: But you also had to know, from the reporter's perspective, that's where the serious politicians are playing the game.

Feurer: Well, that's where they're trying to spin the game, which is not quite the same thing. The really nice thing about working for state government is you're getting paid to do good things, and it's not keyed to a profit-loss statement or somebody's biases hopefully. Most of the time, you're just getting paid to do good. In many ways, it should be the most rewarding of all kinds of employment, because of the fact you get paid to do those kind of things and to do good. It is amazing how good you can feel about yourself, even if you just can help one person or two persons by doing something that you normally don't have the ability to do as a journalist. There are many other kinds of jobs you don't have that ability to do.

DePue: When you made the move to the Kerner Administration, were you married at the time?

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: Can you tell us a little bit more about that? When did that happen?

Feurer: I got married in Springfield, in 1961, and my wife, who I was married to for thirty years and we then got divorced, but she worked for Illinois Bell Telephone, her name was Kay.

DePue: What was her maiden name?

Feurer: It was Judge, J-u-d-g-e.

DePue: Okay.

Feurer: She was like twenty-eight years old or something, twenty-seven, and was only the second woman ever promoted as high as she was, in the downstate division of Illinois Bell Telephone. They had three divisions; Chicago, suburban, downstate. They created the downstate division about the time I came to Springfield, and the other one was '58 or something. So I mean she

had done very well. She was a very good employee. But when we got into our second term, she had worked all her life and she just quit working and that was fine with me.

DePue: What does the assistant press secretary do in the Kerner Administration?

Feurer: He did different things under me than he did when Chris Vlahoplus was assistant press secretary. When Chris Vlahoplus became assistant press secretary, the Kerner Administration, in my judgment, was laboring under some problems because of the fact that Richard Thorne, the press secretary, had been a publicist but hadn't been part of the press room, wasn't really familiar with the operation of state government, wasn't familiar with politics that much. The assistant press secretary, who was a very competent newspaperman, also didn't have that kind of familiarity. So when Chris Vlahoplus went in there, it appeared to me his main vision was establishing and reestablishing the links with the press room. He was widely respected by the other newsmen. When I became the assistant press secretary, he didn't really need an assistant press secretary, because Kerner wasn't all that interested in press. He didn't care about a lot of publicity, he didn't want ten news releases going out in a day with his name on it. He didn't like that at all. He was very private even as the governor in many respects, just like he was as a person, and one press secretary was plenty. So I wound up doing quite a bit of other things, not doing much as assistant press secretary. Now I did related things. He had a weekly newspaper column he put out, he had a weekly radio show he put out. He had a lot of speeches. I coordinated practically all his speechwriting.

DePue: When you say he, do you mean Kerner?

Feurer: Kerner, yes.

DePue: He was putting out a weekly article?

Feurer: Yes. He put out something called, *Your Governor Reports*. Then he had a radio show which would be taped, which was also called *Your Governor Reports*. And then of course he had a lot of speeches to make. So I coordinated practically all the speechwriting. I ghosted those two programs, subject to whatever changes he made or what to do with them on the radio show, on the newspaper columns. I handled an awful lot of correspondence and I eventually became liaison with several departments, because they spilled over. We had a very small staff compared to what you have today. He had about six assistants. We were all called Assistants to the Governor, but of the six or seven assistants, I was the youngest and I was the most junior, not only when I went in but when I went out.

DePue: Does that mean you got all the crummy jobs?

Feurer: There was a lot of things to do and they weren't very crummy jobs, because the things were very interesting that we did.

DePue: Here's my perception of both the positions that you've described here, as assistant press secretary and also a speechwriter. You and the governor better be pretty compatible in terms of what you're thinking and what your political and philosophical views are that are being expressed. Is that right?

Feurer: Sure, sure. If you're not compatible, you need to get compatible with the governor, because the governor is the one who is thinking those things and doing those things, that's right.

DePue: How do you develop that relationship?

Feurer: Well, some of it is you're sending the material to him and if he wants to make changes, you realize what kind of changes he's making, so that you get consistent with the way he likes to approach things. The second thing is that when you do that kind of thing, you learn, for example, because you're now watching him in action, you're with him when he gives speeches, and he has a certain rhythm to his speeches, a certain way to handle his speeches that you write and what you do.

For example, Governor Kerner didn't like to give long speeches. He was an excellent speaker but he didn't like to give long speeches. He thought if you couldn't deliver the message in fifteen minutes, you probably shouldn't be talking in the first place. There's exceptions; the budget message, the state of the state message, those were long, lengthy messages where you had to outline your proposals and your plans and your accomplishments and so forth, and those were very different, when he gave those to the legislature. Most speeches, he didn't speak that long, and he often would take questions. We would write the speeches so he could speak off the cuff; he frequently spoke off the cuff. So sometimes he didn't use his speech at all, that you would have ready for him, and sometimes he'd use part of it. If he was really tired, he might use a lot of it. If he'd been to several places, he might be more inclined to use some of it, but he spoke off the cuff a great deal, was an excellent off the cuff speaker and usually he was better; his off the cuff speeches were normally better than the ones that were prepared for him. We would also write the speeches, so that he could be in and out of them pretty easily.

So if you were writing something, or if I was even editing something that somebody else had prepared, we'd do it in such a way that it would sound to me like the kind that he often spoke. We would go and depart from the draft speech and elaborate as he saw fit. I'd try to make it easy for him to elaborate on and then get back into the speech seamlessly. And so then he learned to expect that and I knew he could do that. If he didn't do any of that, it was still perfectly fine as a speech, but he had a great sense of where he was and sometimes he liked to counter speak. He liked to speak to a group that you

wouldn't expect him to give a speech to and you'd find him giving a speech on a subject that surprised you.

I can remember one time when we had a conference on economic development, and he had a good speech prepared on economic development. He picked up a luncheon placemat that was a copy of a newspaper of maybe a hundred years ago, which advertised milk for two cents a gallon, or I don't know, whatever it was. It had all these things on there and everything. He picked up the placemat and gave his entire speech from the placemat, referring to things on the placemat, and it was really a brilliant speech. I mean everybody was picking up their placemats, looking at them and it was fascinating as he discussed it, and he discussed with great knowledge and great energy and enthusiasm. He never did touch the original speech that he had prepared, which was a good speech.

I remember another time which strikes me. He was very big on mental health, as you know, and they were breaking ground for a new mental health center, they had five or six shovels. It was near Galesburg, Illinois, as I recall and it was a cold day, it must have been ten degrees. There were two hundred people huddled out there and mental health had prepared the remarks for him, which we had edited very slightly. It was an excellent speech, probably twenty minutes long. We got out there and it was first of all, the director of the new mental health center they were building got up and spoke for twenty minutes. Then they introduced the director of the zone and he got up and spoke for fifteen or twenty minutes. Then they introduced the director of mental health, who must have spoken for twenty minutes. By now everybody was turning purple, it was so cold. Governor Kerner, of course, was the main speaker and they turned it over to him and he says, I have an excellent speech prepared here, but I think we waited long enough to break this ground. He said, "Where's the shovel?" I figured he lined up two hundred sure votes for the rest of his life. Everybody was just freezing to death at that point. He never hesitated to read the crowd and he could do that very well. He was a very, very good speaker.

DePue: Did you have a lot of direct, face-to-face encounters with him, where you would work out and find out what his views were, in what direction he wanted to take things?

Feurer: The major architect of the budget address and the state of the state address was Chris Vlahoplus, who was press secretary, and he would occasionally have things for other speeches, but they would work that out and of course, those were wide ranging. Sometimes I'd sit in on those meetings and I would do portions of those addresses and so forth, and we'd have to make them consistent. The other things I did more of that the first six months than I ever did after that, because by then I had the feel for it and I was there if he needed me; you know if he wanted to call me or he wanted to do something different or wanted to go in a different direction, he'd call me in and do that. But I

didn't bother to do that too much after that, because by then I had learned again, his rhythms and his system, and more and more I learned about his positions and what he believed in, what he didn't believe in, and what he wanted to take on. If he wanted to raise other issues, I don't recall that he ever said I want to raise these issues, give me a page on that or something. He just did it. So he didn't give you a lot of direction beyond that.

After the first six months or so, I would brief him on news conferences also, when you had a news conference, and you would try to identify the major issues of the day. That was interesting to me, because the first one I did on that, I had tried to identify the major issues, and I took pride that I could hit ninety percent of them. Somebody would ask us a question about Lock and Dam 24 at Alton, I probably wouldn't know that one was coming in or something. You would try to get the up-to-date information if he was asked about it, and you'd try to tell him, here's what the current figures are on public aid, if that's an issue, or here's what this—you know, you would do the research and have something, so you'd have at hand, the very latest thing that you could have.

The first time I briefed him on that, I did a written brief, two and a half pages with the major issues summarized. That's the way I liked to be briefed and I liked to learn things and so forth, so I gave it to him. We had the news conference and he did very poorly in the news conference, didn't use any of that information I gave him very well, and it really bothered me. So the next time we had a news conference, I prepared the same thing and gave it to him, but this time I sat down and I went over it with him verbally. I noticed that he listened to everything I said and so forth, paid very little attention to what I had written, including the figures I gave him and everything, and he had just a perfect news conference. He had all that information in his hand, including some fairly technical figures that I would have had trouble keeping track of in my mind. After that, I never wrote anything for him. I'd just wrote it out for myself and briefed him verbally on everything, and he had great command of that. He had a great skill of doing that. I'd been a reader all my life, I couldn't have picked up those things reading, and he picked them up by verbal communication, which I think is one of his secrets in meeting people. He would hear a lot of things and he would remember those things much more than I ever could.

DePue: Was he one of those guys who had the politician's memory for names and places?

Feurer: He was very good at names and places, and he had the ability to get very interested in things. He'd go over to a pickle factor in Mattoon or something and they'd give him a tour of the pickle factory. He'd ask questions about the pickle factory and so forth. He'd run into this person a year and a half later and he said, did you ever solve that problem with the pickle machine, when you had such—and he'd remember the details. These people of course were

tremendously impressed that he cared enough and he remembered, and he'd actually gotten very interested in that and he would recall that. I would never recall that if I had the same briefing. I just didn't have that kind of skill. He would remember all the details and say "Well how did you solve this?" he'd say, and so forth. He'd have these discussions with them and those people were very appreciative of the fact that he remembered those kind of things.

DePue: In your job, did you find that your own political views were evolving or maybe solidifying, because you were working so closely with the governor?

Feurer: Yes. I mean a lot of things came up, but I still was in my twenties at the time. I still hadn't even thought about some of these things that came up. You started getting opinions, but I don't know that I'd had opinions before. I started getting opinions when I started covering the legislature. Of course, you hear the debates and then it's hard for you not to get opinions at that point.

DePue: Well especially as a reporter I would think, because you're trying to analyze and understand what they're saying on the Floor.

Feurer: Sure, sure, that's right.

DePue: How about some issues where you would be at odds with what the governor was saying or wanting to do?

Feurer: I really don't recall any of those situations occurring. In fact, I can't recall any. I would sometimes think tactically; I would think that maybe tactically he's not doing this the right way.

DePue: Political tactics.

Feurer: Yes, political tactics. Ninety percent of the time, I turned out to be wrong and he turned out to be right, so after a while, you don't get too carried away on thinking that. I used to wonder why he was never interested in personal publicity. His position was, the governor gets credit for everything good, whether he deserves it or not; he gets blamed for everything bad, whether he deserves it or not. You know that's just the way the system works and that's the way it's going to work, there's nothing you can do about it.

He took down the road signs that said Welcome to Illinois, Governor William Stratton. They just said Welcome to Illinois after that; he didn't put his name in there. We would have a road program which might be 25 percent of the budget. He'd have the Director of Transportation most of the time announce that road program, and said the Director would say, "Well Governor, you ought to announce that; it's 25 percent of the budget." The Governor would reply, "I get credit for everything good, blamed for everything bad; it doesn't matter." Well, what happened was, when he allowed the directors and other staff to get that kind of credit, they tend to work like dogs, because they're now getting much more attention and credit.

They were a little more careful, I think. In retrospect, I decided they were much more careful about what they put in there that they were passing on to the Governor.

Anyway, what happened is, because he delegated so many of those things. If somebody—the Department of Transportation, I will use the example, it ran a highway through the only state park within a hundred miles or something and of course, people got up in arms and they appealed to the governor. The governor would take a look at it and order transportation to go around the state park. He served as a little court of appeals, but he never had his prestige on the line on these things initially. Now I see governors, they put their name on everything, so then if there's a mistake, they've got their PR spokesmen trying to spin it saying well, this is what really happened. He didn't really make a mistake or it should have been interpreted like this. He never had that problem because he wasn't that anxious to slap his name on everything. He just was able to change—you can't change things too often or you can't keep your subordinates happy, but he didn't change everything; there weren't that many things to change, you know, the routine stuff. And he was quite right. He ran this sort of low key… That's why, when I say he wasn't interested in press, we didn't have to slap his name on anybody who moved or went by, you stamped the name on there or something. You didn't do that with him.

DePue: One of the other things that get into the political tactics side or political power sides, is this whole notion about patronage. Now if there's one thing that the Democratic machine in Chicago understood, it was patronage.

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: And certainly Stratton believed in it. What was Kerner's view?

Feurer: With Kerner, there were certain jobs that everybody understood were patronage jobs, and those patronage jobs went to Democrats. They would change and they went to Democrats. But the fact is, Kerner was the least interested in patronage of any governor than I've ever seen from the standpoint. A lot of the Democrats who felt they'd been out of office for eight years, it was time to "smell the meat a 'cooking," as Paul Powell said.

DePue: Who knew about patronage himself?

Feurer: Yes, who knew about patronage, right. Kerner wasn't interested in that kind of patronage really. He didn't replace a lot of people that a lot of Democrats thought should have been replaced, so the organization Democrats were disappointed in Kerner from that standpoint, because he wasn't dumping a lot of Republicans, a lot more Republicans anyway and putting them out. Now the liberal Democrats, you know they were different than that. They thought some should have been dumped, but they probably would have dumped the

patronage Democrats and put in nothing but intellectual Democrats as they saw it. when they did that. But Kerner was probably in the middle ground when he did that.

Somebody wrote a newspaper story analyzing patronage a couple years after he took over, and saying that it was very different, a distinct difference between Democrats and Republicans. When Stratton came in, he put in charge of the Department of Personnel, which was the one that handled most jobs at that time, a guy named Robert Perz, who had been head of patronage for the Republican Party.

DePue: Robert Perz?

Feurer: I think it was P-e-r-z, maybe S, P-e-r-s. I never knew him. But they said he took over the Department of Personnel and he says when Kerner came in, he named Maude Myers as Director of Personnel, who had been Executive Director of the Civil Service Commission and was a Republican. So I mean, a lot of people said well how could you possibly do that? Saved him a lot of trouble frankly in the end.

What the Democrats did recognize, even though they were irritated at this, was that Kerner had won and won big and carried a lot of people with him at the time he came in, or at least hadn't hurt the people who ran with him, whether he carried them or not. They were never completely satisfied that he got rid of nearly as many people as he should have. I knew, at least personally, one of the tactics that was clear that when things didn't look good, were a couple Republicans who took lower paying jobs and tried to get themselves classified in jobs that sounded much more civil service, to protect themselves. They protected themselves but they both said to me later they didn't need to have done that; they should have stayed where they were, they had better jobs and Kerner wasn't replacing those people. They had been high level but not a high enough level that the government felt necessary to change. He didn't like the Department of Public Welfare, which had been headed by a guy named [Otto] Bettag; he thought the mental health system was in chaos and furthermore, it was the largest employer of people in the state of Illinois, the Department of Public Welfare. It had all the mental health hospitals. Stratton had attempted to move Bettag to another job and put him under civil service protection. He didn't last; he was the first guy to go after Kerner took over. So I mean Kerner had some strong opinions on some of those things but generally speaking, we never talked politics. We talked about how politics was affecting legislation and things like that, but we didn't have a lot of discussions about the right political thing to do.

I have to tell you one story for example. One of the things that happened when Kerner ran for office…

DePue: In '64?

Feurer: In 1960. Daley was interested to endorse Kerner, many people felt, because he was not a Catholic and because Daley was worried about the effect of having two Catholics at the top of the ticket. He really wanted Kennedy at the top of the ticket; he was a big Kennedy supporter, Mayor Daley, and so he was the top of the ticket. Basically, he left Kerner to run on his own campaign. Ted Isaacs was his campaign manager and Isaacs had been a good organizer and things like that.

DePue: And old Army buddy as well, right?

Feurer: From the National Guard. Not in the Army, he was in the National Guard with him, yes. But he had done more than that. I'll get back to Isaacs if you want to in a minute, but they ran that race on five hundred thousand dollars or something. It cost about five hundred thousand dollars for the race almost, but I don't think it was quite that much, and they organized a group called Citizens for Kerner. They had a lot of Republicans who supported them, downstate particularly, and they raised all their own money. They raised all their own money basically. They didn't get any money from the Chicago organization. That organization was working very hard to defeat Adamowski and to elect Kennedy and everything, and they did it all. I had been in that office about six or seven days, but I'm the only one around for some reason.

DePue: Now which office was this?

Feurer: The Governor's office, after I started working in the Governor's office. I get this phone call funneled to me because the top five people weren't around obviously, because I would not normally have gotten that call at that point in my life. But it turned out the guy calling had been head of Citizens for Kerner in an east central Illinois county and he starts talking to me. Well the story is he'd been driving through Chicago and he had gotten a ticket and he wasn't really guilty and it cost a lot of money to go out and defend it. It became clear to me at the end, that he was asking us to fix this ticket. Of course, this was my first experience with this kind of request, so I said to him, "When you supported Governor Kerner, you supported a level playing field for everybody; the same rules apply for everybody." I said, "What you're doing when you're supporting Governor Kerner, nobody fixes any tickets, not yours or anybody else's. You just have to go by the system and do what you ought to do." Well this guy gets enraged and says that's the last time he supports Kerner and hangs up on me practically. So I figured I might as well find out right off the bat, whether I had big problems with this guy, and so I went into Kerner, who was around. In those days, you could walk in any time and see the governor. So I walked in to see him and I told him about this phone conversation. Kerner says "good." He says, "Friends like that I don't need."

DePue: Those are the stories that stay with you?

Feurer: Oh yeah, that always stayed with me. I remember that I was very relieved, because I thought this was a major question right here.

DePue: I know you want to talk quite a bit about the accomplishments during the Kerner Administration, but before we get there, I thought this would be a good time, because we'd been talking about politics, and talk about the 1964 election. What role did you play in that election campaign?

Feurer: Well, I was with the governor's staff, so it was hard not to be involved in it to some extent, because everything took on a political context. Every time he gave a speech now, it had some role in that. But I was probably almost as much of an observer in '64 as I was in '60, when I was a reporter, because they had a separate political organization.

DePue: It suddenly occurred to me, you're a state employee; you're paid by the citizens of Illinois.

Feurer: Sure, sure.

DePue: But you're also his speechwriter and he's running for reelection.

Feurer: We weren't writing his political speeches. There were other political—

DePue: That's a fine line, isn't it?

Feurer: It wasn't too fine a line, because he had become such an accomplished speaker. I think he had been an accomplished speaker from the very beginning, to tell the truth, but at least at that point, he spoke off the cuff most of the time. There were occasions when I was off and I'd go here and do speeches and so forth or something, and he just spoke off the cuff. I saw him go into one of the toughest wards in Chicago. I was in Chicago one time, in the evening, and I traveled with him when he went to two or three wards, and one of these wards was a West Side ward that I was glad the state police were around, I mean it was kind of scary. It was an abandoned movie theater. He got up there and is speaking to this crowd, and this is a crowd that Paul Powell was a great success with. Paul Powell was talking to them just before he was, and Powell is talking about the meat "a 'cooking" and go out and kill these guys politically speaking and so forth. I mean they were ready to leap up and charge through locked doors, so he could kill for the Democratic Party and Paul Powell and everything else. Powell once asked somebody why people were so enthusiastic out in Chicago for him, when he didn't know these people very well, and the guy told him, he said, "Well, that's the first interesting speech they'd heard in politics for a long time, because he was interesting, Paul Powell."

Anyway, Kerner came on next. Kerner starts talking about mental health and these people need help, and he starts telling these stories of people and things like that. People are listening, very hushed tones and everything

else. I mean there's not cheering or roaring or anything like that. He finishes his speech and he walks away and I kind of wander around the crowd, just to see what the reaction is, and people are saying, that guy has really got class, that guy really has class. That guy, he's really… And you know, I'm not even sure they followed it all completely sometimes but it didn't matter. It was obvious to them, this is the kind of guy you want to have as the governor. That was the reaction I got, that's the kind of guy we want to have be our governor. Paul Powell goes out there with his machete and chopped them down. But it was interesting. It would never have occurred to me to suggest if I'd been asked that he give that kind of speech to that kind of crowd, but he never talked down to a crowd, I didn't think, and he would talk about these kind of things and capture the attention. It never seemed to hurt him; it seemed to help him, in fact.

DePue: Well, he had as an opponent that year, Charles Percy, who had a strong business background but was also considered to be a moderate, if not a liberal, Republican. Was that a concern, that Percy would be able to run a competent campaign against him?

Feurer: Oh yeah, and I think Percy did run a competent campaign. Percy, I thought, was very articulate and very smart, a very bright candidate. He had a lot of connections, a lot of power, was very popular in the suburbs. A number of weeks before the election, *TIME* magazine had written a cover story on Percy, as the new hope of the Republican Party. I think it had one paragraph saying his opponent is the colorless Otto Kerner, or some term like that. I have forgotten that because it didn't even discuss anything else that happened, and just talk about Percy, and so Percy was a very strong candidate. He was a major league candidate that was very popular with the national news media and people like that.

I thought the turning point of that campaign occurred—and you knew, he was built up almost to super stardom, Percy had been, because he was so well-known. They had one debate that year; they had asked for a debate. Kerner, in the traditional wisdom that is, if you're the incumbent, you don't give him the platform of a debate. Why should you do that if you're the incumbent? So most of the time, incumbents would not get engaged in debates with their opponents, back in the sixties, because you gave him a platform. Why give him the platform? You just draw on people who can then oppose you or something like that. Kerner was advised not to give him a debate for that reason. Well, Kerner said no, he said, "I think he's entitled to one debate." He said we'll give him one debate, which was opposite of much of the advice he got.

Well it turned out in the end, that that was a very smart thing to do because it was Percy that had the national platform, not Kerner. Kerner was doing very well with the local populace but nationally, he wasn't getting anything like the attention, as evidenced by that *TIME* magazine article for

example, that Percy was getting. So it turned out, it probably was a good idea he had the debate. Well then they said, well if you have a debate, have it before the AFL-CIO. Kerner said no. I don't have the AFL-CIO; I'm going to lose this election anyway. He said, we'll go before the State Chamber of Commerce, which of course was a very Percy friendly organization. So he did.

They had it in Chicago as I recall, in the Palmer House Hotel. It was packed, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. I went to that debate; it was in the evening. There were about two tables out of maybe two hundred tables that were Kerner supporters. Most people were cheering for Percy. The debate was supposed to be on economic issues, the economic future of the state of Illinois, keeping with the Chamber of Commerce tradition and so forth. Well, Percy got up and said everything affects the economic condition of the state of Illinois and if you've got a governor who is subject to the mayor of Chicago, that badly affects our economy, and then he didn't talk about economic issues at all. He talked about being subject to the mayor of Chicago. It was the Republican tactic – to claim that the Governor was under the thumb of the Mayor.

DePue: He was painting Percy as being under the thumb?

Feurer: No, no, Percy was painting Kerner.

DePue: Okay.

Feurer: He was the first speaker. Percy spoke first, then Kerner, and then they each had a rebuttal. So Kerner, when he got up he said, "Well you know, I was told the topic was going to be the economic future of the state of Illinois and who could do the best for it and that's what I'm going to speak on." So he ignored all the stuff about Daley and this whole thing, and Kerner starts talking about all the successes the state had in business, which we had dramatic successes in economic development under Kerner; the new Chrysler plant in Belvidere, the Jones and Laughlin steel plant coming in north of Peoria, up in Hennepin, lots of development. Kerner always took great interest in that kind of thing. He started listing all these accomplishments and talking about what he did and everything.

So when he finished, Percy got up in his rebuttal and said, "Well I wasn't going to say anything about this, but you mentioned the new Chrysler plant in Belvidere. I have to tell you, when I was president of Bell & Howell, I wrote letters to the top two hundred industries in the country that didn't have plants in Illinois, and urged them to come to Illinois, to partake of our state. And I have a letter here, from Charles Townsend, (or whoever his name was,) the president of Chrysler that says your letter, among other factors, helped bring Chrysler to the State of Illinois", or something. Everybody goes,

"oooh," and then Percy sits down. So he reads this letter that says something to that effect.

So Kerner got up and said well, you think that's a real barn burner, huh? He said, let me tell you something: people don't come to this state because somebody writes them a letter. They come here, he says, because you've got transportation, the economic climate, favorable tax conditions. He goes through about ten things, all of which are the top ten things that organizations like Fantus and other economic search firms look for, for businesses and everything. He says that's what we've got in Illinois and we got it under this administration. That's why they come here, not because you write them a letter. He says that's not what brings them to the state, and then he sits down.

Well, after they left, I was walking out with several people who I didn't know and I said, "What did you think?" They said, well, they're both really sharp. So, well you know, Kerner is ahead of the game now because Percy had been the superstar. I said to several people there, well they're both really impressive. I think they were not expecting to be impressed by Kerner. They're seeing this as some lackey of the mayor of Chicago who doesn't know what the hell he's talking about, and it turned out not to be the case. I was very nervous at that time, because that was a high stakes thing and, of course, I was pulling for Kerner.

I went to a bar at the hotel and another restaurant and, I don't drink, ordered a 7-UP or something, and they were rerunning the debate on TV. So I'm sitting there next to three guys watching the whole debate and nobody says a word. When they're finished, I said to them, "Well, what did you think?" One of them said yeah, that Percy guy, he's really sharp, but I like the other guy. The second guy says, yeah, me too; the third, yeah, me too. That made me feel much better about the whole thing after I saw that, because I think what happened at the end is, the debate became the turning point of the campaign, I thought.

DePue: But how much was that needed in an overwhelmingly Democratic era as far as the country was concerned? This is the [Lyndon B.] Johnson-versus-[Barry] Goldwater presidential election.

Feurer: Yeah, well it was needed, it was needed. Kerner won by almost two hundred thousand votes, but Johnson won by almost a million or something like that. I think it was needed. I think the Republican Party was putting a lot of their stake on Percy. I thought Percy was a very legitimate candidate and very articulate. I thought when he went to the United States Senate, Percy did a good job as a United States Senator, showed a great deal of courage in being one of the first persons to speak out about Watergate and everything.

When Kerner was nominated for the U.S. Court of Appeals, Percy sat on the panel and strongly endorsed Kerner. He said, "I'd personally be happy to vote for him for anything, to get him out of elective politics." I mean [Percy] handled it with great humor but said very nice things about him and did that. The feelings ran high during the campaign, of course, and everybody was mad at everybody on election day, and in a sense, that happens by the time you get to the end of the campaign. But the fact was that Percy was a very respectable candidate, I thought.

DePue: Most of these people who reach the positions running for offices like governor, they've got a close political advisor who has been with them for a while. Did Kerner have that?

Feurer: Kerner. You know, you have to know something about Kerner's history. Kerner, in many respects was his own political advisor. Kerner's father had the same name, Kerner was a junior, Otto Kerner, Jr. His father had been Attorney General of the State of Illinois for two terms in the 1930s, from 1932 to 1940. He'd been asked by Henry Horner, the outgoing governor, to run for governor, and he didn't want to do it. Kerner always said he benefited greatly from his father's reputation, which was excellent, as a judge. His father appeared to be, from everything I've read, very similar to Kerner, kind of removed from politics, never particularly comfortable in a political setting. Kerner's father was allied strongly to Anton Cermak from Chicago, but his father had not stayed in the old neighborhood. His father had moved up to Oak Park, River Forest, and Kerner had gone to high school in Oak Park, River Forest High School, and then Kerner went to Brown University. Well, there aren't many sons of political figures in the Chicago Democratic organization going to Ivy League schools. Then he went to Cambridge, I think it was Cambridge, for a year, in England, and then came back and went to Northwestern University Law School. So, Kerner was very familiar in moving around with some of these upper echelon people who lived in Oak Park, River Forest, Brown, places like that, very self-assured, very helpful in doing that kind of thing.

Kerner had joined the Masons. One of the things that helped him in running for office was he was in the Masons, and he went to downstate Illinois, because the Masons were, at that point, a very strong organization, certainly were not considered to be pro-Catholic. So, he sort of differentiated himself there. And then Kerner had been in the National Guard and risen eventually to Brigadier General in the National Guard. Kerner had been an elected county judge. He'd been a U.S. Attorney in Chicago. He'd been all these other roles, where I think he had a great deal of self-confidence about how to read things, and his wife, who was Cermak's daughter, was very knowledgeable politically and everything, too.

So, I think from the standpoint of issues and being comfortable with issues and being confident in things he believed in, I think he was pretty much

his own master there. Now he's just like everybody else, he had a brain trust of people that wrote issue papers for him, different topics, and he read them and sometimes went along with them and sometimes didn't agree with them. He had been exposed in these various jobs in so many things, that he had preformed opinions on a great many things before he ever got started.

Now when he ran for office in '60, Ted Isaacs was his campaign manager and Ted Isaacs was a very good manager. Ted Isaacs first gained the attention of the Democratic Party when Sherwood Dixon ran for governor in 1952, against Stratton. Sherwood Dixon, who had been lieutenant governor, got off to a very late start because Stevenson got off to a very late start in becoming a candidate for president. Isaacs played a key role in that campaign. He wasn't the campaign manager, but he played a key role in that and really impressed the Democratic Party with the things he helped with and how good he was when he managed that campaign as an organizer and manager. Then, when they had the Pan American games in Chicago, which as I recall were in the late fifties, Ted Isaacs was solicited by Mayor Daley to be one of the key organizers of the Pan American Games, where he apparently did a very, very good job on that. Then he had known Kerner in the National Guard and in fact, he had helped Kerner. Kerner had been assigned a major mission of reorganizing the National Guard when he was in the National Guard, and Isaacs, that's where I think he got to know Kerner well. Isaacs was a Colonel in the National Guard, and he helped do that. Then Isaacs was campaign manager for Kerner when he ran for county judge on a countywide executive, Chicago for county judge, which as I recall was in 1952. I'm not sure I've got these years straight now; I think it was in '52.

DePue: We can make sure of that when we get the transcript.

Feurer: Sure. But anyway, so he served him then and he served as attorney for the election board and so forth, so he knew Kerner from all those things. I don't know that I would describe Isaacs as being a close friend of Kerner's in the normal sense, but Kerner had a lot of confidence in him and he delivered in a lot of cases when he did organization stuff and everything. But on issues, I thought most of the time on issues, Kerner had his own opinions. He was certainly willing to listen to other people and he sometimes would change if he heard what they had to say, but on an awful lot of things, he had made up his mind long before he even solicited other opinions, because he had been involved in them one way or another.

DePue: Well, you've talked about this a lot already, but this is probably a good opportunity; again, I keep prefacing this. We want to talk about his accomplishments. Tell me more about Kerner the man. What adjectives would you use to describe him?

Feurer: I'd say he was very private; he was very dignified. He was very calm, restrained, he rarely showed anger. He wasn't a name caller; he was invariably

polite. He was very private. He was very private, even about being governor and he was very private about his family. He never paraded his family around in front of the cameras or tried to gain advantage for that or anything else, even though his kids went to school in Springfield. He was very private about all those things.

DePue: Was he an imposing man? I know he's described as handsome.

Feurer: Oh, he was extremely imposing in the sense that he was incredibly handsome, and he kept himself very physically fit. He worked out at the YMCA a lot and always looked very, very good. Well, you can see by that picture there, that excellent biography, he was very, very fit. I think he was like maybe five-nine, maybe he was five-ten. He wasn't tall. I think it startled people when they met him, that he wasn't taller than he was, because he looked like he was tall when you look at pictures. Percy was the same way. Percy wasn't very tall either. Neither of them were very tall, but they were both—Percy looked physically fit, I thought too, and looked good and everything.

One of the interesting things about Kerner was, women would drape themselves over Kerner. You know how you get good looking women that men drape themselves over often. Kerner was a man, one of the few men I saw, that women would just try to drape themselves around him or put their arms on him, put one arm around him and everything else. Kerner would give them this blinding smile and sort of make a little turn, and then you're facing him with an empty arm. Many good-looking women have that move down pat. Kerner had that move down pat, too; he'd just turn to them and just give them this tremendously charming smile but no longer; they now had an arm hanging up there with nothing to hang onto. I think in this book, the authors pointed out somewhere that he—

DePue: We're talking about, *Kerner: The Conflict of Intangible Rights*.

Feurer: Yes, yes. And the authors pointed out Kerner probably could have had any woman he ever wanted and never did. He was always very faithful to his wife and never the remotest sense that he ever had any interest in anybody else. When they would make moves on him, he had the counter moves.

DePue: Well, let's talk a little bit more about his wife. Her name was Helena?

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: I'm curious; you talked about how private Kerner was, but was some of that an attempt to shield her from the public eye?

Feurer: Well, I think he was just naturally private. He was even private about things involving [his background]; Kerner was not a person who talked a lot about his history, for example. He was in World War II, in combat roles, in both the Atlantic and the Pacific. He had the highest nonmilitary medal for saving

somebody's life who was drowning, and he swam out and retrieved him when he was an officer. He had all these accomplishments. He never talked about any of those kinds of things. He never talked about his accomplishments when he was county judge or when he was U.S. Attorney or any of those kinds of things. He just never reminisced about it or talked about the good old days and that kind of stuff. He always looked forward, it appeared to me. I don't know how good he'd be in an oral history or not. Maybe if he was alive, you could ask him, but I'm sure he could have reminisced about a great deal if you'd ask him, but no one ever felt inclined to pry or to look into it and so nobody did that.

DePue: By the time he was governor, at least it's my understanding, his wife, Helena had a pretty serious drinking problem.

Feurer: Yes, that was never completely clear to us. It was never discussed, to the best of my knowledge, with anybody on the staff.

DePue: Was that something that the public generally did not know about?

Feurer: Well, I think the press corps was very different in those days than it is now, and I think that the press corps knew she was disabled in some way. We knew, for example, she could never fly on a plane because of some ear problem she had that caused her to lose her sense of balance on a plane. She could not somehow fly on a plane and she had to be driven everywhere she went or whatever they did. But that was not anything that anybody ever discussed with us or talked about or did anything about.

DePue: One of the reasons I'm asking about that, Robert Howard wrote most of the book, *Mostly Good and Competent Men*, which is a book about all of the Illinois governors, and I believe he wrote the chapter that deals with Otto Kerner. One of the comments he made was that the Illinois public was sympathetic; they thought well of the man because he dealt with the issues of his wife. He was so compassionate towards his wife's drinking problems. Now maybe I'm getting that wrong to a certain extent.

Feurer: Well, I don't think you're getting it wrong. I think that probably is true. I think the public liked him because his wife obviously had problems of some kind and he never apologized for it, he never asked for sympathy for it, he never took advantage of it.

DePue: So the public had some kind of a notion that there was an issue there.

Feurer: Some people in the public, around Springfield particularly. He lived in Springfield, in the mansion, most of the time, so of course you heard conversations about that kind of thing, but none of us knew that much about it and we didn't want to know. I mean, that was not one of our missions as we saw it, to get involved in that and we did not. We had, as a staff, very little interaction, most of us at least, with his wife. I can remember early on though,

she was very smart politically. When I was a reporter, she was at a couple of press receptions or something they had, and she would reminisce, and she was obviously very astute politically and knew a lot about politics. And she obviously was highly energetic.

She told a story one time, it's the only story I ever remember her telling. She told a story about how she had a date with Kerner one time and she was supposed to go pick him up. She went to pick him up at, I think an apartment building where he was living, and she saw him getting in his car and driving away, and she knew she had this date, so she honks at him and he keeps going. So she starts chasing him and going faster and faster through the streets of Chicago. She was getting madder and madder and angrier and angrier. Finally he crashes the car into a tree or something and jumps out. It was a thief who had stolen the car and she had been chasing the thief. Kerner's sitting back in the apartment waiting for her and he has no idea any of this was happening. (both laughter) It was kind of funny. So this guy can't shake her and crashes the car and runs away.

DePue: Was there any sense at all that this was a marriage of political convenience?

Feurer: No, we never had that sense. His wife had been married before briefly, not too long, and had one daughter, and Kerner adopted the daughter. Of course, it was his wife's daughter and everything. And then the daughter was married, not too long, but had two children, who were Helena and Anton, and then she died in an automobile crash. And after that happened, he adopted those two grandchildren. He adopted their mother basically and then she died and he subsequently adopted those two children and neither of the former husbands got involved in that or anything at that particular point. Everybody had the impression that the death of her daughter affected Kerner's wife greatly for the rest of her life.

DePue: Did they have any children themselves?

Feurer: No.

DePue: Okay. Well, I've been teasing this issue long enough. Let's get into some of the accomplishments. We're not going to get done with all of these today but we can certainly get a good healthy start on them I think, if you're up to the task.

Feurer: Sure.

DePue: When we met earlier, you made a distinction that he made accomplishments, there were things that were going on in the executive branch, in the legislative branch and the judicial branch, so I wanted to kind of divide things up that way as we go through these. Was there an attempt that Kerner had to reorganize the executive branch when he became governor?

Feurer: Well, let me take up one thing I don't want to forget, because I didn't make that distinction when we talked before, and then I'll go to that, if I may.

DePue: Absolutely.

Feurer: Which has to do with the fact that as you know, Illinois had a Constitutional Convention in, I think it was 1970.

DePue: I think that started in '69 and finished in '70.

Feurer: Yes, that's right. And one of the things that was interesting to me, that I had not known until I read the book, *Kerner: The Conflict of Intangible Rights*, was the fact that Kerner had been interested, even in the 1950s, in the state Constitutional Convention and had been a member of some committee urging that to be done, and during the sixties, he would frequently bring that up. Nobody else had any particular interest that I could determine at the time, on the staff or other officials or anybody else, there were no groups pushing for a Constitutional Convention. But he kind of reminded me of the ram butting that dam: you know eventually there goes another billion kilowatt dam. He was the only one that ever kept pushing that all the time and he just frequently did that. Those would be things he would drop in speeches that sometimes would be unrelated to the speeches and talked about or he'd relate it to the fact that we were hampered by this old constitution and we really need a new constitution. He just did that periodically all the time and I was struck by that, but I had not known until I read the book, that he'd been involved. He never mentioned that, that he had been involved in the committee back in the 1950s, that was pushing for a new state constitution at that time. That's all I wanted to say about that. That happened after his watch of course.

DePue: Well that's a good lead-in to the question about reorganization, because there's the ultimate level of reorganization.

Feurer: Sure, sure. Well, he reorganized. He did a lot of reorganization. He had limits to his power on doing that, of course. He never had a friendly legislature because the Senate was Republican the entire time he was in office. He did have a Democratic House a couple of occasions, but not the entire time, and he never had a legislature that was completely Democratic at the time that he was in office.

DePue: Well, I thought Arthur Bidwill was the president of the Senate or president pro-tem of the Senate.

Feurer: He was, a Republican Senator.

DePue: Okay.

Feurer: And then Russell Arrington. So they were both of course Republicans and the Republicans dominated the Senate. At one point, of the fifty-eight Senators, I

think it's fifty-eight Senators, I think nineteen were Democrats and the rest were all Republicans at one point. But given those parameters, he still accomplished a great deal of reorganization and most of it was very effective, I thought. But he didn't do it all at once; he didn't announce some sweeping reorganization to do a bunch of things.

The first thing he did when he was County Judge, of Cook County, that was sort of an unusual kind of judgeship. You're in charge of all the adoptions, you're in charge of all the commitments for mental health, and you were in charge of all the election commissions and certain appointments and things there. So obviously, Democrats were very interested in having that because of the election commission and, of course, there were quite a few appointments that you were responsible for when you were the County Judge.

DePue: And adoption issues and mental health issues are the kind of thing that get in the newspapers as well.

Feurer: Well, but they weren't getting in. They were pretty much on the backburner until Kerner took over, but let me talk about mental health first of all. Kerner was very upset at the state of mental health at the time that he became governor, and furthermore, he was upset that he hadn't been able to have more impact on it. As I mentioned, those were handled then by the Department of Public Welfare, by their director, whose name was, I think, Otto Bettag. They were the largest employer of personnel in the state of Illinois, the Department of Public Welfare. They had all these huge mental health hospitals in places like Jacksonville and Galesburg and Anna, Kankakee, and they were great sources of employment, but they weren't doing much for the people there. They would send people there they didn't know what else to do with. They'd send alcoholics there, they would send homosexuals there, they would send people there, and it didn't do anything for them or anything and they just became sort of storehouses for people. They weren't very good facilities at all and it bothered him a lot.

At the time Kerner ran in 1960, with the endorsement of both the Democrats and Republicans, there was a hundred and fifty million dollar bond issue I believe, to basically expand the mental health system—everybody admitted they were overcrowded, underutilized and everything else—and it passed. Well, the intent had probably been at the time they proposed that, to just make the big facilities bigger.

Kerner appointed as the Director of Mental Health, a guy named Dr. Francis Gerty, who had been either at the University of Illinois or something like that, but the most recent president of what I think was called the American Psychiatric Association, who was retiring. Kerner talked him into taking over as Director of Mental Health and he basically gave him a free hand. But one of the things Gerty says, "Well I'll take a free hand but we don't have the right system here. We need a system where we have a system

of zones; we can have much smaller facilities, not more than two hundred in each one. You can get hands-on and give them treatment, do the right kind of things" and so forth. Kerner agreed and did that, so they started selling the bonds for that. Somebody challenged it in court because they said, well that wasn't what was intended, but that's what they spent the money for, setting up all these regional mental health centers. He created a new Department of Mental Health, and put Gerty in charge of this, and Illinois became the leading mental health treatment location of any state in the union at that point. That was the place to be if you were in mental health. We had people flooding in and applying for jobs from all over the country. Kennedy praised the Illinois system as being a model system for mental health.

DePue: Not just because they have new facilities, but a new approach to the problem.

Feurer: Oh, a dramatically new approach, and I'm not smart enough to understand exactly how, but it was much more hands-on, much more treatment oriented; do something for these things and so forth. And Gerty, who was an older man, he was over sixty-five at the time he was appointed, he eventually retired and a guy named Harold Visotsky became the director of the department.

Mental health was a pet project of Kerner's for the entire time he was in office and it was again, the place to be. I met several people in recent years that came to Illinois because of mental health, wound up staying here, but they came here because they wanted to—they were in Virginia or they were in Colorado and they found out the place to go for mental health is Illinois, this is where you learn that. So it was a dramatic change in what they did and it was widely hailed. It was like anything else; I'm not sure everything they did was exactly right but most of it was and it became a dramatic change in how the mentally ill were treated.

DePue: How much was that because of Kerner's direct involvement versus this Dr. Gerty's revolutionary ideas that he was bringing forward?

Feurer: Oh, I think Gerty was their architect of most of the plan, which Kerner strongly supported, but Kerner knew it was a mess. Kerner knew the system was a mess, knew that it needed to be changed, knew it needed better leadership, knew it needed not to be a patronage haven.

Kerner had appointed, as assistant director or associate director or deputy director or something, the Rock Island County Chairman, Democratic Chairman, because they had a lot of jobs that everybody acknowledged were patronage jobs. Gerty resisted that and said I can't do that; I need a more professional person to be the deputy director. And so Kerner dismissed this guy who he had named, who had been a strong supporter of Kerner's in 1960 and everything, and said okay, put in who you need.

DePue: Had there been some embarrassing incidents that occurred during the Stratton Administration that worked to Kerner's favor in getting elected in the first place?

Feurer: Well, Stratton had become very unpopular, even with the Republican Party, through his two terms, and there were several scandals involving mental health and public welfare, and examples of mistreatment or lack of treatment, things like that. It was sort of a cumulative thing. I don't think there was any single issue like the Ryan Administration, where you had the deaths of some people connected to drivers that shouldn't have had a trucking license. I don't think it was a single issue; I think it was a cumulative effect of a number of things that people were just tired of Stratton and were unhappy for various reasons. So Kerner had a lot of Republican support from people who were disenchanted with [Governor William] Stratton, but welfare was one of the main ones. Kerner had felt very frustrated, because when he was Cook County judge, he didn't have a lot of impact on that.

Now, associated with that, Kerner eventually created another department called the Department of Children and Family Services, and the Department of Children and Family Services, which handles among other things, adoptions, was something Kerner knew a great deal about too. Kerner had a great impact on adoptions in Cook County, when he became the county judge up there, because prior that had pretty much been a routine thing. You'd go up there and slap some papers and they'd give them to whoever you said. Kerner would question people, order background investigations, instruct adoptive parents and so forth. He came down to Springfield a couple of times and took on the Catholic church, because there was one provision that said that if they had been baptized in a certain faith, that you shall put them with parents of that same faith. Kerner thought that was far too restrictive and he got some legislative allies, including Bill Harris, who was a State Representative from Pontiac, who later became Leader of the State Senate as a Republican, to join him in that and they eventually got the law changed, so that he could do those adoptions. I thought he showed some real courage. It was very low profile; people didn't know that was happening, but the church was very strong against that and he got that done over the objections of the Catholic Church. He really legitimized the adoption process in Cook County and reformed it a great deal. That was considered his major accomplishment. He used to be introduced as the man who made more women mothers than anybody in the history of the state. (chuckles) He was strongly interested in adoption and Children and Family Services was the result of that interest.

Children and Family Services, as I understand it, also became the [place where] most of those issues previously were handled at the local level and Illinois is the first place that moved control of that to the state level, so you could get more consistent treatment, get better funding, and have some sort of measures of how you're doing. Children and Family Services, still to this day, have things happen because they're in such a volatile field, they are

an embarrassment, but the reason they know about it, I'm told, is the fact that we do this statewide, so they know this statewide. Other states, it happens in such and such a county and who hears about it except in that county, because it's locally handled in that county. At one time, we were the only state that handled this on a statewide basis. I don't know if that's still true or not, but it was considered by the social workers to be a major change.

DePue: Did he reorganize his governor's staff?

Feurer: Kerner, at the end—

DePue: I mean that's a very personal thing, how ever the governor wants to operate things.

Feurer: At the end, Kerner always had a much smaller staff than anybody has had since. We never had more than six or seven assistants; maybe we had eight at one time. He did, for a short time, have sort of a local government branch with three people in it, that was sort of attached to the office also, and then those got spun out to a new Department of Local Government. I kind of lost track of when that happened. But due to his management style, which I think was heavily influenced by the military, he delegated most of his tasks, sent it out to the departments and told them to handle it and then come back to him. Some of us thought, probably as a staff, he ought to be getting us to approve everything, but the fact is, we didn't need to approve that, we didn't know that much stuff. I've seen it the other way now, and he was right and those of us who disagreed were wrong, to the extent we disagreed with that.

DePue: Did he have a budget director? This is prior to the constitution in 1970, where they gave more power on developing the budget to the governor, and took a little bit of that away from the legislature. But did he have some kind of a budget director, a budget position?

Feurer: Well, the Department of Finance handled that at that time; the Department of Finance, and the director of that department, for I think the entire time that he was in office, was Jim Ronan, who was the Democratic State Chairman. He was a terrific guy and very smart and very common sense, very practical. Under him, there was a guy named Ted Leth, L-e-t-h, and Leth was, for all practical purposes, the budget director. He had a fairly small staff and they had incremental budgeting pretty much, where they looked at the old budget and decided how to change it; you know, what are you going to raise or cut or whatever you did. It seemed to me, it worked fairly well, but it certainly wasn't elaborate as the Bureau of the Budget, which they have now, or anything like that.

DePue: Let's finish off today then, with a little bit of discussion about finances and taxes, as far as Kerner is concerned, because one of the things, as I understand at least, that led to the Constitutional Convention in 1970, was this whole

issue of whether or not Illinois should have a state income tax. This is prior to the time of the state income tax. So what do you recall? And what you're talking about and what we are going to be talking about the next time we meet, there's a lot more demands on the state budget because of new programs. This is after all, especially '64 and on, it's the great society programs at the federal level and there are similar things, as I understand, going on at the state level, that are putting more pressures on the state budget. So that's a pretty long intro to an opportunity for you to talk about his budget initiatives and his taxing initiatives.

Feurer: Well, a lot of people believed that Governor Kerner should push for an income tax increase, which I think everybody agreed was probably allowed in the previous constitution, so the constitution itself did not, in 1970, pave the way particularly, for an income tax. He never did that. He never discussed publicly whether he thought that was a good idea or not. As a practical matter, it never had been accomplished. The only way you could accomplish something as controversial as an income tax is do it the way that [Richard] Ogilvie did it, where you've got a block of votes of Republicans and you make a deal with the mayor of Chicago, and he's got a block of votes as Democrats, and together, through party loyalty and whatever weapons that gives you because you're the leader of your respective parties, you can put together a majority.

DePue: And then take the risk that you're not going to be reelected.

Feurer: Well, you take that risk though. Ogilvie, in my judgment, did not get reelected for other reasons, not because of the fact that he passed the income tax. That probably didn't help him, but another governor probably could have passed the income tax and got reelected. Ogilvie, I thought, had the misfortune of following Kerner. Ogilvie was just a contrast to Kerner; I mean he was not sociable, not involved in the local community, he tripled the size of his staff, was much harder to get to see. He just had the kind of personality that didn't go. He cut back on some other programs that had been successful and became unsuccessful during his tour. And so as a result, even though he had all this additional money from the income tax, it didn't help him as much as it should have. If Kerner had gotten an income tax, I'm confident he would have used the money in a way that people would have seen some real benefits, and it probably would have saved him from the standpoint of having passed an income tax.

Kerner did raise the sales tax at one point, and that was basically mostly Democrats and a few Republicans who agreed it was needed and chimed in. One of the major revenue enhancements that Kerner had… When Kerner became governor, he named Ted Isaacs as Director or Revenue. Isaacs, for example, who was a political arm of Kerner you could say, he kept two or three of the major people at the Department of Revenue. There was a woman named Catherine Hanselman, there was a man named Willard Ice, both who

were key players in the Department of Revenue. He was smart enough to keep them.

What happened was, we were in the middle of a recession when Kerner took over. Not a recession in the nature we're in the middle of now, but nevertheless, I think we had six percent unemployment or something like that, at the time. Isaacs, working with the existing staff, basically came forward and found a way to plug what everybody agreed were loopholes; money was going outside the system. The state passed some statutory changes and made some administrative changes and the implementation of those two things basically resulted in enough extra revenue that by 1963, with a slight increase in the economic status of the state, the staff had gotten away from that crisis that it had faced before because it raised more money through the existing sales tax by applying that across the board to more people than in the past. And so in many respects, Isaacs helped him out a great deal by coming up with this system which allowed him to raise more money.

DePue: He raised more money. It wasn't just ways to find budget cuts within the current…?

Feurer: Oh no. He plugged a lot of loopholes. I mean Kerner was spending a lot more money on mental health, for example, and some of these other social agencies, but Isaacs raised more money by plugging what he called these tax loopholes.

DePue: But are we talking about sales tax loopholes?

Feurer: Sales tax loopholes, yes. Sales and service tax loopholes. He raised more money by doing that, by broadening it out, and as a result he didn't need to seek a tax increase and he avoided what everybody said was going to be a tremendous crisis. He avoided another crisis, that we'll talk about the next time, about public aid, if you want to talk about that too, because he made some changes with public aid that were very substantive, which had an impact on the financial affairs of the state too. So he did those things.

Now another thing he did somewhere along the line—I've lost track of this, as to what year this happened. It used to be that if the state built a new hospital or something, they had to appropriate the money out of the general revenue and do the hospital. Under Kerner, it was the first time they started bonding, and then there's something called the Illinois Building Authority. It's since been replaced by the Capital Development Board. But the bonding with the Illinois Building Authority had a very small staff and basically, they sold bonds and then paid off the bonds to pay for new capital facilities, which led to a real boom in building in institutions of higher education, for example. They operated with a much smaller staff than the Illinois Capital Development Board now has. I never knew quite how they did that, because seemingly, they only had a half a dozen or a dozen people or something, that were just administrating the whole thing and raising the money through this bonding.

Dawn Clark Netsch, I think was one of the architects of that. I'll tell you more about that, but that was the first time we moved to that.

DePue: When Netsch was working in the administration?

Feurer: Yes, yes. That's my recollection.

DePue: And as I recall, she was there for the first term but not very much of the second term.

Feurer: Yes. I'm trying to remember when she left, but she was there most of the first term, you're right. She may have left before the end of the first term but I'm not sure.

DePue: By the time the end of the second term—well, he left in '67. Was he more inclined to be sympathetic towards an income tax? Why did he avoid bringing that issue up?

Feurer: Well, I think because of the fact that he couldn't pass the income tax. I think the only way you ever pass an income tax is with a Republican governor and a Democratic Mayor of Chicago and vice-versa, because you've got two blocks of votes, two people who can deliver blocks of votes, who can negotiate for those things.

DePue: So, very much a political calculation on his part.

Feurer: Yes. I have no idea what his position was on income tax, but he was realistic enough to know, I'm quite sure you're not going to pass an income tax when you don't have anything to go with you. The Mayor of Chicago, people always said for example, that Daley probably got more from Stratton than he got from Kerner, because Stratton could deliver a block of votes, Daley could deliver a block of votes. They could strike a deal, okay if you do this for Chicago, we'll do this for downstate, or whatever you want to do or something, and they would deliver those two blocks of votes and that would be enough to pass what they do. There was no incentive for the Republican Party to support something that they don't have something to gain or lose, and the governorship is the thing they have to gain or lose.

DePue: Well. we've been at this for over two hours now. This has been a very interesting conversation. As I started by saying, I haven't had the opportunity to talk very much about the Kerner administration, but that's why it's such a valuable interview to do as well. We've got a lot more to talk about the next time we get together, but I want to thank you Bill, for giving us the opportunity to start.

Feurer: You're welcome, you're welcome.

(end of interview #1)

Interview with William Eugene Feurer Jr.

IS-A-L-2011-065.02

Interview # 2: January 24, 2012

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Tuesday, January 24, 2012. My name is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln President Library and I'm here with Bill Feurer today. Good afternoon, Bill.

Feurer: Good afternoon.

DePue: We're in the library. This is our second try at this. We were having a great conversation for a few minutes and I figured out we weren't recording, so we're going to try this again. I think we're doing better this time. My apologies for that. What I wanted to start with, the last time we talked about your early life and we got in a little bit to the Kerner Administration.

What I wanted to take us back to was a couple quotes, and in particular, I'm going to start with reading a quote from Robert Howard's book, *Mostly Good and Competent Men*. These are very short quotes, but one of the things in his assessment of Otto Kerner that he said was, "He was a popular but indecisive governor." Would you agree?

Feurer: No. Robert Howard was not a fan of the governor during the entire time he was in office. He was a correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*, which of course was a strong Republican newspaper. Kerner was a very decisive governor and made decisions and I don't know what he'd be referring to when he talked about being indecisive. When we talk about some of the things that happened in his administration, I suspect you would come to the same conclusion.

DePue: And I think you mentioned beforehand, he was the kind of person, as you mentioned earlier, that didn't mind being in the background and letting other people take the credit.

Feurer: That was his management style. I think I mentioned to you that, for example, when we would announce major programs, if the work had been done by a department, he'd have the department director announce the program. Some people thought he should have tried to do that kind of thing and he said they did the work. His general theory was that the governor gets credit for everything good and blamed for everything bad no matter what happens, and that you don't need a lot of work doing that.

I was brought on this job as assistant press secretary and being very clear, he didn't need an assistant press secretary because he wasn't that interested in press. Once his press secretary handled things, he was a very competent press secretary named Chris Vlahoplus. I wound up doing many other things in the administration; as assistant press secretary, I would fill in for Chris if he was gone. Once he was absent for illness for two or three months, I was the press secretary, but we were all called assistant to the governor at that point and we had general duties across the whole administrative range of activities that you did.

But Governor Kerner wasn't the typical political figure in that he didn't seem to be interested in getting lots of attention or lots of public acclaim. He didn't seem to feed off of that kind of thing, where he wanted the newspaper clip, or he wanted to see that or he wanted to do that, unlike most people who run for public office.

I want to make clear, if you walk into a crowded room and everybody stands and cheers, obviously that pumps you up. That would pump up Governor Kerner I think, just like anybody else, but I mean he didn't seek that kind of attention or that kind of approval or lots of favorable editorials or things like that.

DePue: Okay. Here's another quote, and this is a very short quote again, from Robert Howard's book, that "Kerner was an integral part of the Chicago Democratic machine." Machine is not the right word, "Democratic Organization."

Feurer: Kerner was endorsed by the Chicago Democratic Organization. Kerner, you could argue, led the creation of the Chicago Democratic Organization in many ways because of his popularity and because he was elected at a critical time in Illinois history for the Democratic Party. But Kerner was not ever part of the organized Democratic Organization in Chicago or Cook County, except to the extent that he had been tapped to run for county judge and been elected there. He was tapped for U.S. Attorney, but he was not ever a precinct committeeman, he never was an active part of ward organizations. He was never the kind of guy who worked his way up from the street or anything else.

He was basically selected because of how he could help that party. If you like, I could review briefly how that played out.

DePue: Yeah, if you would. We need to start with understanding that the way the process worked at that time is the body was called the slate makers, and in 1960, Richard J. Daley absolutely controlled the process of the slate makers in determining who the party candidates were going to be across the board, not just for the city of Chicago but for Cook County and for the state as well. You did a great job of talking through that previously, and I hope you can replicate that for us.

Feurer: Well, I'll try to do that again. Richard J. Daley was both Mayor of Chicago and Chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party. Most of the Democratic votes in the state of Illinois came out of the city of Chicago, in Cook County. It's not surprising that he was the single most influential person in the Democratic Party in the state of Illinois, as he was. He was the leader of the Democratic Party in the state of Illinois because of the fact that he controlled all those votes. He would frequently come to the Illinois State Fair during Democratic day and he would praise Governor Kerner as the leader of the Illinois Democratic Party. Kerner would tell people, when he was asked, I'm not the leader of the Illinois Democratic Party; Mayor Daley of Chicago and Cook County is the leader of the Illinois Democratic Party. He said I'm the Governor of the state of Illinois; Mayor Daley handles affairs in the city of Chicago and Cook County. Governor Kerner was basically the governor of the rest of the state and also Chicago, in those cases where it was helpful to the state of Illinois, to be helpful for the city of Chicago.

But in putting that in perspective, I think this is done to some extent in the Schlickman/Barnhart book. People don't remember exactly what happened but Mayor Daley had become a fairly recent power, with his chairmanship of the Cook County Democratic Organization and Mayor of the city of Chicago. The last person that had done that had been Anton Cermak, who was, of course, the father of Mrs. Otto Kerner. Anton Cermak had done that by building up a coalition of all the various ethnic groups and populations in the city of Chicago, putting them together and defeating the Irish for about the first time in the Twentieth Century.

The second person that ever did that was Mayor Richard Daley, who followed exactly that same model and built up a coalition of all these interest groups and did exactly the same thing. But Mayor Daley's track record had not been perfect during the 1950s. Part of it had to do with the fact that in 1952, Adlai Stevenson, who was the Governor of the state of Illinois, had made a fairly late decision to seek the candidacy for president and was the candidate. At that time, Governor Stevenson said it was wide open, who wanted to be the candidate for governor in his place. Well the most logical candidate from the standpoint of most Democrats was Eddie Barrett, the Secretary of State. He was very popular; he had been elected once or twice,

well-known throughout the state and a product of the Chicago Democratic Organization. Adlai Stevenson's people got worried about that, after he had indicated his interest, and were worried that they would now have to carry on their back, a product of the Chicago Democratic Organization while they were running as sort of an independent-minded President of the United States.

So the Stevenson people wound up endorsing the Lieutenant Governor of the state of Illinois, Sherwood Dixon. Sherwood Dixon then became a late entry in the governor's race and lost to the man who became governor, William Stratton. So there was sort of a defeat for the Democratic Organization. With respect to that, Barrett himself also lost that race, because he had now jumped back and forth and he lost to Charles Carpentier for the Secretary of State race. So not only had the Democratic Party not elected a governor, they had lost the Secretary of State, a patronage rich office for the Democratic Party.

In '56, Democrats picked another candidate who was active on the Cook County Board, whose name I cannot recall. He got involved in a scandal involving a flower fund or something, where he had used money that had been collected for flowers for people who died and used it to finance a trip to Europe, as I recall, for recreational purposes. As a result, the Democrats nominated, at the very late date, a judge named Richard Austin, a well respected judge but who had no track record of having run downstate, done anything like that. Austin lost to Stratton, who achieved reelection.

By 1960, the Democrats did not have a good track record downstate and furthermore, they had had a real problem in '56, because a Republican, Benjamin Adamowski, who was a former Democrat, had been elected State's Attorney, and from that platform had launched a series of investigations, mostly against the Democratic Organization in the city of Chicago and Cook County.

In 1960, Mayor Daley had not quite consolidated his hold on power that he had in subsequent years, because some of these things hadn't worked out too well for him. He was exceptionally strong, the strongest single Democrat in the state of Illinois, but it wasn't a sure thing, you would say, at that particular point.

Mayor Daley was very interested in seeing John F. Kennedy run for President of the United States. John F. Kennedy was a Catholic and being a Catholic was not popular in many areas of Illinois, and it was controversial in many areas period, throughout the country. He felt that it would be a real problem if the Democrats nominated a Catholic for governor also. The other two announced candidates for governor were—well, there were two candidates for governor. One was Joseph Lohman, a former faculty member at one of the colleges in Chicago, who served as treasurer of the State of Illinois, who was a Democrat and a Catholic. The second was Stephen Mitchell, the

former Chairman of the National Democratic Party, well-known, who also was a Catholic.

Daley felt, probably correctly, it would be suicide to nominate both a candidate for president who was a Catholic and a candidate for governor who was Catholic, in the state of Illinois, so he favored Otto Kerner. Kerner had a number of strong attributes from the standpoint of Daley. One, Kerner was well-known downstate. He was active in the Masons, the Masonic organization, which was a strong organization downstate and Kerner was known through that. Kerner had been and was at the time, a general in the Illinois National Guard and was well-known throughout the National Guard for the state of Illinois. Kerner had also been very active in the Boy Scouts movement. He was known throughout the state of Illinois for being active in the Boy Scouts movement.

Kerner was a Protestant. Kerner was the son of Otto Kerner, Sr., who had been a popular Attorney General from 1932 to 1940, and who had been solicited by the Democrats, particularly Henry Horner, to run for governor, but he chose not to do so. Kerner was also somebody who had not worked his way up as a ward committeeman or through the precinct organization, but was a graduate of an ivy league university, Brown University, had gone to Cambridge, Northwestern Law School, and moved very easily in those kind of circles, among Republicans and others. He had been a Cook County judge, where he was in charge of, among other things, adoptions. He became very well-known throughout the state as sort of reforming the adoption process, when he was a Cook County judge. He was known for doing that. And another very important thing was that Kerner appeared to have the capacity to raise his own money to run for governor, and he also wasn't closely connected with the Chicago Democratic Organization, even though he served as a county judge. He wasn't identified with standard, so-called machine politics or those kind of things. So Kerner in many ways was an ideal candidate.

Kerner did raise his own money through Ted Isaacs. Isaacs was a master organizer who had been active in the Sherwood Dixon campaign and had gotten accolades for some of his work there. It was Isaacs that had helped organize the Pan American Games in Chicago when he was there. He had helped Kerner reorganize the Illinois National Guard, where he was a subordinate to Kerner. He had helped manage Kerner's campaign when he ran for Cook County judge. So as a result, Daley felt—and again, apparently quite correctly—Kerner was capable of running a campaign on his own, which he did.

Kerner ran in '60, won by five hundred thousand votes. He carried the state. Kennedy carried the state by maybe nine thousand votes. Daniel Ward, a former dean of one of the law schools in Chicago, was a candidate against Adamowski, won the State's Attorney race, not by a tremendous number of votes, but Kerner clearly helped those races. So in many ways Kerner, while

perhaps it wasn't his plan or purpose, he helped consolidate Daley's power in the city of Chicago.

DePue: The quote that Howard had suggested that to a certain extent, that Kerner was beholden to Daley.

Feurer: Well, you probably would have had trouble getting elected as Governor of the State of Illinois if you didn't have the support of Mayor Daley and the City of Chicago Democratic Organization. So if that makes you beholden to some extent, I suppose that's true; you know it's the single most important source of your votes. But I mean, I think Mayor Daley felt beholden to Otto Kerner too, for having sort of taken him off the hook on some other problems, so it was probably being mutually beholden.

DePue: So it wasn't a relationship where Kerner felt that he owed something to Daley, that there was a certain amount of control that Daley could exercise there.

Feurer: No, I don't think that was at all. I mean it would be foolish to say that Kerner didn't understand that Daley was the Mayor of Chicago and Daley was Chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party, and that he would be as supportive as he possibly could for them, because they were the same party and because it was a major source of support for him.

DePue: I'm going to read another quote, and this one is from, *Kerner: The Conflict of Intangible Rights*, by Bill Barnhart and Gene Schlickman, and you've already mentioned that book as being a great source, a very detailed biography on Otto Kerner. This one is a quote not from the authors but from Kerner himself, in a 1962 speech that he gave. "It is for each governor and each administration to determine whether he will conduct his administration as a creator or a curator, whether he will see the problems of the state as those his administration can help solve, or that he views existing conditions as those which right themselves in the day-to-day workings of the various elements that go to make up the state." So the question is, did Kerner see himself as a creator or a curator?

Feurer: I believe he saw himself as a creator and I think that despite the fact that he faced the legislature, which he never controlled—the Illinois State Senate had been controlled by the Republican Party for thirty years—I thought he had a remarkable record of success doing what he did as Governor of the State of Illinois.

DePue: And we mentioned this the last time, when it didn't record properly, but one of the assessments that comes out in reading the book is that at that time in Illinois history, I'm talking 1960, the powers of the Governor's Office were relatively undefined, that it had a lot more to do with the personality and the character of the individual who was there, in terms of how successful he was,

than dependent on the actual legislative or constitutional powers that were specified.

Feurer: I think that's true, but I think that's true today also. I think that the person who is a President or maybe a Mayor of the City of Chicago, or the Governor of the State of Illinois, goes a long way to shaping the power through how he builds public support, what he does, how he carries out the offices of his duty. There's a certain amount of maintenance, you know you've got to keep the railroad running on time, and every governor should be able to do that. Some are satisfied to just keep the railroad running on time. Others want to do more than that. Some governors take the position that the legislature proposes and the governor disposes. Others, including Kerner, don't do that.

Kerner frequently would urge the legislature to take action on various things. I think in his last two terms, or rather the last term, which was '65 to '68, he probably sent fifteen to twenty special messages to the legislature, and they would urge action in various areas: transportation, recreation, insurance, whatever areas, and they typically were not single shot messages. They would encaption a subject area and then he would have half a dozen proposals or more. Many of those became very successful and were enacted into law.

DePue: Let's turn to his accomplishments now, and the last time we met, we did talk about some of his accomplishments in the Executive Branch. The area I wanted to start with though was in economic development. Was he able to make some inroads in economic development?

Feurer: He made tremendous inroads in economic development. It was an area of great interest to him. When Kerner took office, I don't know if you could say that Illinois was in a recession or not, but it had like eight percent unemployment or something like that.

DePue: Which would have been much higher than the national average at the time?

Feurer: Yeah, I think it was. Well, when he left office it was like two percent or something. The problem was finding enough people to fill jobs, in a sense, by the time he left, which was not a common situation to be in. Illinois, during his administration, became the leading export state in the country. It had a rich agricultural product, it had a lot of existing companies like Caterpillar, for example, that exported a lot of things, but he also was responsible for bringing in lots of new business into the state of Illinois. He wasn't completely responsible for it and he would not say he was completely responsible. He would always say that you had to have transportation, tax climate, workforce, locations, assistance from the government. So the state was one fact, but he aggressively promoted Illinois and was very successful in doing that.

The three biggest projects that I remember him having were the new Chrysler plant in Belvidere, Illinois; a new steel mill, operated by Jones and

Laughlin, in Hennepin, Illinois; and the Accelerator, that later became known as Fermilab, which was by a small town called Weston, and then they changed the name over to DuPage County. The book by Barnhart and Schlickman gives a very detailed description of how Illinois came out of nowhere to win the Fermilab project and Kerner's role, which was very instrumental in doing that. It's a very sophisticated look and it was very complicated and complex, and Kerner handled himself very well. I think you would agree if you read the description in the book that was written by Barnhart and Schlickman.

DePue: Who was president at the time? Was Johnson president?

Feurer: Lyndon Johnson was the President at that time.

DePue: How much of that decision had to do with the power that an Everett Dirksen or maybe to a lesser extent, Paul Douglas could exercise in Washington, D.C.?

Feurer: Well, when you read the book, you'll see that one of the things that became critical… Dirksen was not a player, a heavy player, but he was the Republican leader of the Senate, so of course, he gave lip service to this. He was not a major player until late in the game, on the Fermilab project.

What happened was that Illinois did not have a fair housing bill or an open housing bill, which Kerner had supported from day one, when he was in office, and some of the opponents, Senator Pastore from Rhode Island, and another Senator who I don't recall who that was, led the fight saying they don't have a fair housing bill. We shouldn't give it to any state that doesn't have a fair housing or open housing bill. That woke Dirksen up, because Dirksen saw that as an attack on Illinois. So basically Dirksen said well, if we're going to force that policy on this against Illinois, we'll be enforcing that policy on every state in the union on these kind of things or something, which woke up the rest of the Senate and that ceased to be a problem in the sense once Dirksen weighed in and suggested he was going to keep track of any rules that were enforced against Illinois were going to be enforced against every other state in the union, which nobody had the least bit of interest in seeing happen. And so he was at the end, a major voice in doing that.

Lyndon Johnson probably had the capability of killing it if he wanted to do that, but Kerner had been a supporter of Lyndon Johnson's and had praised Johnson's activities as he tried to advance civil rights and doing many of the things he did in his programs. And so Johnson, I don't think he steered it to us, but he didn't avoid doing that. Much of the growth that existed, of course, as a result of new industry and business with much smaller companies, those were met very friendly.

One thing that Kerner did was he led trade missions to Europe and to Asia. We had a trade office in Washington and I think we had a trade office in Europe. I'm not sure about the Far East at the time, but I mean the state

Department of Economic Development, which was a creation of Kerner's, was very aggressive in pursuing this area. The Department of Economic Development was a department that the Republicans did not want to give Kerner for awhile, but eventually swung around because it was clear we were having tremendous success. I assume that's why they swung around, because it was clear that we were having tremendous success with the development of new economic growth in the state of Illinois, and they eventually yielded and gave him that Department of Economic Development.

DePue: I would imagine both in Europe and in Japan, if those are two of the targets for your going to overseas missions and trying to promote Illinois businesses, that both of those places are also still rebuilding after the Second World War, and they're accelerating at that pace.

Feurer: Yes. There were major markets that were helped dramatically by the Marshall Plan and other aid programs, so that they became major customers of the United States, which people kind of overlooked in many ways when they talked about the aid program, that we aided our own country a great deal by doing that.

One of the interesting sidelines which isn't directly related to your question but which I may forget and I thought you might be interested in hearing was that Governor Kerner, as you recall, was in the artillery in World War II, in the service, and he had served as an Executive Officer early on. I think his first assignment with the regular Army is Executive Officer to William Westmoreland, who became of course the Commanding Officer in Vietnam. They had worked together for a couple years and they fought the first victory I think, that the allies had in North Africa, with their artillery unit. Kerner was, of course, active in that respect, but Kerner had also then become close to Westmoreland when he did this.

Well, during the Vietnam War, it became sort of a noblesse oblige, but the political leaders would all head for Vietnam and go get briefed by Westmoreland about the progress of the war. And I mean it was practically nonstop, congressmen, senators, governors, everything else. Kerner, when he went to the Far East, swung through Vietnam on the way back to see Westmoreland.

DePue: I think that was in 1965?

Feurer: I don't recall the year. But in any event, Westmoreland had a couple of Colonels, apparently, who he always sent out to meet these political leaders and other leaders, and they would escort them to meet Westmoreland, and he'd have an appointment and he'd spend fifteen minutes, a half an hour with them or something. When Kerner came in, Westmoreland came out to meet him at the airport, and these two Colonels said that Kerner's staff who was with him at the time, who is this guy getting—what's this all about? They

didn't know about the history they had and apparently, Westmoreland spent half an afternoon with Kerner and they stayed up until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning discussing the war and tactics and things like that. It was very close, it was an interesting story. I don't know if that was widely known, but I thought that was an interesting story.

DePue: Let's turn our attentions to higher education. Was he able to do anything in the field of higher education?

Feurer: Before we leave economic development, let me mention one more thing.

DePue: Okay.

Feurer: One thing that Kerner was very aggressive on was increasing tourism. He felt we had a lot of advantages. He was working and developing recreational activities, and we can talk about that in another perspective, but he promoted very much the Lincoln sites, the recreational facilities in Southern Illinois, the increased development of parks and things like that. They had trails, the Mississippi Trail. In fact, when he was invited to be chair of the Kerner Commission, I think he was on a boat going along the Mississippi River, to promote the Mississippi River Trail or something like that, around the Quad Cities area. And so he was very aggressive doing that—he spent a lot of time supporting the Department of Economic Development and handled much of that through promotion, and that was one of their major activities and probably for the first time, Illinois became a major player in the field of tourism under Kerner. Now we'll go to the other thing, I'm sorry.

DePue: Yeah, it was higher education.

Feurer: Yes. Well, higher education was again one of Kerner's absolutely major accomplishments. The commission that had recommended the creation of the Board of Higher Education was actually formed in the late fifties under Stratton and it made recommendations. But in '61 was when the Board of Higher Education was created and many people were surprised that they became successful.

What had happened in the past, in the fifties, and maybe even in the forties, was that higher education was represented by a very strong University of Illinois, which was a land grant institution in the state of Illinois, very well-known. It was also represented by Southern Illinois University, which was very well led by Delyte Morris, their president, and they had achieved power beyond what you would have expected from their location and the population it served and had achieved a great deal as a major rival of the University of Illinois. And then there were the universities under the teachers' college board, which were typically called colleges at that time I think. It included Eastern Illinois, Western Illinois, Illinois State and Northern Illinois, who were sort of the stepchildren of higher education at that particular time.

The rivalry between the University of Illinois and Southern Illinois had become so intense that it was shaping other events happening in the legislature. For example, the main proponent of the University of Illinois was Everett Peters, a Republican Senator from St. Joseph, who was also Chair of the Budgetary Commission, which reviewed all the budgets for the whole state of Illinois. One of the main proponents of Southern Illinois University was Paul Powell, who became Speaker of the House and was a very strong proponent of Southern Illinois University.

An awful lot of people were feeling pressure to support one or the other, in order to get favorable action on their own legislation which might have nothing to do with the University of Illinois or Southern Illinois University. I had felt personally, when I was an observer at the time as a reporter with United Press International, I didn't think the Board of Higher Education had a very good chance of passing, because I thought that neither SIU nor University of Illinois was very high on having a board of higher education, which they saw as a new bureaucracy being imposed on top of them. But many legislators were sick and tired of being asked to pick sides in this fight and it seemed to me that that in the end, plus the fact that Kerner was strong to support higher education, and of course, he had a lot of Democratic votes out of Chicago that tended to support him, but they weren't major factors because most of the public universities weren't located anywhere around Chicago, in Cook County, and they came onboard and they passed the Board of Higher Education. It was in many respects one of the greatest accomplishments of the Kerner Administration, the whole field of higher education. He not only created the Board of Higher Education, oversaw its creation, but he also oversaw the creation of the Illinois community college system, which had no systemized community colleges to speak of in the state of Illinois prior to Kerner taking office.

Let me talk about the Board of Higher Education and higher education first of all. First of all, during Kerner's administration, they created—SIU got a new medical school, located primarily in Springfield, a new dental school located primarily in Alton. It got a new campus in Edwardsville, Illinois right across the river from St. Louis. It got Sangamon State University, a two-year capstone college or university, created in Springfield. They got Governors State University, created up near Park Forest, Illinois, near the Will County line. It got the Chicago Circle Campus, which was a Chicago branch of the University of Illinois, which formerly had been antiquated facilities, at Navy pier, in Chicago. It dramatically increased aid to education through the Illinois State Scholarship Commission, through both loans and grants. They got new medical schools in Rockford and Peoria. This all happened in eight years.

They then created branches of the community college, and it was compromised, like a lot of things, where they basically partially controlled — well, mostly controlled the junior colleges. Community colleges were created by locally elected control boards in these community college districts, and the

state offered substantial support to assist these community colleges. Something like twenty-eight or thirty community college districts were created during the Kerner Administration, most of them in the state of Illinois, all through local votes. And of course, now the entire state is represented by community colleges.

The first community college in the country was at Joliet, but that did not herald the creation of a lot of community colleges until the Board of Higher Education and Kerner came along. Kerner gave strong support to the Board of Higher Education. He named, as the Chairman of the Board of Higher Education, Ben Heineman, who was the president of Northwestern Railroad in Chicago. He'd been in law school with him at Northwestern. He was smart and tough and savvy and could handle himself in these rivalries that took place. I mean Kerner basically—and the Board of Higher Education was created to coordinate the activities of higher education in Illinois, and its major powers were fairly limited. If you built a new campus or if you wanted to offer new programs, you had to get the permission of the Board of Higher Education, and they had to decide whether you needed it or not, but that was it. You know, they didn't have the right to abolish programs, to abolish schools or anything else. But they also were asked to give a budget to the state of Illinois, to the governor and the legislature, and Kerner made it quite clear to the higher education community, I'm going to take the budget that comes from the Board of Higher Education, so you better get together and get your act together, because that's going to be the basis that we operate on.

Much of the Board of Education's power comes, if it has power, from the fact that you have a governor that says clear it with the Board of Higher Education, don't come to me with these things. Clear it with the Board of Higher Education and we'll talk about it. Having done that, he wound up with a very coordinated approach to higher education that led to the point, even ten or twelve years ago, higher education in Illinois, the system was rated number one in the country. It's not that way now because among other things, we don't have the resources to support it like we were doing, but it was a very substantial accomplishment. And just like the way he handled other things, the Board of Higher Education led the way on these things. Kerner just said clear it with the Board of Higher Education and that's what I'll support. He supported Heineman and he trusted Heineman, knew Heineman. The would get together very little. The board eventually persuaded people; it took quite awhile that they were going to call the shots and they were going to enforce the same rules for everybody. All those, Northern, Illinois State, Eastern, Western, all became universities. They created schools of Chicago State, Northeastern Illinois University, which had formerly been branches of the Chicago Public School System. All these things were very significant.

We're going to get to reapportionment later probably, but Illinois hadn't reapportioned itself from 1910 to 1960 or '58, or something like that, so during that period of time when all these schools were being built, not too

surprisingly, they all got built downstate, which is the same way with mental hospitals, prisons. All those things offer jobs. If you take a look at the map of Illinois, they're all downstate. You look at Chicago, you look at the ring counties; Lake County, DuPage County, McHenry County, Will County, they have hardly any public facilities. Lake County and Chicago had the branch of the University of Illinois of Chicago. Lake County to this day, still doesn't have a public university. DuPage County to this day, still doesn't have a public university. Will County has one public university, Governors State, a two-year capstone school that was created near Park Forest. But none of these places had these kind of things and that's just thinking about higher education, but the same thing is true when you look at the history. The same thing is true with all these other kind of facilities too, practically all of them were located downstate, where they became a source of sometimes patronage, certainly major employment. You know, a lot of subsidiary activities take place when you have those kind of facilities and you do that kind of thing.

So higher education was clearly one of the major accomplishments of the Kerner Administration, and it was operated very much like he operated other things. He picked people that he felt was very competent, he left it in their hands. If they needed help, he gave them help.

DePue: There's an obvious question though, after listing all these new institutions, and most of these are from the ground up. They just flat out didn't exist before.

Feurer: Sure.

DePue: That's expensive. Where did the money come from?

Feurer: Well, that's an interesting question. Some institutions were created because of bond issues that went to the public and were voted on by the public, under provisions of the, I believe Illinois Constitution, allows you to do that. But many of these were under Kerner; he created something called the Illinois Building Authority, and the Illinois Building Authority, which was a relatively small, pretty legally nimble agency with not a lot of employees. They sold bonds and Illinois started financing public improvements through the sale of bonds, the theory being that you're building these institutions for twenty years, why would you pay for them all in the first year, when you can spread the cost out, be fairly applied and assessed against the people who will be using them for the next twenty years. And so it was a predecessor to the Illinois Capital Development Board, which has become a pretty cumbersome operation. Under Kerner, it was a much smaller operation, but they sold a lot of bonds and that's where a lot of those things came from.

DePue: Okay. Because we know, and I think we talked about this a little bit last time, one of the things that did not happen during his administration was a creation

of an income tax. That was an issue that Governor Ogilvie was going to take up after the Kerner Administration.

Feurer: Well, that's true. Most of these buildings were not created as a result of the income tax either; they were practically all done through bonds. Virtually all capital projects come as a result of sale of revenue bonds from the state of Illinois.

DePue: But you listed a pretty impressive list of brand new institutions just a few minutes ago.

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: You could almost make the case that it practically doubled the amount of student population. I don't know if that would be…

Feurer: Well, I think that's a fair statement. More than half the students in public higher education institutions in the state of Illinois, for example, are in community colleges right now. Most of those didn't even exist before Governor Kerner came along and created them. I don't know if he's gotten as much credit as he deserves for what he's done for the higher education university system, but I think he's gotten quite a bit of credit from community college systems. They know that he was basically the father of the community college system in the state of Illinois.

DePue: The next area then, let's turn to, is mental health. Any accomplishments in that area?

Feurer: Well, my recollection is that we talked about that in some detail in our first meeting. You remember that he set up this system with zone clinics and centers, and named the former head of the American Psychiatric Association, Dr. Francis Gerty, to be the director. I think we talked about mental health and the Department of Children and Family Services.

DePue: I know we did the latter, so I'll take your word on that as well. Your memory is better than mine.

Feurer: But I will talk about a related one because it's interesting that it operated in some respects the same way, if I might, which is the Department of Public Aid, which has a very interesting history. Illinois was on a biennial system during the Kerner Administration, where one legislative session went on for two years, but normally they met only at odd numbered years and they only came back on even numbered years for special sessions, if they needed a special session. Well during the fifties, they needed a special session almost every even numbered year, invariably it was for public aid, because they had estimated a very favorable public aid outlook, but what happened is then it never turned out to be favorable and they would spend a lot more money on

public aid and they would have to come back and pass more money for public aid.

Public aid at that time was run by an Illinois public aid commission. In my judgment, it was probably run by a commission because of the fact it made it easier to insulate the legislature and the chief executive from what were perceived to be the failures of the public aid system, where they were spending maybe 25 percent of the state's budget on public aid matters. Kerner, when he took over, asked the legislature to create a department of public aid and take it away from the commission. That was one the Republicans were delighted to cede to, because they felt this was nothing but a millstone around his neck, because it had been such a disaster. Well, Kerner did what he did in the other areas; he named a professional to run it, a guy named Harold Swank, who worked for the Department of Public Aid and was known as Hap Swank.

Swank went to the legislature and they created an advisory commission to him there, and he persuaded the legislature to give him more money for staff and for retraining and resources like that and so forth. He says you know, if you want us to get rid of fraud and things like that, we need more people to supervise these people, and he persuaded the legislature to do that. One of the key persons he persuaded was a guy named William Carroll, who was a Republican Senator out of Park Ridge, I believe, who ran several suburban newspapers. Carroll became sold on doing this and they supported Swank in doing this, and Illinois suddenly started going down in their public aid expenditures. They started retraining people. They really didn't find that many people who were being fraudulent, but probably they found some, but what they found was they were able to, with this additional staff, train people. I think I recall the figure that if you trained a thousand people, got them off the public aid rolls, you're saving five million dollars or something, I mean it was very substantial. Everywhere else around the country, public aid is going up, and in Illinois, it starts going down.

In 1965, Governor Kerner gave a budget message where he talked about how he wanted to spend the budget, and after that, the stories were written, as they always are on the budget message, about what he was asking for and what he wanted to do. The most penetrating story was one by Tom Littlewood of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, who is the author of the definitive biography of Henry Horner. Littlewood pointed out that the biggest story in the budget message was the fact that public aid wasn't even mentioned, even though it was maybe twenty-five percent of the budget or a very high proportion, because public aid was now under such control and the track record was so great on that, that it no longer was an issue. It no longer was even a controversy, was something that people had spent a lot of time arguing about historically over the years.

During the entire Kerner Administration it was under Harold Swank and it was run exceptionally well. Once Swank left, after Kerner left, it got

away from us again and it's been a problem ever since again. During the time that Kerner was in office that was probably recognized by veteran observers around here as being a major success of Kerner. He got this public aid budget under control and he did very good things.

I remember running into a couple of people I knew, who had been caseworkers, who were caseworkers at the Department of Public Aid, after Kerner left office, and I asked them how things were going in public aid and they said how would we know, they've cut our staff way back so they could all be in Hawaii resting on the beach for all we know. We're lucky to keep up with the paperwork. Overworked, don't have enough people and of course, there was always high turnover in some of those stress jobs, caseworkers and things like that. But it was a major accomplishment during the Kerner Administration.

DePue: Which would you assess came first? This is a chicken and an egg question for you: economic development and falling employment numbers or improvements in public aid?

Feurer: Well, I think that helped. I think that helped because we were so successful. They all were put together and Kerner was really one of the early proponents of workforce preparation and training programs, through the Department of Employment Security and a lot of places. You would see the whole pattern as he went along, pushing for increasing employment opportunities and doing more things for more people.

DePue: Well, that was also the role of the community college system, was it not?

Feurer: Yes, it was. That was a major factor, I believe. A substantial percentage of people in rural community colleges never intended to even get an associate degree there. They're there for vocational training, for other kinds of things, to prepare them for the workforce. Sometimes they haven't gotten that kind of training in high school and it helps them out a lot.

DePue: Well here's another area, talk about building. How about an improvement over Illinois' transportation grid? Illinois had always been, because of its geographic location next to Lake Michigan, it had always been a transportation hub. Was Kerner able to do anything in that respect?

Feurer: Well, basically I think he left transportation to professionals, but he did do a couple things, and this was initially started by Stratton, I think. Illinois didn't make a mistake a lot of states made. They went in and did the urban areas first, and of course, that's the most expensive area to construct roads in. They were constructing the interstate highway system.

Now, I think basically Stratton and Daley had struck some deals on that, in doing a lot of the urban areas first, but Kerner continued that and did that first, so that basically, the states that waited to do the urban areas last,

spent much, much more money, because those urban areas were all growing and that left a lot more buildings and things you had to get rid of when you did do that. So he was very successful, I think, in implementing the interstate system. He got, for example, he got Interstate 72; Kerner was involved in getting that built. Well one reason is Illinois was making such good progress that you got the favorable addition; Interstate 72 wasn't part of the original interstate highway system when they did that.

He also had an interesting proposal which was shot down, called the Kerner Curve, and I don't know if you've ever heard of that. When he had gotten the Jones & Laughlin Plant to come to Hennepin, he promised he would get them a four lane highway running from Interstate 80, which crossed from the Quad Cities to the south of Chicago, right up Interstate 80. What Kerner wanted to do is he wanted to curve Interstate 55 at Lincoln, Illinois, and swing it up to the East Side of Peoria and go straight north, up to 80 or pass close to Hennepin, where it also would give what he considered to be a badly needed north-south access on the West Side of the state of Illinois and interstates.

Well, a coalition of Republicans banned together to stop that, Bill Harris of Pontiac, and David Davis of Bloomington, because they didn't want Interstate 55 to be curved around. Even though Kerner had promised he would see that the stretch between Lincoln and Interstate 80 was still brought up to interstate standards, they didn't do that and they were able to kill that. If that had happened, the present Interstate 39 quite probably would have run from Rockford down east to Peoria, and then curved over to Lincoln there, and now it's followed the route of Route 51 and goes right through Bloomington, which has three interstates going through there, of course. And so that was one of the interesting things.

I remember when Bill Harris was at a hearing I attended, where he asked one of the engineers at the Department of Highways why they wanted to build this road, because he had gotten permission from the Federal Government. They would have paid for this if it was an extra highway, they would have paid for this. He got permission from the Federal Government and they asked Bill Harris, who was a very good senator, Republican Senator, and I thought a very good senator, but he says why would you do this without any kind of studies or anything like that? And this highway engineer said, well Senator, we wouldn't do this without studies; we've done studies, we've got them in our office; we'd be glad to show you, they justify this, shows it's a good idea. But he says you have to remember, Senator, he said if we only built highways based on traffic surveys, he said there wouldn't be a mile of pavement in the state outside Cook County. Bill Harris didn't want to hear that and they went on to something else.

DePue: Okay.

Feurer: I will mention a couple of interesting stories on transportation, which aren't major league things, but it was interesting; for example, when Kerner took over as Governor of Illinois and they had all these signs around the state saying, "Welcome to Illinois, Governor William G. Stratton," he said take those down; I don't want my name up there, people know me. And he didn't use those signs; he didn't like those signs, having them all over every entrance to the state of Illinois.

The second thing I remember was in one of his special messages. I always said it just kind of shows the way Kerner would operate sometimes, to me and even internally, is that we were doing a special message on transportation to the General Assembly, and I was proofing that. I did a lot of that kind of thing, and I noticed that two years earlier we had carried a program in the state of Illinois and we asked them to pass a billboard control bill. The billboard control bill got a half a percent increase in your money for interstate highways if you passed it. It was one of Lady Bird Johnson's initiatives. It got killed in the General Assembly because the billboard industry was very strong. They donated a lot of billboards for candidates for office and things like that. So the next year it came over from the Department of Highways; it didn't have this in there any more. My recollection had been we had another chance to do this and get this bonus, which was about five million dollars or something. So I called the gentleman from the Department of Highways and he said yeah, we looked over there, but he said we understood that the governor really wasn't in favor of this and so we just didn't want to embarrass him by suggesting to put that up again. So I said, "Well, why don't you send that over to me anyway, and I'll just ask him."

So I asked the governor when I was going over the report, and so the governor says, "This is the last year?" I said that's right and he said, "I really wasn't in favor of this." I said that's right. He said, "Put it in there; it's the last year." Well, at the end of the legislative session, I was talking to Bob Maher, who was the governor's chief legislative guy, and I said, "Bob, I notice you passed that Billboard Control Bill." I said, "I thought that was probably very difficult." And he says, "Boy, was it difficult." He said, "Every week the governor said to me, how are we doing on that Billboard Control Bill?" (both laugh) The Governor never mentioned that to me again and I didn't do legislation, so I mean I wasn't involved in working with the legislature. The governor never mentioned that to me again but boy, he stayed above. He didn't like somebody saying that he didn't support something when he put it in there and everything.

DePue: So he was contrary enough just to do that?

Feurer: Well, I think he was very irritated that somebody would allege that he didn't really care about that bill, because he didn't like putting some in that he cared about. He knew some things weren't going to pass or weren't going to win. I thought that was interesting.

DePue: When we initially met, even before we got into the interview itself, I think you wanted to divide up his accomplishments and what he was trying to do between the executive and the legislative and the judicial branch. So the question here, is there anything else on the executive side that you think we need to be talking about?

Feurer: Can we stop for just a moment?

DePue: We sure can.

Feurer: I made a couple notes, so whenever you want to start we can start.

(pause in recording)

DePue: We're back after a very quick break and I'll turn it over to you to talk about some more executive accomplishments.

Feurer: And I'd like to talk about just executive patterns. One of the things that's interesting is the Department of Personnel, for example, of the state of Illinois handled all the employment. When Governor Stratton took office, he had a man named Bob Perz who was a former educator that had been very active in Republican politics who ran the Department of Personnel and had done a lot of work in patronage for the Republican Party.

DePue: I'm just going to interrupt you here. Is Department of Personnel another way of saying the patronage chief?

Feurer: Well, I would say under Governor Stratton that was probably true. I don't want to pick on Governor Stratton, because I was only around for one year when he was here, but it had the reputation for being the patronage chief. What I wanted to say is that when Governor Kerner took over, he appointed a woman named Maude Myers, who was a Republican and who had been Executive Director of the Illinois Civil Service Commission under Stratton, as Director of Personnel. She had a strong civil service background and [there were] very unhappy Democrats about that particular appointment. She ran what I believed to be a very straightforward state employment agency. There always are a certain number of jobs that are well recognized to be patronage jobs, and there were more of them in those days than there are now. Now, more and more things aren't that way, but there were always a certain number of positions at that time considered to be patronage jobs. But on the regular jobs, Kerner did not mess around with the semi-hire. You know, he would appoint new directors or new assistant directors or associate directors, but below that, he didn't tamper with those professionals, even though many of them had come up through the Republican ranks and Republican promotions when the Republican Party was running the state of Illinois. I think it was one of the greatest surprises for many people, Democrats and Republican alike, how he didn't tamper with that too much.

The former top official in Sangamon County Republican Party just told me a couple months ago, he was talking about one of his very veteran precinct committeemen and this precinct committeeman said, you know, that last good governor we had in the state was Otto Kerner, and he was impressed because they hadn't tampered—he hadn't played games with, you know, job descriptions and those kind of things and doing that. But this Maude Myers ran the Department of Personnel for a long time while Kerner was in and he let her run it. She came out of the civil service merit board system or whatever it was; that's where she had worked.

I also wanted to point out the Department of Revenue was an interesting case. He had named Ted Isaacs, his campaign manager, to be the Director of the Department of Revenue. Isaacs kept a couple of very top people at the Department of Revenue; a man named Willard Ice and a woman named Catherine Hanselman who had been top executives in that department under Stratton. That department put together a bunch of legislation to close what were considered to be loopholes in the state of Illinois' enforcement of the sales tax. It was widely credited with avoiding any necessity to have a tax increase during the first two years of Kerner's term because of what Isaacs had done in the Department of Revenue. You recall, of course, Isaacs got in trouble in other kinds of things, but they never were in the Department of Revenue, so far as I know, which of course is a very, potentially rich source of problems if you were going to get involved in something illegal, the major tax collection agency in the state of Illinois.

I also wanted to mention to you a little about recreational work, because most of the recreational facilities came out of the Department of Conservation at that time, and Kerner appointed a man named William Lodge, who as I recall was from Monticello, Illinois, and had been head of a sportsman's group or something, hunting and fishing and matters like that, as Director of the Department of Conservation. Conservation also took care of the recreational facilities and Kerner was very big on doing things on recreational facilities.

For example, on the recreational facilities, there was a corps of engineers' project which were developing new lakes in Shelbyville and Carlisle. But in conjunction with that, Illinois built all sorts of parks and other facilities along those two lakes. Illinois on its own developed Rend Lake, which is down just off Interstate 57, north of Marion, Illinois, and a big new recreational facility there. Under Kerner they developed Illinois Beach State Park, which is almost an urban park, located up near Waukegan, around a couple of nuclear power plants, but became a brand new state park. They developed the Cahokia Mounds State Park, across from St. Louis, at that same time.

You know, he pushed hard to increase the services of some of the existing historic areas. In conjunction with those kind of things, he also, on

tourism, I should mention, he first of all shepherded the development of the Lincoln Home, which had been a state facility, to the Federal Government and became the only national park in the state of Illinois. There's a large national forest, the Shawnee National Forest in Southern Illinois, but there was no other national park in the state of Illinois except this four block square area around the Lincoln Home, but which is a major asset to tourism in the state of Illinois. And then he did the reconstruction of the old State Capitol. You may recall that the Old State Capitol, which is in Downtown Springfield, was once the Sangamon County Building. And they had lifted the entire State Capitol up in the air and built a third floor underneath it, so it was a three story building. So when they changed back to a museum to become the Old State Capitol, they took it apart block by block, removed that bottom story and then put it back together as the Old State Capitol. And of course, it also is now a major leading site for tourism in the state of Illinois.

DePue: I think it's one of the more curious construction feats that we've had, taking the whole thing, block by block, out to the state park and building a huge parking lot and then the facility for the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, and then putting the [Old] State Capitol on top of it again.

Feurer: Yes, you're right. And they had to mark every brick. It's an interesting historic story, because a couple of the architects are still around who did that and it's a really interesting story on how they did that.

I wanted to talk to you a little about human rights, because many people seem to be, I suppose, surprised at his choice to head the National Commission on Civil Disorders, which became known as the Kerner Commission.

DePue: Well, I was holding off on talking about that under the legislative area. Is it more fitting under the executive branch, do you think?

Feurer: Well, in many ways I think it is. I thought I'd talk about it now that I'm thinking about it, if I can.

DePue: Sure.

Feurer: I'm not going to talk about the national commission unless you ask me about that, but just as a prelude to it, why he probably was a very good choice for that. Before he was elected, while he was serving, I think, as county judge. He was active in the Boy Scouts of America. He was involved in the reorganization of the Boy Scouts of America. In Chicago they had like black Boy Scouts troops and white Boy Scout troops. After he finished his reorganization, they didn't have black and white Boy Scouts. They had black and white Boy Scouts, but they didn't have ones that were just devoted to blacks and ones that were devoted to whites. He had weighed in very early on that.

He also was supervisor for the reorganization of the National Guard, and the Illinois National Guard had a higher percentage of minorities than any other National Guard in the country. Now, it wasn't a huge percent, it was like 5 percent or something like that, but it was higher than any other state in the union where National Guards tend to be. But particularly in the older days, it would be more of a country club kind of thing almost. Illinois had a higher percentage of minorities than the country.

When he got to Springfield, he pushed early for the passage of the Fair Employment Practices Commission, which was eventually passed and which handled complaints on discrimination of employment. It was a controversial issue; it wasn't particularly popular with a lot of people, but he got that done.

He pushed for open housing, which he never got done during his entire administration. An even more controversial issue, but every two years in the state of the state message, he asked for them to pass an open housing bill or a fair housing bill. He tried to do that because he was very worried about discrimination in housing.

He was an early supporter of the eighteen-year-olds to vote. He felt if they went in the service, they ought to be able to vote. He pushed that a number of times, too.

One interesting anecdote that has to do with that is when Governor Kerner was in office, fairly early in his administration, a group of fifty or so business leaders, two of their representatives came to see him in Springfield to ask if they could have a governor's prayer breakfast every year. He said he'd be happy to do that and support it and appear. When they had it, they would schedule a time he could come and it was part of the national prayer breakfast movement.

They asked him if there's any restrictions and well, he said, he would like to see Illinois residents, if possible. There were twelve or thirteen million people in Illinois, and he thought he could get good speakers from Illinois; it would be very helpful if he had other speakers there from Illinois when he spoke, in which they did, but he left office seven years later. And this committee would sell the tickets and market them, and it was fifty, sixty people and it had some rotation. I served as liaison of that, so that's why I happen to know this story. They always had a series of committee meetings before the coming one to discuss the arrangements and the speaker and how they handled the sale of the tickets. And then they always had one meeting afterwards, where they came to discuss how it went and could they do anything better next year and that kind of thing.

They invited Governor Kerner to come to that final meeting the last time and gave him a Bible signed by everybody in the Prayer Breakfast Committee, which he appreciated, and they asked him if he had any

suggestions. He said well, as a matter of fact, he says, I do. He said you know, I've lived in Springfield much of my life, my children have gone to school here, I'm involved in churches here and all this. He says it's always occurred to me that this was a very high powered committee who could do wonderful things. He said we're in the city of Lincoln and he says people still can't join certain country clubs because of their color or their religion, can't live in certain areas of the city because of their color or their religion. He said, I'd just like to see the people of this committee, who are so influential, if they couldn't get together and try to do something about some of these social things, which I would see as being very consistent with your mission of the Prayer Breakfast Committee. I thought that was a very interesting comment. I mean he could have easily accepted the Bible and said thanks for all your good help, but he didn't do that. Now they never did anything as a result of this, still haven't done anything as a result of that except run their prayer breakfast. But I mean I was struck by the fact that from beginning to end, he'd been very committed to the concept of human rights and human relations. He never made a bunch of wild speeches about it or waved his arms or made accusations, but he pushed that all the time.

DePue: In the area, now that we're talking about this, this is a period in American history where the civil rights movement was very active at that time, and you have a lot of things going on in Chicago and a lot of out migration from the Chicago neighborhoods.

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: Did some of his view on open housing/open occupancy get on the wrong side of the Daley Administration?

Feurer: Well, if it did it was never apparent to me. The city of Chicago was very worried about panic peddling, you know, which would happen. You get one black family on a new block and immediately there was a group of realtors that would swing in there and try to drive everybody else out and sell it, and so people would move. Kerner felt that if you had true, fair open housing that wouldn't happen. So he felt that that was one of the answers to the problems that were created by that, but I was never aware of any. Kerner himself, I heard him ask this two or three times, about relations with the city of Chicago and he says, I talk to the Mayor of Chicago about one tenth of the number of times that I talk to the Mayor of Springfield and other mayors, he said they each did their thing.

I'll tell you an interesting story which I didn't see all of, but which I could read one time. I normally didn't get involved in legislation, but one time, I must have been the only one around, because there was nobody else involved in this. Governor Kerner called down John Touhy, who was the Speaker of the House for Chicago, and Arthur McGloon, who was the Leader of the Senate, and Touhy was a very strong follower of Mayor Daley, as was

McGloon. McGloon only had nineteen votes out of fifty-eight in the Senate or something.

DePue: So he was the Minority Leader.

Feurer: So he was the Minority Leader, a Democrat, while Touhy had 118 votes as a result of the long ballot and, you know, he could pass anything he wanted to, because with 118 votes, that's doing whatever he wanted to do. But Kerner had some really, fairly technical bill, and he said he needed their support on it, needed it for the Department of Transportation, whatever it was. And then they finished Touhy said "Governor," he said, "We'd like to help you on this but we just can't do it." He said that hurts the city of Chicago, he says you know, I really have my major obligations to Chicago, I just can't do that. I would have to tell the Mayor this—you know, if this hurts us, we just can't, I'm sorry I can't help you. So Governor Kerner says well, I don't think it hurts the city of Chicago at all. He said John, he says—Jack, I think it's Jack—you know, do you want to explain why. I don't think Touhy figured it out, but he said, no it hurts and I just can't do it. So Kerner said well, I know you have to get back and said, why don't we come back here at 4:00, I'd like to talk to you a little bit more; I want to show you some other things. Touhy said well, out of respect for you as governor we'll come back, but we're not going to be able to help you on this.

So they left and Governor Kerner says to me, would you have Edna—who was his secretary—get Mayor Daley on the phone. So I said okay and I left; I didn't stay in the room, but I came back for the 4:00 meeting. They walked in and John Touhy says, "Governor, I was thinking about what you said." So he says, I called the mayor and I said mayor, I said the governor really needs this one and as a personal favor to me. I'd appreciate it if you would support the governor, even if it does hurt the city of Chicago. The mayor said Jack, if you think that's what's needed, then you tell the governor we'll support him in that. So Kerner said, well I'm glad you worked that out and so forth. McGloon looked very skeptical about the whole thing. They walked out and that was taken care of. I mean that's very much how they operate.

If you asked me what happened, I think I know what happened. I never asked Governor Kerner what happened, but I think I know what happened. I think Daley made an excuse to call Touhy, asked him how things were going, this came up and I think Daley told him to support the governor on that. But Daley knew that Kerner isn't going to make him look bad to Touhy. He doesn't want Touhy getting upset with the mayor and everything and Kerner is willing to take the hit and you know, Touhy walked out thinking he really sold the bill of goods on that. Kerner knew better, I think McGloon knew better, I know Daley knew better, but I think that's sort of the way they operated. They didn't try to step on each others' toes or do anything like that. It's just an interesting little vignette as to exactly what happens and how

things sometimes would happen, but Kerner didn't have to make those calls very often and Daley left Illinois to Kerner and Kerner left Chicago pretty much I think to Daley.

Kerner said one time, he was asked about what he thought about Daley or something, and Kerner said, I think the toughest job in this country is President of the United States. He said, the second toughest job is the mayor of New York, the third toughest job is the mayor of Chicago. I thought that was an interesting comment.

DePue: I don't know if you know the answer to this. This is a little bit of speculation perhaps. Kerner grew up the son of Otto Kerner, Sr., who was of Czech background; so was Anton Cermak. They both were bohemian background in that respect. But I know that Kerner, Sr. moved the family to Oak Park, in part to get to a better school district, and now you're into a completely different neighborhood. Was that at all a factor do you think, in Kerner's support for open housing initiatives, his own personal experiences?

Feurer: I don't think so. I just think that was something that he philosophically believed in. I think that movement though, to Park River Forest, was Otto Kerner, Sr. really wanting to separate himself from being one of these guys who was going to be in the same precinct all his life or anything else. Otto Kerner, Sr. was never a precinct worker either.

DePue: So he wanted to separate himself a little bit from Cermak?

Feurer: Well, I don't know if so much from Cermak. I think he wanted to separate himself from the party activities and the fairs and the organization, I think that's right. He was drafted back into the party most of the time, the senior, very much like Kerner was who the party reached out and tapped him because they needed somebody that had the record of some independence and had their own identity. I think Kerner, Sr. had that, I think Kerner, Jr. had that; they're very much alike in that respect. If the Democratic Party could get 80 percent of the votes for governor, no matter who they nominated, I don't think they would ever nominate Otto Kerner. They would have nominated one of the loyal guys who has worked his way up from precinct committeeman probably, but those aren't the kind of people you can get elected.

DePue: Do you know what Kerner's views were about the national civil rights movement, the one that was being led at that time by Martin Luther King?

Feurer: His views came out much more clearly when he was with the National Commission on Civil Disorders, of course. I think he was supportive but he was never leading any marches or anything like that. He was never a victim of those marches either. I mean he had a track record, as I just went through, of supporting human rights activities, and so he was not unpopular with the people who were leading those marches. He wasn't one that was a target.

DePue: Do you recall, I believe it was 1963, that they had to call out the National Guard because of some riots in Chicago?

Feurer: I do remember that.

DePue: In fact, I think maybe those riots had more to do with the Hispanic population at that time even, than the African Americans.

Feurer: Well I'm not sure. I don't remember that. There was a National Guard General named [Richard] Dunn from Bloomington, Illinois, who was a lawyer, handled that, I think was in charge of taking it up there and he supposedly did an excellent job. Kerner was a good friend of Dunn's because, of course, they both had a National Guard background. He had great respect for him. Dunn was a very prominent lawyer, represented a number of higher education institutions.

DePue: Okay. Let's go back and talk a little bit about legislative issues. I wanted to start with something that maybe the governor wasn't closely involved with but certainly he lived in Illinois, so he got to experience the redistricting challenges that the state had at the beginning of the 1960s, the one that ended up with the bed sheet ballot. So I'll kind of turn it over to you and let you kind of sketch that out for us a little bit, if you can.

Feurer: Well, I should remember the details of that more than I do, and I'm not comfortable that I can accurately portray exactly what happened on that. But what happened, of course, as I recall, is in 1910, Illinois stopped reapportioning even though the constitution called for it every ten years.

DePue: You're talking about the U.S. Constitution?

Feurer: Well, the Illinois Constitution called for it every ten years I believe.

DePue: Okay.

Feurer: But they just didn't do it and people would sue and try to force reapportionment. Well, what happened is that the Supreme Court would say that's a political thicket and we're staying out of this. It eventually got so bad, so many people and so many states were ignoring this that the Supreme Court just said we've got to get involved in this and they can't do this any more. So they reapportioned under Stratton for the first time and what they did, as I recall, is they reapportioned by area, so that the Republicans would continue to dominate the Senate, but they would reapportion by population in the House, which at that time had 177 members. Well, a year later or something, the Supreme Court or somebody threw out the Senate one and said you can't do that, it's got to be by population, and then they had to change it. It became an issue.

Kerner vetoed the bill that was eventually passed, as I recall, and they wound up with the bed sheet ballot, which they had 118 people running for each party, when everybody was gaining those well-known people. And so for one year, you had a legislature where John Touhy was the Speaker of the House, where he had 118 votes or two-thirds of the votes in the House. But you know, I don't remember the ins and outs of those details of just exactly how that happened.

When I was thinking back, I was thinking that there comes a time when they said if you have four in each party and you can't reach agreement, they would draw lots to see who the fifth was. And I had thought that happened under Kerner, but I was wrong about that; that happened later I think. I think that happened after. I think that was part of the new constitution in '70, and, I think, that was done after that. So I'm not as familiar with that as I should be.

DePue: Okay, okay.

Feurer: At that time, the legislature was mainly biennial sessions, and so they had a lot of legislation in the odd numbered years and some legislation sometimes, you know in the even numbered years. The legislature was very different then than it is now, for a number of reasons. One of the major reasons, Kerner did have a lot to do indirectly with one of the major changes in the legislature. At that time, they had special commissions, normally House and Senate commissions, sometimes with public members. They would have one for traffic laws and they'd have one for pensions and they'd have one for criminal law maybe, and they'd have one for school problems, a commission, and they had a budgetary commission. These commissions seemed to enforce a little civility in those days, because they had members of both the House and the Senate, and they'd sort of hash these things out, and it would be common to say that you'd have three members of the majority party and two members of the minority party from each House serve on maybe a ten member commission and so forth. The commissions often had staffs that they hired, either part-time or full-time, and they were the source of much of the input you'd have. So if something came up that was technical and wasn't political and had to do with pensions, you'd better have the endorsement of the Pension Laws Commission or it wasn't going anywhere. That was very customary as the way they operated.

Well, in '64, the Republican House teamed up with the Democrats to throw out Everett Peters as head of the Budgetary Commission.

DePue: What was the name?

Feurer: Everett Peters. He was the Chair of the Budgetary Committee. He's the one I mentioned earlier, who was also the U of I spokesman. They threw him out and named a member of the House. That had to do with an intra-Republican Party feud but anyway, when they threw him out, then Russell Arrington, who

was the head of the Senate at that time, started building up staff, and they started getting all these staffs for the legislature. Previously, they had very small staffs for the legislature. They just started developing staff for all the committees and all the committees had staffs and they got bigger and bigger, and now the staffs do much of the work and they take a leave of absence, do much of the political work that they do for these legislators and everything. Kerner was indirectly responsible for that when he acceded to the Democrats combining with the Republican House, to prorogue the legislature. He terminated the legislative session and they went home and the Republicans got mad, and so the feeling seemed to change to some extent. It resulted in creation of the staffing system for the legislature in some respects, but it as a direct result of Kerner proroguing the legislature, I think. You know, the staffing was part of the Republican response to doing that.

In Kerner's term, they probably had twenty-five hundred bills every two years that would maybe be passed or considered. I think if I recall, maybe they'd pass many-hundred bills. Kerner probably vetoed a substantial percentage of them. A lot of them would be for expenditures and new fiscal projects and things like that, so he had a lot of vetoes. He vetoed a lot of bills.

DePue: Did he have a line item veto at that time?

Feurer: No, no he didn't. He had an effect on the legislature also, as he had called for a new revenue article for the Illinois Constitution, which was very restrictive. He felt that it should be broader based, the revenue article, and he called for a new revenue article for a couple terms and hadn't had any luck, and by '67, he was urging a Constitutional Conventional. I think he was probably the first guy that was really asking for a Constitutional Convention, and, of course, by 1970 they did have a Constitutional Convention.

DePue: I think we talked about that very briefly last time as well. How would you characterize his relationship with the legislature, and let me preface it by this one? In the House, you've got Paul Powell, at least for the first few years that he's there, and Paul Powell, one of his famous quotes—for a colorful guy who's got a lot of famous quotes—I'm sure you remember this one, "I can smell meat a 'cooking."

Feurer: Yeah.

DePue: In other words, patronage, it's time to cash in on patronage. We've had Stratton for eight years, now we can get some patronage.

Feurer: Well, a lot of Democrats had that attitude. I mean Paul Powell wasn't the only one that thought that. Every county chairman in the state of Illinois who was a Democrat had been on the outs and thought he or she should get a job and probably all their friends and relatives too. So the patronage assistant to Governor Kerner, who handled those kind of jobs, was a guy named George

Bosem who had done that for Stevenson and had a perfect personality for that. But I mean there was a constant line of people seeking jobs and the ones that had jobs were in the line seeking better jobs.

DePue: Well, I thought that's what you were talking about with Maude Myers, that she was that position.

Feurer: No, no. Maude was the Director of the State Department of Personnel that handled all the civil service exams, and those jobs were called personnel code positions. That's why they would call them code departments, the governor would call it code departments because they were under the personnel code, and they governed many kinds of technical jobs, professional jobs. Most of those kind of jobs were handled there. So the kind of people who were lined up to see George Bosem were people who were looking for jobs that maybe didn't require that many skills but there were fewer of those jobs and long lines of people who wanted to do those kinds of things. But actually Kerner'a relationship with the legislature was pretty good. GOP legislators didn't think, I think, that Kerner was a master politician, which as a result meant they didn't exactly fear him and they passed a lot more legislation than he would have gotten if they thought he was a master politician. He didn't have to do a lot of bargaining. He went in on the merits and tried to sell what he had and he sold an awful lot of that stuff, and things were going so well in the state that it was pretty hard for anybody to get too upset. I mean the economy was growing, unemployment was going down, he was widely praised for a lot of these programs that had been put in; the legislature was getting its share of praise for having participated in many of these things. But you would never have mistaken Kerner for a legislator; I mean he was not a wheeler and dealer you know, the give and take that you do with those kind of things. But he solved some real problems for them.

One of them: For example for years, the utilities came in there fighting the rural electric co-ops, because as the cities expanded the utilities wanted to keep serving those people. Co-ops would say no, those are in our area now; we do it. Pretty soon, just like I said with higher education, people were getting solicited to support one side or the other and they were finding those choices impacting their own legislation. Legislators would get involved in a fight they didn't know much about and they don't care much about.

Kerner sent Bob Maher, who was his top legislative assistant, to meet with the utilities and the co-ops, and basically told him not to let them out of the room until they get some sort of agreement. And Bob Maher, that's exactly what he did. I think he probably intimated that the first one that leaves this room will be on the losing side, so nobody left the room and they finally put together an agreement as to how they would handle disputes, which they both predicted would last a year or two. Lobbyists from both sides told me this over the last year or two, that it lasted all through the Kerner Administration and so far as I knew, it's still in place. It was technical and I

didn't understand it, but I mean he just sent somebody there. He got Maher and Maher, who was a former legislator, just wouldn't let them quit talking. Similarly, when the community college system was created, there was some contentious wrangling among the legislators. But my recollection is that at the end of the day, there was not a negative vote cast by any legislator and everyone got lots of credit.

DePue: Was Kerner the kind of guy who would go down and do the glad-handing and sit with the legislators? Jim Thompson had the reputation of going down and putting his feet up on the desk and just getting down with them.

Feurer: No. No, Kerner never was like that. Kerner was not like that, but Kerner was always very accessible to any legislator that wanted to meet with him. Anybody who wanted to meet with him, Kerner made himself very accessible, and Kerner never argued with people or did things. I heard a former mayor of Peoria speaking to a class I attended one time, who didn't know I had anything to do with Kerner, and he was asking about Governor Kerner. This mayor, who was a Republican, said that Governor Kerner was one of the classiest guys he ever met, a good listener, interested, asked you informative questions when you met with him, when you needed something. He goes through the whole thing and he says, it was just a wonderful environment. He says about fifteen minutes after you were out of there, you realized you didn't get what you want, he says, but it was all nice and pleasant and courteous and respectful and everything. He said it's just amazing to me, you know, I did that three or four times, happened to me every time he says. And then he said, and if we did get what we wanted, you suspected that he probably was going to do that anyway. He scarcely ever told people no when they came to see them, even though he knew it was going to be no and they really knew it was going to be no. But he would listen to him, take it under advisement, and then give them a very courteous letter later, oh we just can't do this or that.

He never embarrassed people, he would never say this is the dumbest idea I ever heard in my life; he never did those kind of things at all. He was always very gracious to people when he did those kind of things. I never even heard him raise his voice at anything. He was kind of reserved, but he was very, very pleasant That was sort of his style.

DePue: Would you say then, he was much more comfortable in the skin of an executive than as a legislator? He didn't have a lot of experience going into the job as a legislator.

Feurer: Yes, I think that's fair to say, but it never bothered him to talk to legislators. I think some governors, Governor Edgar, for example, who had been a legislator and an intern, I never thought Governor Edgar seemed very comfortable with legislators. He seemed very comfortable with being an executive. I never thought Kerner looked uncomfortable with legislators, but

he wasn't going to go down there and go out for a drink with the boys, he didn't do that kind of thing; that just wasn't his style.

DePue: How about having folks over to the mansion, parties and functions at the mansion?

Feurer: He would do those kind of things. I remember sometimes because it probably was a good idea politically to do that. I said he didn't grow up as a member of a political organization, but he'd been around a long time and he'd been around political organizations and he knew the kind of things you needed to do and things you didn't. His wife probably knew even more, because she was Anton Cermak's daughter. She was very, very sharp and very, very savvy in those kind of things.

I remember… I believe this was around Christmas of '63 but I'm not sure I've got this straight. There was a local country club called Oak Crest County Club, a small country club near Springfield, and he invited the press out there for just like a little Christmas buffet or something, and they all came there. Afterwards they were sitting around talking and one of the press people says, Governor, he says you know you've been in office three years—I don't remember the period of time, but say he'd gone three years or whatever it is—not having any kind of scandals in office. He said, "We haven't had any governor go that long and not have a scandal in our recent memory. What do you attribute that to?" And Kerner says, I'd like to attribute that to my inspirational leadership and my great desire for honesty and leading by example, but he said I really attribute it to sheer luck. He said, "I've got fifteen hundred people I appoint to various positions, a lot of them I don't even know. The ones I know maybe never had this kind of responsibility before. You never know what's going to happen with these things. You do your best to try to keep them straight.

Not too long after that, the Ted Isaacs envelope story broke. I was certainly delighted with Kerner not seeing fit to praise himself and break his arm patting his own back, because he was quite candid about that. He knew that you're at the mercy of the people who work for you in many respects.

DePue: Well, that's just the kind of comment if he had done that, that would have made the journalists dig even deeper.

Feurer: Oh, it really would have, it really would have, probably.

DePue: Some of your conversation though, especially on his relationship with legislators and mayors and other people, it almost sounds like it's more of a judicial temperament than it is an executive temperament.

Feurer: Well, I thought he had a good judicial temperament, yes you're right. In fact, let me briefly talk about—we talked about the executive branch and we talked about the legislative branch somewhat. But let me talk about the judicial

branch, because if you recall that during Kerner's administration is when they passed the new judicial article, and they took the judges out of direct elections after their first time running. You ran against your record, which itself is a compromise. That never would have passed without Governor Kerner. Democrats in Chicago, particularly, did not like that legislation.

DePue: I think you probably need to give us a little bit more background on that.

Feurer: Well, what happened is that the judiciary in Illinois, until the 1960s, was chosen by a direct election. So what happens, of course, when you got a ballot that had ten million judges on it, the strongest influence among your precinct committeemen came in and gave each voter a list and said these are the ones you punch, and that's what you do. And the judges, of course, were always beholden to political parties; the Republicans downstate, Democrats in Chicago, and they tended to be one-party benches in many respects, too.

DePue: And a fair number of the political corruption trials that had occurred in Illinois, at least in that period I know, dealt with judges, I believe.

Feurer: Some did, some did. The Illinois State Bar Association really took the lead in trying to change that system, and they were really shooting for something like what's called the Missouri Plan, where you had an independent commission, supposedly, that appointed the judges. The question came up, who determines who is a member of the independent commission, and that commission is not going to be independent because somebody has got to name them, which turned out to be a deal breaker on the Missouri Plan, probably. So they basically created this system in which they said you run in opposition to other people the first time around. After that you run against your record and if you don't get a certain percentage of the vote, saying that they think you've done a good job, yes votes, then you're going to have to run again against opposition following that. So that's the plan we've had ever since and we've done it.

A lot of the Democrats didn't like it in Chicago, and a lot of Republicans didn't like it downstate. There were a lot of legislators who saw themselves as losing an important source of support you know, particularly if they were in a one party—most of downstate was Republican, except for Rock Island and down around East St. Louis and Belleville, in that area. Most of Chicago was Democratic. So political parties controlled the judiciary to some extent. It wasn't uncommon to have a judge who got out of line, got a little too independent and might be out the door at the next election. He might not even be endorsed by his party the next time around.

Most people think that that system has probably worked pretty well. I think that most people think the judges we have now are better quality than the ones we had before probably.

DePue: I know that the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, the progressive wing would prefer to have merit selection of judges though.

Feurer: Yes, they would.

DePue: This judicial article, then, is a compromise?

Feurer: Yes, it was a compromise. The argument was that the Missouri Plan was merit selection, but then there was always the great question of who appoints—who is the commission that appoints them, how are they selected, what gets them to be so damn meritorious? (chuckles) And no one ever gave a satisfactory answer, satisfactory at least to many of the opponents. The compromise passed the legislature. It had to go to the legislature and then go on the ballot, and it passed pretty narrowly in the legislature. I mean at one point it looked like it wasn't going to pass. The Bar Association rushed in and saved it. But Kerner basically persuaded, I think, the Chicago Democrats to go along with it.

DePue: So is that how the vote broke down, the Democrats supported it and the Republicans didn't?

Feurer: No, it was more of a marble cake. I mean it wasn't fair to say that's quite true. You remember in those days, they still had cumulative voting, and so there were a lot of people who were minority people who were independent voters, and a lot of those people tended to support it and some did not, too. So I don't think you could type it quite that easily.

DePue: This might put you a little bit on the spot, but did this judicial article pass after you had the bed sheet ballot where you had the dominance of the House at least, by the Democrats?

Feurer: No, it passed the legislature. It passed either in '61 or '63.

DePue: Okay, so prior to that time.

Feurer: So that was prior to that time, yes.

DePue: Okay. A little bit different subject but certainly in the Judicial area, I think. Some of the governor's—any governor's—more difficult decisions to make is when facing an execution of a criminal. And in this case, I think Paul Crump was probably the most prominent one that he had to deal with, if not the only one.

Feurer: Sure, sure, and it wasn't the only one. That's covered very exhaustively in the book by Barnhart and Schlickman. I believe that all those took place before I went to work for the governor. I think those took place in his first three years. I went to work for him about three years after he took office or something.

DePue: Okay. Anything else on the Judiciary you'd like to address?

Feurer: No. One of the other things that passed with his strong support was a new criminal code, which updated the criminal code, but that again was something that was done by the Illinois State Bar Association special committees. The ISBA went to the legislature and the governor and the governor strongly supported that and urged its passage and so it passed with little difficulty.

DePue: Would he have been termed a law-and-order governor? To a certain extent he had the credentials. He had a judicial background; he was also in the National Guard. Normally those things would be identified with, or they could be at least.

Feurer: Sure, sure. He was in favor of humane imprisonment and so forth, and he was in favor of attempts at redemption for prisoners. He believed in more than just punishment for people who went to prison. In law enforcement areas, he was active in urging the passage of the Victims Compensation Fund, for example, to compensate victims of crimes, things like that. I've lost track of whether that passed while he was in or that passed later, but that was one of the things that he urged upon the legislature.

DePue: I think what I'd like to do today is to finish off with some more stylistic things here or maybe some more personal areas, as well. We're going to have another session here if that's okay with you, Bill.

Feurer: That's okay.

DePue: A lot of discussion in recent governors is whether or not they were Springfield governors or Chicago governors, and where they spent the bulk of their time. What was the case for Kerner?

Feurer: Kerner was a Springfield governor. He was from Chicago, but he lived in Springfield, considered Springfield his home; he sent his kids to school in Springfield. He joined the church in Springfield; he played golf at the Springfield clubs. He was active in the Springfield community, you know. He would go to a Cub Scout Troop to help them swear in their new honorees. Somebody told me one time they saw him and they said these people were used to seeing the governor stay around for the rest of the program. He stood there two hours, leaned against the wall, watching the program, and eventually it was his turn. Normally, if you've got a governor going to a Cub Scout pack, you'd put him on so he'd get in and get out, but he seemed absorbed and interested. He was the only governor that was ever named a First Citizen of Springfield, an award sponsored by the Copley newspapers, the only one I think was ever even probably seriously considered.

When he got out of prison, he got cancer. Of course, he was probably only in prison for six months or something; he got cancer and he was let out. They had a welcome home party for him at the St. Nick Hotel in Springfield.

As I recall, he had like fifteen hundred people there and they sold out tickets in two or three days. I mean, he was extremely popular in Springfield. I think it was probably a lift for him, doing those kinds of things. He did things like the prayer breakfast, which was strictly a Springfield operation.

One of the other interesting things he did, which I probably wouldn't remember except it now comes to mind, is he also was involved in the creation of what's called the Lincoln Academy, and that's a group that gets together and honors distinguished Illinoisans every year with awards, kind of modeled after the Nobel Prizes, a pocket sized version of the Nobel Prizes. They give them awards, they bring in people, and they have ceremonies, a lot of highly ranked educators, sometimes society—not the usual kind of people. He'd do that. It's still going on and he created that and at the time he did that. But he was a Springfieldian.

I'll tell you just a couple of interesting stories that I thought were interesting. He was not a comedian. I never heard him tell a joke in his life. He may have told jokes but if he did, he maybe did them socially and we weren't around with him socially. But I was around him when he was in social moments and he didn't tell jokes in speeches; he wasn't that kind of person. But he had a pretty good sense of humor, but people didn't tell him jokes either; he just seemed so dignified, I think, in some respect. I didn't hear people, but maybe people told him jokes, but every once in a while he would do something.

One time they had a one shot antelope hunt in Wyoming, I think it was, and they would invite dignitaries and he was invited to go out there. He liked to hunt. He was a hunter. It turns out there were six or seven dignitaries of various kinds and they were all Republican except him. Well, one of them got an antelope, it wasn't Otto Kerner, and they asked him about it later and he said well, he had done better. He said when this antelope ran by, he says he saw a Democrat and was so shocked he stopped dead and one of the Republicans shot him. (both laugh) But he wouldn't normally do that.

I was with him one time in a hospital in Morris, Illinois, he was going to visit some friend of his. He wouldn't normally be in Morris, Illinois. He gets in the elevator of the hospital and a woman gets on and looked over at him once and looked at him twice and says, "You know, you look just like Governor Kerner." He said, "People are always telling me that." He never did identify himself.

One of the stories I always got a kick out of, his chauffer told me, who was a state policeman, a state policeman corporal. He said that they were going to St. Louis, and Governor Kerner said he'd like to drive, because he didn't get to drive; he was driven most of the time, of course, by the state police. And so he drove and this corporal was next to him and they're heading towards St. Louis, and some car roars by them with Missouri plates, just going

a mile a minute, you know, or more than a mile a minute, going ninety miles an hour probably. The corporal said Governor Kerner was so upset, he speeds up and he catches up with this car and has the corporal in his uniform, wave down the Missouri motorist. Kerner gets out and walks back to him and the corporal is following behind him, not sure whether he's supposed to write him a ticket or what, and Governor Kerner says to the motorist, "You know, you're a guest of the state of Illinois. When you're here, I would be very appreciative if you would observe our laws and our customs. Those speed limits are there for a reason, they stabilize and help people and save lives." And he chews him out in a very dignified way and goes back and gets in the car and drives off. This corporal says he's pretty sure this guy had no idea he had just been chewed out by the Governor of the State of Illinois. (both laugh)

Kerner never expected people to call him every day and get permission for everything they did or even tell them, when they were directors. He expected them to run the departments but he didn't expect to read about it in the *Chicago Tribune* either, if something came up.

I remember one story with William Lodge, his Director of Conservation; they had trouble over in Cass County, near Beardstown, because there were a lot of fishermen allegedly breaking the game laws; hunting and fishing out of season, setting up illegal kinds of fishing and everything else. One game warden over there hid his car in the woods somewhere and staked out a place he thought he'd catch somebody, and stayed all night and nothing happened, so he went back to his car. His car had been burned up. Well, the word on the street was, everybody knew who did it and the guy was given a lot of drinks at the local bars. Lodge sent virtually every game warden in the state over to Cass County for the next six weeks and you couldn't go twenty feet without running into a game warden. He got motel rooms, put them in there. He never announced it, it never was in the paper, never said anything. People in Cass County sure knew about it though, and I was pretty sure that guy didn't get any more drinks for awhile. But I mean that Lodge operated very much like Otto Kerner would have operated when he did that kind of thing.

I think you asked me in the first meeting, words that would describe Kerner, and I probably gave you some words I think, but it occurred to me later that I probably should have also said style and courage. Courage is one that you didn't normally associate perhaps with him, because he was quiet, didn't make a lot of noise. But he showed a great deal of personal courage, as they pointed out in the Schlickman book. He won the highest award that the Army could give for peaceful action when he jumped in the water and swam out and saved some enlisted man who had been swept out by the tide, off of, I think it was Sicily, and rescued this man and got this award. I never heard him mention this at all. I only knew that because I read the Schlickman book, but that doesn't surprise me that he would do that.

When he was campaigning to change the adoption laws, for example, he came down and tried to change the provision and got it changed, the provision in the adoption law that says you will favor the religion of the natural parents when you put children up for adoption. His position was you do the best you can by giving them parents who looked like they're the best; it doesn't matter what their religion is. The Catholic Church was strongly opposed to that, and he had to fight the Catholic church on that and eventually, he overcame it. He and a coalition of mostly Republicans defeated the Catholic Church on that issue, and they passed legislation removing that as a requirement for adoptions. One of them was Bill Harris of Pontiac, who he knew well, and I think Harris, I read later, was one of the first people that adopted a child under the new provisions of that adoption law.

But even the things like when he'd pitch open housing. He knew open housing wasn't favored by a great majority of electors, a great majority of Democrats, but he pitched it in every state of the state message, he'd talk about that. I just can't imagine people, you know, things like talking to that Prayer Breakfast Committee and telling them you need to clean up your act in Springfield guys, you know this is something you ought to be doing. He didn't make a big deal out of that, doing things, and he was very quiet about it, but he showed, I thought, a lot of courage in doing those kinds of things.

DePue: Maybe this is another example of that quiet courage that you've been talking about here, but my understanding is he had a difficult situation with Helena Kerner. My understanding is most people who knew about that gave the governor a lot of credit that he had dealt with that in a very dignified way.

Feurer: Oh, I thought he did. He was a very private person, I thought generally, too.

DePue: Well, can you flush out a little bit about the challenges that Helena Kerner had and that the family had in that respect?

Feurer: Well, I think I mentioned to you before, when you asked me about that, he kept his public life pretty separate from his private life, so the only thing you ever heard privately was just incidental. It was kind of like the blind man and the elephant, you know, where you feel a trunk and a tusk and one tail, and I'm not sure that's what the whole elephant looks like or something. I really don't really don't feel qualified to do that. I'm not sure anybody on our staff would be qualified to do that, because he had his own private life and he kept his own private life. He wasn't antisocial or anything, it was just his way.

DePue: Did Helena Kerner not have the traditional role of First Ladies in sponsoring certain activities?

Feurer: No, I don't. She didn't do much of that. She was really not very well during most of his administration, so she did not do that.

DePue: So, you didn't even have many direct dealings with her at all in that respect?

Feurer: No, no.

DePue: Okay.

Feurer: This is only personal, but I remember I was on the Springfield Urban League board and in 1968 I was elected president of the Urban League, and they brought in the president of Illinois Bell, came down as a speaker to the Springfield Urban League. He made a courtesy call on the governor the next morning and after he did that, he came to my office and he said, you know, he said, I mentioned to the governor that I was down here at the Urban League annual banquet installed you as the new Urban League President. The Governor said he didn't know that. He said he didn't even know you were on the Urban League board. And I said, well, I guess I had never mentioned that to him or something. And the President of Illinois Bell says, well, I said to the governor, are you surprised? And the Governor said no, that's not his style, but I'm pleased. Kerner never mentioned that to me ever, about doing that, but I kind of remember that because a number of years later, when he was an Appeals Court Judge in Chicago, my father had died of a heart attack, lived in a town about fifty miles south of Chicago. My mother had worked for Marshall Field's there and my father gave his body to a med school, to be used for research, and so he had a memorial service. My mother worked for Marshall Field's and so a lot of people were there from Marshall Field's. After the memorial service, they came through the reception line and they would say, I'm Mary from women's shoes or I'm Charlie from men's sportswear or something. And then in the middle of that line there was Mrs. Kerner and Governor Kerner. Shook hands and everything, gave condolences and left. The minister said, you know, I didn't even know the governor was here. I heard the former Governor Kerner was here and I didn't even hear that until later or something. He didn't come around. I used his line and I said to the minister, "Well, that's not his style." DePue: This has been very interesting and it's important, because I haven't had too many opportunities to talk in depth about the Kerner Administration. So I'm especially appreciative of that. We do have quite a bit more territory to cover and I wanted to get more into the second term and some tumultuous events, both at the national level, at the state level, and even for Governor Kerner personally. So that's what's on for the next time we meet.

Feurer: Okay.

DePue: And thank you very much.

(end of interview #2)

Interview with Bill Feurer

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Interview # 3: February 1, 2012

Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Today is Wednesday, February 1, 2012. My name is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, and I'm here this afternoon for our third session with Bill Feurer. Good afternoon.

Feurer: Good afternoon.

DePue: Bill, it's been fun talking to you and hearing your recollections about the Otto Kerner Administration. It's invaluable to us, since we don't have too many opportunities of going back to the early sixties to talk to folks about those years. So this has been very beneficial to me. We've gotten through an awful lot of what Kerner accomplished while he was in office, but we kind of divorced that from politics to a certain extent, so I wanted to start today with his reelection campaign in 1964, when he was going up against young Charles Percy. So I'll kind of turn it over to you and if you could tell us what you and the Kerner Administration thought about Percy as an opponent.

Feurer: Well, I think it was very clear that Charles Percy was a very formidable opponent. He had become the white hope of the Republican Party, not only in Illinois but almost nationally in many ways, and received a great deal of attention from the national media as a result.

DePue: Had he held any political office before this run?

Feurer: No, he had not. He had been the president of Bell & Howell, a company with its main plant in the state of Illinois.

DePue: And very successful obviously, in that position.

Feurer: Yes, it was successful.

DePue: What was it that made him stand out, having no other political background? Normally, the person who is going to be running for governor, you know, you made a few steps along the political ladder, so to speak.

Feurer: Well, I'm not sure that's normally the case. In many respects, parties find it to their interest to nominate a new, fresh face for something like governor, because they don't have a track record. They don't have a record of having been in the legislature and having to vote on thousands of bills and taking positions on various things and alienating as many people as they keep happy in many respects. So that was true then, just that's, I think, true now.

Kerner, for example, was a beneficiary of that. You recall that in 1952, the Democrats nominated Paul Douglas for United States Senator and Adlai Stevenson for governor. Both were outside the political organizations of the Democratic Party in the state of Illinois, but Jacob Arvey or whoever was dictating that at that time, recognized that this is the kind of candidate that the Democrats need to be successful and that's who they nominated. At the same time, Arvey was in essence preparing for the future, because he was also the one who made arrangements for President Truman to name Otto Kerner as the U.S. Attorney in the Northern District of Illinois, and that came out of the blue as far as Kerner was concerned, also. He had not sought that position, he had not looked for it, he was not active in the political party, he was not active in elective politics, and as a result he became the perfect candidate to be the chief law enforcement officer for the Federal Government in the northern part of the state of Illinois.

DePue: Was that at the time when his father would have been serving in the Seventh?

Feurer: No. I believe his father had died two or three years prior to that time, in the 1940s, I think, but I'm not completely certain of that.

DePue: So if nothing else, Kerner was a known quantity simply because his father had…

Feurer: Well, it certainly didn't hurt his case for being named, and the fact that he had the same name as his father and his father had an exemplary record as a judge, as Attorney General for the state of Illinois and on the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

DePue: Okay. How would you explain or describe Charles Percy's politics?

Feurer: Well, I think Charles Percy would have been considered to be a middle of the roader, moderate Republican, and at that time the national Republican Party was controlled by its moderate wing.

DePue: Do you recall the issues that the campaign focused around?

Feurer: Well, the Charles Percy campaign, almost entirely against Mayor Daley, and tried to argue that Governor Kerner was his satellite or took his orders from Mayor Daley. I don't know how he ran in the city of Chicago, but that's how he ran in the suburbs and that's how he ran downstate. So he basically tried to associate Kerner as much as possible with Daley, and then run against Daley.

DePue: We talked quite a bit about the relationship that the two men had, Daley and Kerner, and how Kerner liked to describe that, but what was his thoughts, having Percy focus his campaign on that?

Feurer: Well, when Kerner ran against Governor Stratton four years earlier, that was exactly the campaign Governor Stratton ran. He ran against Mayor Daley also. Kerner had no track record to attack for Governor Stratton when he ran in 1960, so in '64 Kerner had a track record but unfortunately for Percy, that was a very good track record and it wasn't something that he could take on. Maybe in certain areas, he could take on certain issues where Kerner may have taken a position that was unpopular. But Kerner basically was fairly bulletproof from the standpoint of being attacked, even in '64, by Charles Percy. Percy didn't spend much time talking about Kerner's record. He spent a lot of time talking about how good he thought he would be, and also a lot of time talking about how you shouldn't have somebody who was linked closely to Mayor Daley.

DePue: Well, these weren't the only people who ran against Daley when they were actually running for governor. Dan Walker did it quite effectively as a Democrat, and took out Paul Simon, but that's a different story for a different day. Why wasn't there more emphasis on real issues? Is that because Percy and Kerner were pretty close?

Feurer: Actually, I think they were.

DePue: Do you remember much about the general campaign then?

Feurer: Well, I remember quite a bit about it because of the way it developed. Percy received a great deal of national publicity, so the national news media, the news magazines, other organizations like that, spent a lot of time talking about this race and they primarily focused on Percy being the great new hope of the Republican Party. *TIME Magazine*, several weeks before the election, ran a cover story on Percy, having Percy on the cover, as I recall, in which they devoted one paragraph to Kerner and devoted the entire rest of the article to what a great hope Charles Percy was for the Republican Party.

Typically what happens in a race between an incumbent and a challenger is that the incumbent has more publicity and is better known, but has a record that they have to defend and invariably, they made some enemies as a result of their record or their lack of a record, whatever the case may be. The challenger has the disadvantage of not being as well known, but has the

advantage of not having any kind of record and can run about anything they wanted to run on. That situation was actually reversed in the ’64 election. Kerner wasn’t as well known as Percy by the time the election came along, because Percy had gotten so much national and even regional and state media attention, and Kerner had not been one who sought out a lot of publicity when he was serving as governor. On the other hand, Kerner hadn’t antagonized hardly anybody. Percy was extremely well-known, but there was still the conservative wing in the Republican Party that wasn’t very crazy about Charles Percy and as a result, he probably had more enemies than Kerner but had much more publicity.

Percy challenged Kerner to a debate or a series of debates, as is typical for incumbents. The traditional wisdom for incumbents is to deny that if they think they’re in good shape, because why should they subject themselves to a debate where they could get into trouble when they don’t need it. Well, at the time he was challenged, it wasn’t clear that Kerner was going to be the victim of so much publicity for Percy. Kerner felt he didn’t want a series of debates, but he thought that Percy was entitled to one debate and so he agreed to one debate. Then the question came up, who would the debate be before? Well, a number of his advisors among the Democrats advised that he debate in front of the AFL-CIO, which would have been very friendly to Kerner. Kerner said no, he wouldn’t debate in front of the state Chamber of Commerce. They pointed out that Percy would be very strong before the state Chamber of Commerce and that Kerner probably would not be as strong. Kerner indicated to his advisors that he recognized that but he says, if I don’t have the state AFL-CIO, I’m dead anyway. He says, I’ll go before the Chamber of Commerce.

So he had one debate before the state Chamber of Commerce in Chicago. That debate, in my judgment, is what turned the campaign around. The debate, as I recall it, was at either the Palmer House or the Conrad Hilton, I don’t recall which one of the downtown Chicago hotels. The parties’ negotiators had agreed that they would discuss economic development. The room was packed; it was a sellout for this debate because it was the only debate of the campaign. Charles Percy and Otto Kerner both wore tuxedoes. Charles Percy wore a blue shirt with his tuxedo because it showed up better on TV. Otto Kerner wore a customary white shirt with his tuxedo.

Percy spoke first. He said that in his opinion, economic development depended completely on the political climate in which you operated and how can we have a political climate when Mayor Daley is Mayor of Chicago, and spent the rest of his speech attacking Mayor Daley and linking Governor Kerner with Mayor Daley. He didn’t speak at all about economic development.

Governor Kerner got up and said well, I was told this was going to be about economic development and that’s why my remarks are going to be

about economic development. Governor Kerner spoke about economic development, which Illinois had a terrific track record for the three years he'd been there, and he cited some of the major things, including the new Chrysler plant in Belvidere, Illinois, that had been announced during his first term.

They then each had a response period. Charles Percy got up and said well, I wasn't going to say anything about this, but he says, since you raised the new Chrysler plant in Belvidere, he says, I have here a letter from the president of Chrysler, whose name I believe was Lynn Townsend at the time, a prominent voice in Republican politics. And he says the reason I have this letter is because I wrote a letter as president of Bell & Howell to the hundred biggest firms or companies in the United States that don't do business in Illinois and urged them to come to Illinois and locate a plant here. He said here's a copy of the letter, he says, I'm reading you from chairman Townsend of Chrysler, in which he says, your letter, among other factors, helped us decide to bring our Chrysler plant to Belvidere, Illinois. And everybody in the crowd went *oohhhh, ooohhhh*, you know like that and then Mr. Percy sat down.

So Governor Kerner got up and said well, you think that's a real barnburner, huh? He said let me tell you something. He said you're a businessman out there; he said, you know people don't locate plants in the state of Illinois because somebody writes them a letter. He said they locate them here because you've got the tax climate, you've got the kind of administration that's sympathetic to them, you have the transportation, you have the workforce available to do the job, you have location, you have access to shipping, and he cited about ten or twelve things, all of which are the ten or twelve things that organizations like Fantus would give to people, saying if you want to locate in a new state, here's the kind of stuff you need to have. He said that's why people locate in the state of Illinois. He said they don't locate here because of me and they don't locate here because of Mr. Percy. They locate here because we have developed a climate and a situation in the state that makes it a very favorable state in which to locate. And then he finished his remarks and sat down.

When they were introduced at the beginning, I should say, if there were a hundred tables there, which there probably were, ninety-eight of those tables cheered wildly for Percy, two of them clapped wildly for Kerner, when they were introduced. This was not a friendly crowd.

After they finished, we walked out and I was just walking out by myself, so I was by a couple of people, I wasn't identified who I was. So I asked a couple of gentlemen when I was walking out, "What did you think of the debate?" One of them said well, that Percy is really smooth, and the other guy said yeah, he said, actually both of them were very good and the first guy said yeah they were. They both sounded a little startled, because Kerner had almost been diminished so much in the minds eye of people publicly, that

when he actually showed up and knew what he was talking about, was articulate and smart and bright and to the point, it came as a surprise.

I subsequently went to a local bar at another hotel and just sat down there, and they were running the debate, and so there were two guys watching the debate at the bar. So I sit there the entire time and watch the debate again and when it finished I say to them, "What did you think?" One guy says well, that guy Percy is really smooth. I think he used the same word as the other guy. And the other guy said yeah, but I like the other guy, and the other guy said, me too. And I felt considerably reassured by that very anecdotal evidence as to what had happened, as to what it had done.

And I think what happened was is that people who weren't familiar with Kerner or Percy, saw Percy as a bright hope of the Republican Party and bright and articulate and smooth, intelligent, with the hope to lead us out of the wilderness as they saw it, I suppose, and they saw Kerner as being some sort of precinct committeeman who had been a tool of the Mayor of Chicago or something. When they saw them both up there and realized that they were both smart and sharp and articulate. And further, when they realized, I think in the end, that letter by Percy was a mistake, because these guys were businessmen and I think when they thought about it, they thought, of course, nobody's going to locate a plant in Belvidere, Illinois because somebody writes them a letter. They're going to locate a plant there for exactly the reasons that Kerner cited.

I thought Kerner broke the back of what appeared to be the Percy tide at that time. I thought if the election had been held thirty to sixty days earlier, Percy might well have won that election, but it wasn't. And when that happened and the word kind of got out, I thought that made the difference and I thought that was the main reason that Kerner won the election.

DePue: But the way you're describing Kerner, this is three and a half years into his first term as governor. He would have had to run before, where all of these misperceptions about who Kerner was would have been dispelled back in 1960, you would think.

Feurer: Well, I think there's a couple things to keep in mind in that '60 election. One of which is that Kerner was a new, fresh face, wasn't associated with anybody. He served as county judge of Cook County, he served as U.S. Attorney. He hadn't worked for the Daley organization at any time. Secondly, Daley, as I think we mentioned in an earlier tape, really wasn't quite the power or kingmaker that he was viewed as being four years later.

DePue: Much of that reputation was built around the 1960 election.

Feurer: That's absolutely right, absolutely right. So neither of those were a factor and Kerner had a number of other things going for him, that he still had going for

him in 1964. He was well-known because of his father; he was well-known because he was a General in the National Guard. He was well-known because he had been a county judge, a U.S. Attorney, military service. He had done a substantial number of things. He was very active in the Masons one time, which is a strong downstate organization. So he had a residue of goodwill, but people need a reason to vote for you, whether they have a residue of goodwill or not, particularly if they had a choice between what they consider to be two good candidates. As a result, that's what happened.

And I mentioned also that in 1960, the Chicago Democratic Organization hadn't particularly worked hard for Kerner. They were working for [John F.] Kennedy and they felt Kerner could take care of himself, which he could. Well in 1964, it was obvious Kerner needed more help, and I think they mobilized to work harder then for Kerner than they had worked in the past. [Lyndon B.] Johnson was a shoe-in at that point for president and everybody knew that, so the result was, I think they devoted a lot of their efforts to Kerner too, and then Kerner did extremely well downstate, where he was very, very popular. So the result of all those things, I thought that resulted in his election.

DePue: Were the polls showing that Kerner had a tough race ahead of him?

Feurer: Well, polling was considerably less precise in those days than it is now, and it also was used much less than it was. But the polls showed that things turned around in the month or two before the election.

DePue: And you mentioned it yourself, that that was the year Lyndon Johnson was going up against [Barry] Goldwater.

Feurer: Yes, which was dramatic. Johnson beat Goldwater by a million votes I think, or close to it, and maybe more than that in Illinois.

DePue: See, I would think the power people in the Democratic Party would say, you know Johnson is going to slaughter Goldwater; we'll have this one for Kerner just on a coattail effect.

Feurer: Well, the coattail effect certainly didn't hurt him but in the end; you've got to win it on your own. Illinois residents tend to split their votes frequently between president and governor, and so that's often the case. They did that four years earlier, when Kerner won big and Kennedy barely won.

DePue: Okay. One other issue I believe came up during that particular election campaign was Kerner's very close friend and associate and Department of Revenue Director, Ted Isaacs, had gotten himself in a scandal and had to resign in the midst of the campaign, or he was actually campaign chairman for awhile. Do you recall any specifics on that?

Feurer: Well, Isaacs was somebody who had been associated with Governor Kerner for a long time. He had been a colonel in the National Guard when Kerner was a general in the National Guard. When they reorganized the National Guard, Kerner was kind of in charge of that and Isaacs was sort of his chief assistant on the reorganization of the National Guard.

Isaacs had been involved in the Sherwood Dixon campaign in 1952, which was unsuccessful, but where he had acquitted himself very well as a political organizer. Isaacs had been one of the main organizers of the Pan American Games in Chicago in the late 1950s. Isaacs had been his campaign chairman when he ran for county judge, in I think '60 and '64 both, so they had a long association. Isaacs then was named revenue director by Kerner and when he became revenue director, he was successful in changing the Sales Tax Act in a way that resulted in additional income at a time when Illinois was in pretty much a financial crisis, in '61 and '62, and avoided any kind of tax increase that first three years, almost entirely, through their efforts with the Department of Revenue. Isaacs was smart enough to keep a couple of very smart people at the Department of Revenue, he kept most of them who had already been there and they were able to accomplish that in fairly quick order. So Kerner had a lot of confidence in Isaacs, because Isaacs also, in 1960, had been chairman of the Citizens for Kerner. That is, I think I had mentioned earlier, was a completely independent organization of the Democratic Party and mustered a tremendous amount of support for Kerner, some of it because Kerner had a lot of contacts, although I assume because a lot of people were not crazy about Stratton after two terms.

So yes, so he would have been very actively involved in the campaign if he hadn't gotten into trouble with some sort of envelope contract, which I don't remember the details of but where he had apparently improperly inserted himself in a bidding for some company for envelopes that were awarded by the Department of Finance, not his department. But whatever it was, it was an upset.

DePue: So he was in a position to make profits over the state of Illinois purchasing envelopes?

Feurer: Well, I'm not sure how that worked. All I remember was it was about envelopes and a contract through the Department of Finance. I do not recall the details. It was not a monstrous contract but whatever it was, he was in some position to make money or a friend of his made money or something. I don't recall the details.

DePue: I think it was the Cook Envelope Company, which sold envelopes to the state.

Feurer: That sounds like that could well be true.

DePue: Okay. So he left. Did that cause any wrinkles to the campaign?

Feurer: I don't think so. By then, Kerner was, of course, an incumbent governor and when you're an incumbent governor, you have a lot of people supporting you because they like what you've done, so it's easier than as a challenger; you know to find supporters and volunteers to help you out.

DePue: And as you mentioned, Johnson won the state handily over Barry Goldwater, by close to a million votes, if not that. Kerner wins by a hundred and seventy-five thousand votes over Percy. Quite a bit different margin there, so what you're talking about is very much on the mark. Going into the second term then, what did Kerner hope to accomplish?

Feurer: Well, let me back up just a moment, because I'm not sure I made this point adequately when I talked before, if you would let me address that question if you don't mind.

DePue: Great.

Feurer: One of the things I don't think I really emphasized, because it's not generally considered to be true, but it is, is that Kerner was an activist governor. Kerner, as we've discussed before, never had his party in control of both the House and the Senate in the entire time he served as governor during those eight years, but he was very active, presenting programs and proposals and things. He's the last governor I can remember who I would consider to be an activist governor. It seems to me that the position of most governors, virtually every governor since Kerner, has been: the legislature proposes, the governor disposes. Let the legislature present it to me, send me what they've got and I'll do it, and once in a while if it was something that was a direct attack on the administration or something, the governor would get heavily involved in the legislative activity itself. Many times they just wait to see what comes and they decide whether they're going to sign it or veto it.

Kerner was much more proactive, before that was a popular term, in the kind of things that he wanted to send to the legislature and do that. He did it in such a way that he didn't draw a great deal of attention to himself. He operated through existing departments, he operated through commissions. He operated through other groups that were interested. But he would endorse those and he would turn out to be the key supporter of many of these things that occurred, that had happened, and I don't think it's widely recognized that he did that. When I say no other governor was a true activist, of course they were activists occasionally, on some issue that's of great interest to them. I don't mean to say they never were. The only other person I would put in the activist category since his time would probably be Governor George Ryan, and it wasn't that he presented so much a great program of things, but Ryan, if he saw a roadblock occurring in the legislature, he tended to get in there and see if he could do something to eliminate the roadblock and get things moving again. He was an ex-legislator for many years and it was his nature, if he saw a problem, to try and go fix it. He wasn't so proactive in proposing forward

solutions, I don't think, as he was trying to solve problems once they cropped up, but I think in four years he did a great deal of that, try to solve problems, Ryan did.

DePue: You wouldn't put Richard Ogilvie in that category? He was the guy who was able to pass an income tax increase.

Feurer: No, I wouldn't put Ogilvie in that category because, I mean, Ogilvie took over a smoothly running operation when he took over from Kerner. Illinois probably had its golden years during the 1960s, when Kerner was in office. The one thing that Ogilvie did was pass an income tax, but no one was going to pass an income tax as governor of the state of Illinois unless they were Republican, and I don't think people always generally understood that. It's interesting you mention that, because I was thinking back. I was getting a Masters of Public Administration at the time I worked in the Governor's office, and one of my professors at the U of I, who I took a couple courses from, was an economist named Glenn Fisher, who was with the institute of government affairs or something, I don't have that quite right, but it was headed by Sam Gove anyway, over at the University of Illinois. Fisher had written a book called *Financing Illinois Government*, and he also had been a major contributor to a very comprehensive report done by the Illinois Revenue Commission, which talked about a need for revenue and how all these things worked together, and extremely well done and very lengthy publication. And he was a great teacher and he looked like a typical professor, you know, wore the tweed jacket and everything else, and was a very good guy. It didn't look like he would be nearly as smart and pragmatic as he was. And he said to me one time, toward the end of the second class I attended with him when he knew me better, he said, "I really like Governor Kerner." He said, "But you know, this state really doesn't have a fair tax system. They really need an income tax because it's a much fairer tax. So I'm very disappointed that Governor Kerner has never gone out and tried to get an income tax." And I said, "Well Glenn, if you want an income tax then don't vote for a Democrat for governor, because," I said, "they're never going to get it, because the Republicans would oppose it unanimously and many conservative Democrats downstate would oppose it." I said, "The only way there will ever be an income tax in this state is if you have a Republican governor who can deliver a block of votes and then make a deal with the Mayor of Chicago, who can deliver another block of votes, and together they can get a majority and pass an income tax, and the only way they'll do that is if they work out a deal where each of them thinks they're getting something pretty good for themselves when they do that." Well, that's exactly what Ogilvie did. If it hadn't been Ogilvie, it might have been [James] Thompson; if it hadn't been Thompson it might have been [Jim] Edgar. It was never going to be [Dan] Walker; it was never going to be [Rod] Blagojevich. It was never going to be a Democratic governor because the nature of the beast is you don't have the votes to do it when you do that, because the out party has no incentive to play the game.

DePue: Much of what you're talking about here illustrates that Illinois, in the 1960s, was a different political entity than it is today, where the governorship and the House and the Senate are all pretty much dominated by the Democrats, and have been for the last two or three cycles at least.

Feurer: Well, it was very different in those days, it was very different. The Republicans had run the Senate for thirty years without having lost control of the Senate; Democrats had occasionally won control of the House. Under Stratton, it was pretty much the same kind of animal it is today, except it was for the Republican Party. Republicans ran the House, ran the Senate and ran the governorship for a while during that period of time too.

DePue: It makes me recall that during his second administration, not only did the Republicans control the Senate, but you've got W. Russell Arrington, who was arguably the most successful Illinois State Senator that we've had in the last several decades. I don't know if you would agree with that or not.

Feurer: Well, Russell Arrington was a very smart, bright man and very politically pragmatic, you're absolutely right, and a very strong personality. They've had some very good Senate Leaders in the past. I thought Bill Harris from Pontiac was a very good, strong Senate Leader. He wasn't as confrontational as Russell Arrington, and so in some respects he got more of what he wanted, I thought, than Russell Arrington did. I thought Philip Rock and Tom Hynes and Cecil Partee were all leaders of the Senate, who were all very good, I thought, when they served as leaders of the Senate. So it depends a lot on the personalities and it also depends on how many votes you got.

DePue: It always ends up with that, doesn't it?

Feurer: That's the factor, yes. One of the interesting things to me was Kerner, when he became governor, had no experience with state government by itself. And it was interesting to me that he would have missteps, I believe, when he took over, and I think he did, because he didn't even have people that had worked for state government. The Democrats had been out for eight years, none of them had been around. Stevenson had many missteps too, politically, when he tried to do things. But Kerner had a knack for administration. He had run National Guard units, he had run the U.S. Attorney's Office. The Cook County judge was almost an administrative judge, except for adoptions and mental health cases almost; it was almost an administrative kind of a job, and he had experience running organizations and he was very good at it, I thought. That's where he basically developed his style I think. He delegated a great deal. He realized that you could get a lot done if you didn't care how good you looked, and he had the general theory, as I think I've said before, that the governor gets credit for everything good and blamed for everything bad.

DePue: Right.

Feurer: And I think to a great extent, he was proven to be right. You can get in a little trouble sometimes when you delegate some people you didn't know well or who don't do what they should do, and you get in trouble on that. But generally speaking, I think he was right. Do you want to talk any more about the political aspects of the 1964 election?

DePue: Well yeah, if there's more to add to what we've already discussed.

Feurer: Well, I didn't have anything particular to add. I think it was a shock to the nation, to tell the truth, that Percy didn't win, because I think the Republican middle had much of their hopes built upon Percy being one of the people who would come down the line and later go on. Percy, I thought, went out and distinguished himself later as a United States Senator and showed a great deal of courage. Every Republican president since [Dwight D.] Eisenhower has been more conservative than his predecessor, and by the time that Percy got to the Senate, they had [Richard] Nixon in there. Percy was now probably not in the mainstream of the Republican Party. Nixon was further to the right than Percy was.

When Watergate broke, Percy was very courageous, coming out early saying this is a huge problem we have to address. That made lifelong enemies of many very conservative Republicans who were in favor of Nixon. It wasn't popular and I always gave Percy a great deal of credit for being courageous and swimming against the tide. Percy never became a major figure on the Republican side of the United States Senate, and I think it's because, I think, the mainstream had left him. I think the bed of the stream changed or something. I don't think he changed. I thought he was pretty consistent much of his life.

DePue: Well, I know the '64 election was quite a shock, especially to the conservative element of the Republican Party, being trounced that significantly.

Feurer: Well, I think it was more of a shock to the middle of the road of the Republican Party, because some of the conservatives were never that crazy about Percy anyway, and they could blame it on the fact that we shouldn't have nominated Percy, we should have nominated somebody more conservative. But I think they assumed they had the election won. It was almost like Dewey – Truman , but not quite, you know of course in 1948, where a lot of people were making their plans based on the fact that Percy was going to win the governorship.

DePue: No embarrassing headlines at least.

Feurer: No, no.

DePue: Okay. Can we talk a little bit about now that Kerner has gotten four years under his belt and experience in dealing with the legislature and crafting

legislation and working through the process, what did he want to do that second term?

Feurer: Well, let me address that. I'd just like to review very briefly what he did in his first term, because much of it was building upon his second term. I'm not going to go through this whole thing, but let me just say that when he took over in 1960, with no experience in state government, of course he had no friends in state government, but he had no enemies in state government either, so that may have balanced itself. He really had some fairly remarkable accomplishments in his first term, particularly since those accomplishments required the cooperation of the legislature in many cases.

He created a new Department of Mental Health, which really became the leading Department of Mental Health in the country, as we discussed. He created the Department of Children and Family Services, which nothing like that existed anywhere else in the country at the time and that was driven much by his knowledge and interest in adoptions that he got as Cook County judge, when baby selling was a big racket. Chicago, through Kerner, cracked down on it and he centralized the management of those kind of services at the state level. He got the Department of Public Aid created. Public aid had been a constant thorn in the flesh of existing governors for quite a while, because they continually had deficits. You had to have a special session in the second session, the biennial, just to get an efficiency appropriation for public aid. In three years, Kerner didn't have that any further; it was just a remarkable accomplishment.

All that happened in his first term. He asked for a Department of Economic Development because he was so strongly interested in that area. He didn't get that until his second term, but they were much more reluctant to give him that initially, but he still accomplished many things, even during his first term that did that. For one thing, he was interested in trade. Illinois, while Kerner was in office, became the leading trade state in the country; ranked first in agriculture in exports, second in industrial, and first overall when you combined industrial and agriculture. And that was just by the middle of his administration, when that happened.

He pushed tourism very hard during that, which hadn't been done in Illinois. He focused a lot of the tourism on history, among Abraham Lincoln, where he basically was instrumental in getting the Abraham Lincoln home turned into a national park, the only one in Illinois. He, as you know, recreated the old State Capitol by taking down the building brick by brick and putting it together after they removed an extra floor that had been built in there. A lot of the tourism he pushed had to do with Lincoln. In our term, we had a tremendous number of visitors from overseas that came in, and we were told by the State Department an awful lot of them came from Africa, where Lincoln was a real hero. We were told by the State Department that we were

the third most requested site to visit in the country by people coming from overseas, after Washington and New York or New York and Washington.

DePue: Springfield?

Feurer: Springfield, Illinois.

DePue: Not Chicago?

Feurer: They were talking about dignitaries; yeah, they're talking about dignitaries. No, not Chicago, and it was because of their interest in Lincoln. The people who showed up knew more about Lincoln than many of the people that lived in Springfield, because Lincoln was such a hero, particular to Africa, particularly in Africa. But even the rest of the world, Lincoln would be one of the few Americans they had ever heard of, so it was amazing how often that happened.

He converted the method of building, which almost had to be done, because he didn't have the cash in the bank to do that through the Illinois Building Authority, so they could bond many buildings, building and expansion of higher education and so forth. We talked about how he really pushed human rights, like fair employment, which he got done through a Fair Employment Commission during his first term. He pushed open housing or fair housing the entire time he was in office. He never got that done while he was in office, but every speech he gave, every state of the state speech he made a pitch again for fair housing. He said we need to solve this housing discrimination problem. Eventually it passed, I think in the seventies. I don't know who that passed under but it took a long time. That was basically not a winner from a political standpoint, because how much popularity would there be for fair housing? People were worried about it all over the place. I suppose it helped him with minorities and people like that, but I mean it was an issue that he never took off the front burner.

In the field of human resources, I mentioned that before, he converted the Department of Personnel into what it was supposed to be, which was a merit operation. He put it under a Republican named Maude Myers and you could get your jobs if you took exams and you qualified and you did very well. There are a certain number of jobs that are always recognized as being political, more then than there are now, and those were political jobs, everybody understood those were political jobs. But he didn't cut out upper middle management or lower middle management, even medium middle management.

I saw an analysis a number of years ago, which I can't remember where I saw it. I wish I could look that up for you, but it did an evaluation of the elections in Sangamon County, Illinois, of governors when they ran for reelection and invariably, people would get very disenchanted with governors

in Sangamon County, Illinois, because that's where Springfield is, where state government is, where a lot of the employees are. Kerner on the other hand did very, very well in Sangamon County, Illinois. He did much better than other incumbent governors their second time around, which, of course, would lead you to believe that's probably true, because he had fifteen hundred people show up and they wanted even more for dinner, when he got out of jail, to welcome him, in Springfield, Illinois. He was just very popular. He made himself a citizen of Springfield, of course. He was on the church board, he was active in the church, went to the YMCA all the time, he sent his kids to school in Springfield. Downtown Springfield was a thriving commercial area at the time he was here, and he helped it a lot by spending money, state money, to keep buildings around there, leasing them and also because of what he did with the Old State Capitol.

He was, I think, responsible for getting the judicial article passed, which was a major change, of course, to the court system, and it passed in the General Assembly during his first term, which is still very much the pattern we have fifty years later still today; whatever they passed then is still what we have, and it was a major change. He got a new criminal code passed, which was a Bar Association bill. I don't know how much interest there was in it, but he was interested in it and he pushed for that. It might have passed anyway, I don't know, but all those things were accomplished during his first term.

And then of course, I talked about everything he did in higher education. He was addressing the baby boom, which led to all sorts of new educational facilities that led to the community college system, which he pushed hard for. Much of that didn't come to fruition until his second term or even afterwards, because some of it involved building brand new campuses and things like that, as you can imagine. And he pushed very hard for new recreational facilities around Lake Carlisle, around Lake Shelbyville. Those were both federal reservoirs, but the fact is that there were a lot of state developments around them: Rend Lake in Southern Illinois, again, Illinois Beach State Park near Waukegan. There's a park down—I don't know what the name of it is now, called Cahokia Mounds, He had asked the legislature for a lot of money for additional acreage, and he made the first steps to taking over a good part of the Joliet Arsenal property up near Joliet, which was being abandoned by the Federal Government because it was the last remaining, huge, unused tract of land that close to the Chicago metropolitan area. So he was very conscious of those kind of things.

In 1965, which now is the beginning of his second term, he gave an inaugural address to the General Assembly and the state officers, and it was very short. I looked up that inaugural address, so I could tell you a couple of things there.

DePue: Good lawyers always do their research.

Feurer: That's right, that's right. He pointed out, in this inaugural address, that Illinois no longer was in a fiscal crisis and had a working balance in its general fund, which is, of course, not the case today.

DePue: Well today, as we sit here and talk, well maybe he just finished up, Governor Quinn gave his state of the state address.

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: Or was it yesterday he did that?

Feurer: I think it was today. But in his inaugural address, which wasn't quite the same as a state of the state address, he pointed out that in Illinois we'd reached new highs in production. There had been a separate economic study several months earlier that had found this, and so he didn't just make this up. He said we reached new highs in production, in employment, in wages, in personal income, in exports, which were at an all-time high, in industrial development, which has surpassed all records. We're pretty sure it passed all records. We hadn't had a very organized system of tracking that until Kerner took over, but there was a tremendous amount of development and they weren't all these big projects like Chrysler in Belvidere and Jones and Laughlin Steel in Hennepin and like the new [atomic] accelerator up in the west suburbs of Chicago. I mean most of them were much smaller projects but there were lots and lots of them, I mean hundreds every year.

The rate of unemployment was less than all other popular states. We had a lower unemployment than any other populous state in the country at this time, in '65. He pointed out that in 1961 it was about 6 percent. I think I told you earlier in one of these tapes, I thought it was at 8 percent when he took over in 1960, so I may have been wrong on that, because he said it in '61, which the next year it was 6 percent. And then when he was speaking to the General Assembly, it was about 2.5 percent, or no I'm sorry, it was about 3.8 percent, and then by 1968 it was a little over 2 percent. So I mean Illinois unemployment just dropped like a rock during the time he was in.

In the time he was in the General Assembly, at the time of his state of the state message, he made a lengthy state of the state address, and let me just give you an idea of some of the things he asked for then.

DePue: So it's almost like you're his press secretary or spokesman.

Feurer: Well, I could have been, couldn't I? But I just want to give you a feel. He asked for an increase in aid to public schools, which I know he got. He asked for fair housing, which he didn't get. He asked for a revision of the revenue article of the State Constitution, which he had asked for before. He pointed out it was ancient and archaic and didn't lend itself to a modern revenue system. He never got that and by the time it came to the end of his second term, he was asking for a Constitutional Convention, which of course

occurred two years after he left office. But I think he was the first major official of any kind to push for a state Constitutional Convention.

He asked for appropriations to acquire twenty-eight thousand additional acres of land for parks and recreation. Illinois did not rank high in the amount of land for parks and recreation it had in relation to its size. We were fairly low ranking among the states. He asked for another appropriation to acquire twenty thousand acres of the Joliet ordnance plan which I talked about. That second occurred—I don't remember how much of the first he got but he got some of it. He asked for an increase in the minimum wage, to $1.25, that would have been the new minimum wage in 1965. I don't think he got that that year.

He asked to increase the state police from twelve hundred to two thousand persons and he asked to control billboards on highways, which he eventually got. He got some increase in the state police; he didn't get the two thousand persons. I don't recall the number he got on that either. Later in '65, in the legislative budget message, he asked for an increase in the cigarette tax. He asked for an increase in the gas tax. He asked for an increase in the public utilities tax. He asked for an increase in the tax on racetrack pari-mutuel (sic) betting. He got some of those, some he didn't, but I wasn't the fiscal expert and I've lost track of what he got and what he didn't. But I mean he bluntly asked for those things, to help fund what he saw being the new requirements of the state budget.

He mentioned these new requirements of the state budget, things like the great expansion in public higher education, increase in the school fund, the fact that under the new judicial article, all those judges had become state employees. Under the Department of Children and Family Services, a substantial number of those missions had been transferred from the local government to the state, and they had hired new people there. So that was some of the things that he listed as reasons for the increase that he asked for.

He did not ask for—which is always interesting if you look back—any more toll roads. I don't think Governor Kerner liked toll roads very much, and I don't believe he suggested any. We had some at the time, we continued to maintain those, but of course toll roads per mile, the maintenance costs a lot more to operate than regular highways, and I don't think he was very fond of toll roads. And he didn't ask for any kind of increase with gambling. Those both became major factors after he left office but not while he was in office.

DePue: I think it's also interesting, you said one of the revenue sources he wanted to get to was racetracks, is that what I heard?

Feurer: Yes, yes.

DePue: A little bit of irony in there, considering what happened later on.

Feurer: Well that's true, because racetrack people would not have been happy with increasing the tax on pari-mutuel betting. But nevertheless, that's what he asked for. In 1965, he also sent a special message to the legislature on workers compensation, where he asked for what appeared to be major changes in the Workers Compensation Act. It's a technical area and I have no idea what passed and what didn't and how that worked, but it was a special message to the General Assembly.

And in that two years, '65 and '66, and this is information I looked up. I certainly didn't remember this. The General Assembly passed 2,211 bills, which was a record at the time for the number of bills passed by the General Assembly, which of course Governor Kerner was responsible for a number of those bills, you know having people introduce them. Governor Kerner vetoed 267 of those bills, so slightly over 10 percent he vetoed and maybe 13 others, he vetoed parts of them. So that was sort of a general summary of the things that happened in the first two years of his second term.

In 1967, he delivered another state of the state message, and just let me point out a couple of major things he pointed out in this. He said that unemployment was now down to 2.4 percent. He pointed out that over the last several years, aid to dependent children and public aid, had gone down 5.4 percent. He didn't say the time period. I think it was probably three years, maybe four. It had gone down a total of 5.4 percent, while nationwide it had gone up an average of 22.9 percent. So we had gone down 5 percent and nationwide, the average was 22.9 percent. New York was up 60 percent, California was up 96 percent, during that same period. We had an average of ten thousand public aid recipients in training programs at any one time, which is what he credited and most people credited, the reduction of public aid to his getting people back to work. Those were reforms that did not last after he left office, and public aid has continued to be a problem ever since. Public aid will always be a major expenditure, I don't mean to suggest otherwise, but it was really under control at the time he was there.

At the same time, for the first time, he did this for the first time in '67. He started sending special messages to the General Assembly, in writing, He had done one on workers compensation in the previous two years, the previous biennial, but outside of that, that was the only time I can ever remember special messages to the General Assembly. He always had a budget message, he always had a state of the state message, he might have an inaugural address or something, but outside of that, he would make his announcements or something. But by '67, he was doing these special messages to the General Assembly. He had one on law enforcement, which included among other things interesting enough an argument for gun control, which would not have been popular with the people he was normally popular with in downstate Illinois, but which he made a pitch for that. He wanted to increase police training and he had a number of other proposals having to do with law enforcement. I just picked a couple at random.

He had another special message on insurance reform, which was so technical that I didn't understand it, to tell the truth. (chuckles) It was four or five pages of major changes of the way insurance…

DePue: Was that partly involving the workers' compensation?

Feurer: No, it didn't involve the workers' compensation.

DePue: Okay.

Feurer: It did not involve the workers' compensation. He had another one on human resources, where he again talked about fair employment practices and a number of other areas, and he also urged an increase in the minimum wage, which had been unsuccessful I believe, previously. He asked for an increase to $1.40 for the first year and $1.60 for the second year and thereafter. There was an increase, I'm sure, in the minimum wage somewhere along the line, but I lost track of when that was too.

DePue: I'm thinking the federal minimum wage, was that a dollar at the time?

Feurer: I don't know. I don't remember.

DePue: It seems to be that's what I was making when I was working at that time.

Feurer: Probably true, probably true. He asked that they authorize by statute a commission for women and pointed out that women have been discriminated against in employment and many other places. He already had a commission which he appointed, an advisory commission; he was trying to create that by law. I don't think he got that by law but I don't remember that either, whether he got it by law, but he was very early onboard on that one.

He delivered a special message on higher education. Of course, everything was coming into play now: the new campuses for SIU and Edwardsville; the new campus in Chicago for the University of Illinois; Governors' State; Sangamon State;, which became University of Illinois-Springfield; medical school facilities in Rockford, Peoria, Springfield; dental school in Alton—all those, and then the whole community college system. And so he had a special message where he asked for financial support for all those activities, and that's just to take care of the baby boom.

I think by the end of his term, if I recall correctly, I think there were like twenty-seven or twenty-eight community college districts then in business, which had not been there when he started.

DePue: I think for Sangamon State here in Springfield, it was either '69 or '70 that they had their first classes there. [SSU was founded in 1969.]

Feurer: Yes, yes.

DePue: So this would have been during the time that these places were—

Feurer: Being put together.

DePue: —being put together.

Feurer: Hiring staff. His press secretary, Chris Vlahoplus, who was sort of the Chief of Staff for Kerner during certainly the last part of his administration, actually became a vice president out at Sangamon State University and was hired before they had any faculty or had any students. He was one of the early hires. He had been at the University if Illinois in Chicago, when he was hired for that position. I don't think he ever moved his family from Springfield, so he came back to Springfield. He did that for a number of years.

DePue: I rarely do this, but I think I'll mention that I did interview Cullom Davis here recently and he was the fourth person—this is what he told me—the fourth person out of Sangamon State that had been an assistant vice president and involved in a lot of those decisions.

Feurer: Was he? Yeah, I'm sure he was.

DePue: And that was again, the '69, '70 timeframe.

Feurer: Sure, sure. He delivered another special message. All these are special messages he was writing to the General Assembly with legislative proposals. He had another one on natural resources and the natural resources he asked for a billion dollar bond issue to be authorized by the General Assembly, to go to the electorate in 1968 for primarily air and water pollution. Again, very early on, very early in our history, I mean air and water pollution, everybody except Rush Limbaugh, appears to be worried about this now, air and water pollution. He was very early and he had a special study done by a consultant firm, and pointed that out. He wanted to evolve a fairly complicated pattern of loans, local government grants and local government things to clean up air and water. My recollection of that is it passed the General Assembly but was turned down by the electorate in '68. And of course, by then he was no longer governor and with the Kerner Commission, he never did much campaigning for that because of the fact that even though I do think it passed and I think it was on the ballot in '68 but it did not pass.

He had another special message on collective negotiations for public employees, which he indicated he favored, but he had several pages, I mean four or five pages of restrictions and how it should be operated, to be done responsibly and so forth. He felt that if they had that right in private enterprise, that the state should be subject to that too, but because of the special circumstances of being public bodies, he had a number of strong suggestions about how it should be done. And I don't remember the fate of that or whether that was a result of his recommendation. It certainly occurred but I don't remember when it occurred and how that happened. That is just a

sampling. I mean this is somebody now going into the seventh and eighth year of his governorship, and still you can see probably he's got more things going on than he had going on originally in his first term when he was trying to sort things out and get things squared away as he would see it.

And then in the '67 session, the General Assembly passed 2,603 bills, and Governor Kerner vetoed 401 of them. So he actually vetoed a higher proportion. In his veto messages it was always interesting, he always said something nice about the sponsors and the proponents, and said we don't have enough money or something like that. He never picked a fight in his veto messages. He wrote veto messages on all these things or had veto messages written, which he would approve, but he typically never picked a fight in the veto messages. It was common for the legislators to have a pet project where they wanted to appropriate a hundred thousand dollars for the YMCA in their hometown or something, and he would typically veto those kind of bills and say that those are very worthwhile projects but we just don't have the money to fund those kinds of things, or something like that.

DePue: How many of those bills that he vetoed would have been a situation similar to this: the speaker or the president of the Senate came to him and says well, Governor, we're going to pass this legislation, because that's the best thing to do politically, but we want you to go ahead and veto it for us please?

Feurer: Well, I can't say that never happened but I'm not familiar with that as a tactic or anything like that. It would be common for the reverse to happen, that we would be directed to contact certain legislators and say the governor is not going to be able to sign this bill. It was typically a person who had been a loyal supporter of the Governor or something, but typically we did that for most people. We'd contact them and say he's not going to sign this bill, but we just wanted to let you know in advance. It's a good project but we're sorry, we just don't have the funds. An awful lot of them had to do with that. A few of them had to do with the fact that they were duplicate bills. Sometimes the House and Senate would introduce identical bills and each pass each other's, and you just have to veto one and sign one.

DePue: I think the general public would be astounded that there were that many bills going through the legislature in the first place. Another question I have then is how many of those are kind of pro forma things where so and so is being appointed to a particular position?

Feurer: That isn't done in the form of bills; appointments, that doesn't count appointments.

DePue: Okay.

Feurer: You submit appointments; a certain number of appointments have to be confirmed by the Senate. Once they're confirmed by the Senate it's taken care

of, it's not considered to be a bill. And it doesn't consider resolutions where somebody passes a bill saying we urge everybody in the state of Illinois to support the Cancer Society or something. That doesn't include those kind of things either. It just includes actual changes in the law. So, all those bills involved either changes in the law or appropriations from the public funds.

DePue: Just the kind of numbers that would drive conservatives who say we need to have smaller government crazy, I would think.

Feurer: Well the number of bills has increased dramatically because we've gone to annual sessions.

DePue: And we're talking about during this timeframe?

Feurer: During this timeframe, yes, yes, that's right. So if you looked at the numbers now, this pales in significance, I think.

DePue: What's interesting to me also in listening to you go through these proposals and accomplishments that he had during the second term, you're also saying what's going on at the national level with the women's liberation movement really starting to pick up steam by the late sixties, about the emergence of a true environmentalist movement in the United States at that time.

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: Certainly building on Johnson's "War on Poverty" campaign, which was very much about his early portion of the second administration.

Feurer: Sure, sure. And in fact there's at least one anti-pollution bill that passed Congress in '63. I can't remember which, it was a famous one. It was sort of the first step in doing some of these things, I think.

DePue: The U.S. Congress you're talking about?

Feurer: The U.S. Congress.

DePue: But I know that Nixon was the one who established the EPA at the national level.

Feurer: Yes. But there was something in '63 that I can't recall that was sort of the tide of good feeling after, around the time the Kennedy died.

DePue: Okay. That's quite a bit on anybody's agenda, especially for a second term, when normally it's just kind of picking up some loose ends that you didn't get accomplished the first time around.

Feurer: That's what you would think. I think that what happened is the more involved Kerner got, the more he saw needs in different areas and wanted to bring

about change. And remember, this is a biennial session, so this is just the odd numbered years. So when I'm throwing all these things at you, that would be handled within a six-month period and then you don't consider them again for eighteen months or so.

DePue: Maybe the other significant thing is this question. Was the legislature able to adjourn on time?

Feurer: Well, they had to stop the clock a couple times I think; that was the technique they used in those days. They would just announce "stop the clock," and then they'd go until 4:00 a.m. and finish up.

DePue: But wasn't the end of the legislative year the first of June and not the first of July?

Feurer: No, no. I think it was the thirtieth. I think it was midnight on the thirtieth of June, as I recall.

DePue: Okay. So maybe the changes that occurred there afterwards were the percentage that they needed to have to move legislation forward. I'm sorry to confuse you here. I'm just trying to clear up my own mind I guess.

Feurer: Sure.

DePue: Well, you've been talking about a timeframe, especially getting up to '67 and '68, where, let's face it, the United States is going through some significant turmoil. And we've alluded to some of this, but civil rights was an issue throughout the early sixties and by the time you get to the mid to late sixties, it had turned ugly in many respects. You had riots in a lot of the major cities in '66 and, obviously, the antiwar protest about Vietnam is building. But I want to look at the first thing, because Kerner has such a significant role in [investigating] the violence going on in American cities at the time. Is this a good time for us to talk about the National Commission on Civil Disorders?

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: Why is it that President Lyndon Johnson turns to Otto Kerner as a guy to head up this commission to study this explosion of violence in major American cities that had occurred in the last couple years before that timeframe?

Feurer: Well, one reason is because he was one of the few people around who probably met whatever qualifications that President Johnson thought he needed to head up this commission. You know, he needed somebody first of all who probably had an acceptable human rights record and Kerner had that very much. He would have been considered probably a conservative on economic policy but he was a liberal on social policy probably, if you were to try to analyze Governor Kerner's position. He was governor of a major northern state. He'd been a loyal supporter of Johnson's, when Johnson was

president. He had praised the War on Poverty, had praised a number of the actions that had been taken by the President. He had stayed out of the Vietnam matter, which was getting people lined up on both sides at that particular point in time, and I think he was somebody that the President hoped would support his point of view on this. The President was trying to take some heat off of himself because of all these civil disorders.

The book by Barnhart and Schlickman has just a terrific description of everything that happened during that time, and we only saw it from the outside. The Governor got that call when he was on a trip promoting tourism along the Mississippi River, as I recall, because I think I was with him at the time. He had gotten a call and he had to pull to shore and he had to go use the phone somewhere. Well, it was the President calling about heading up this particular commission.

After he started heading up the commission, Governor Kerner probably spent half of his time working on the Commission of Civil Disorders and being out of Illinois and half of his time back here being Governor of Illinois. Governor Kerner worked out regularly at the YMCA. He was very physically fit, never had his stomach like most of us you know, and always looked just impeccable. He was always well dressed, just looked terrific and everything else. He just always looked fresh as a daisy, no matter how tired he was and so forth. I thought he started wearing out during that national commission thing, because he just was burning the candle at both ends. He looked tired.

Governor Kerner was perfectly at ease at dealing with people. He didn't like to tell people no if they had spent a lot of time to come down and see him and present something. He'd take it under advisement. Even if he knew and they knew it was going to be no, he handled it very politely and very courteously. He listened to their arguments and so forth, no matter how ludicrous their arguments might be, and sometimes they would be pretty ludicrous. Then he was very pleasant to them, write them very regretful letters normally, and so they felt they had their day in court. I think they did have their day in court when they were with him. He wasn't above changing his mind if somebody persuaded him differently, but most of the time everybody knew what the outcome was when they were coming to him with one last appeal.

DePue: When Johnson selected Kerner to head up the commission, you mentioned that he didn't come out strongly about the Vietnam War, so that would certainly be in his favor. But was he also somebody that Johnson didn't see as a political threat, because he didn't have political aspirations at the national level?

Feurer: I don't think Johnson ever saw him as a political threat. Kerner was a non-politician. I mean Kerner never was maneuvering himself to get attention, like

John Lindsay, the Mayor of New York, who was the vice chair, of course was somebody who was very ambitious and who many people thought would far overshadow Kerner as the vice chair, because Lindsay got a lot of attention being located in New York City for one thing, and because he was young and attractive and personable and ambitious.

DePue: That would appeal to the moderate wing of the Republican Party?

Feurer: Well, I think he would be in the moderate wing of the Republican Party, that's right. I got diverted by just saying that the one thing I noticed that had an effect on Governor Kerner was he didn't spend as much time being courteous. He was courteous, but I mean he didn't spend as much time with people who had things to say where they clearly weren't going to get what they wanted and everything. He tended to answer some of them right away, giving the answer right away as opposed to writing them later or something. I think it just was a time question; it was a time management problem. He just didn't have time to do what he normally did, where he gave as many people as possible a hearing and doing those kind of things. He looked tired to me, he looked much more tired. I always thought that Kerner still had a lot of things on his plate that he would have liked to have accomplished, and I always thought he would probably run for governor for a third term, even though that had never been done successfully I think, in our history, up to that point. I thought he might do that but I think he got so tired that he lost interest in doing that.

DePue: Do you know how Kerner felt when the job was first offered to him? The way that Barnhart and Schlickman—

Feurer: Which job was that, which job?

DePue: To head up the national commission, because he's walking into this political buzz saw to a certain extent. Whatever you say, there's going to be a strong constituency that's going to be opposed. From what you said, this is just the kind of thing he tried to avoid.

Feurer: Well, I think Governor Kerner probably used the argument on a number of people who weren't sure they wanted to take a job or a position on a commission or something with state government, by saying you really owe this to your state. And I think his sense of duty was such that he would never have used that argument against the President of the United States, when the President asked you to do something. I think if a Republican president asked him to do something, he'd have probably done it, because I just think it was his nature. I think that was instilled much by the military, but he had a real sense of duty on these kind of things, so I think it wouldn't have occurred—you know he might have said, are you sure I'm the one you want, or something like that he might have said, but that would have been the only thing I would ever see him saying.

DePue: It sounds then, that his response to this was this is a burden more than opportunity for him.

Feurer: Well, I would say it was more of an obligation than an opportunity. I don't know if it was a burden. Most obligations carry burdens with them I think, but I think he saw it as an obligation. I don't think he saw it as a chance to get the national spotlight. I don't think he saw it as a chance to position himself for bigger and better things or anything like that. I think he did because the President asked him to do it. The President certainly had not stopped things like a new accelerator coming to Illinois for example, or Texas, which is strong and the President was from Texas. I suppose the President could have shot that down if he had been so inclined, had not done that. So I think Kerner felt an obligation to the federal government and to the President for this position, and I think he probably felt a personal obligation to the President also.

DePue: You're right; Barnhart and Schlickman do a very good job of laying this out in the book.

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: I wanted to just mention one thing because it really struck me as one of those ironies that oftentimes happen in American politics maybe. And so here you've got John Lindsay, a Republican from a big city, New York City, who is advocating for a much more expansive, at least as the authors are explaining it, a much more expansive role for the federal government, i.e. a lot more money going to the big cities.

Feurer: Yes, yes.

DePue: And they quoted Kerner as saying this in September of '67. "The eventual success and the future of our state's cities lie with the state rather than the federal government. The federal government by nature, tends to be weighty, cumbersome, and sometimes slow, too slow." So here we've got this Democratic governor who is arguing for a less role for the federal government, a Republican mayor who is arguing for a more role.

Feurer: I think Kerner became very involved and very engaged in the activities of the commission and in support of its findings. Within six months of having taken that or some period of months, I don't recall him ever giving a speech on any subject where he didn't address that issue. He addressed the issue that they were taking up for the national commission when he gave speeches to the egg producers or whoever he was speaking to. He would bring up this issue and do that, and of course, he was in great demand as a speaker anyway, who people wanted to hear about this from him and everything. So it became, as we prepared draft speeches for him and things like that in our office, that was always something we needed to include or at least give him a departure point

so he could talk about that, because he always wanted to talk something about that, because he became very committed to these findings and what they said and very engaged in the entire issue.

DePue: Were you still in the role as assistant press secretary/speechwriter for him, during this timeframe?

Feurer: I was hired to be the assistant press secretary, but Governor Kerner was never that interested in press. When Chris Vlahoplus became his press secretary and was very open, he didn't need an assistant press secretary, really. So I really became an administrative assistant almost. Now, that's not completely true because if we needed help on press things, I was obviously the guy that did it, because I was familiar with the press. When Chris Vlahoplus became ill for several months at one point during the Kerner Administration, I became the acting press secretary, during that period of time. I guess you could argue things like coordinating speechwriting and writing speeches and ghosting, you know I did the drafts. He had newspaper column, I think I mentioned, and a radio program called, *Your Governor Reports*, and I would often do the first drafts of those things. So I did all of the press secretary stuff I suppose. I was liaison with a number of departments; I handled a lot of correspondence that could have been press secretary stuff too, I suppose. I sort of was a "jack of all the trades that weren't covered by anybody else" person in the office.

DePue: I guess one of my questions is, how much of your time then was dealing with his job on this commission versus his job as being governor of the state?

Feurer: Very little of our time. The commission had a full-time staff and had a larger staff than the Governor's office for that matter, and so we didn't do anything of substance that I can recall. Dawn Clark Netsch was hired for a short time by the commission, and I don't think she was there too long but she was there. But outside of that… He wanted to bring in a revenue director named Ted Jones, and I think that's covered in that book also.

DePue: Right, right.

Feurer: Our staff wasn't involved in the substance of the commission at all. That staff was handled by the Washington staff of the National Commission of Civil Disorders. We had to educate ourselves. I probably had to educate myself most, because I did this mostly. I reviewed, except for the major speeches, which Chris Vlahoplus probably always did the initial draft on, like the budget address and like the state of the state message. Most other drafts were prepared either by myself or if he was speaking on a specific subject at a specific department, we'd ask for them to send over a draft. I would review it to make sure it was consistent as to style and length and the Governor's positions and everything else. And so once it became clear he wanted to speak about the Kerner Commission findings, I always was making sure something was in there about that too, so I probably learned more about it than anybody

else on our staff, because of the fact that I was tasked with making sure we had something, hopefully it was fresh and new but it was the same thing in a different way forum that we were being consistent with that report, because it was a long, complicated report, so not many people probably read that.

DePue: With its share of controversy.

Feurer: Well, with its share of controversy. I don't know that there was—the unanimity of the commission was such that I thought there was a minimum of controversy. The one who was the most disappointed, of course, was the President, who didn't want those kind of findings. He wanted either a finding of some conspiracy going on, or he wanted a finding that this is just a bunch of bad guys or something, I think.

DePue: You're talking about Johnson being upset that there was something, a conspiracy that was causing these riots.

Feurer: Or that it was just a bunch of opportunists, bad guys who were taking advantage of the couple of incidents to make trouble.

DePue: Let me read just a couple quotes that are going to be very familiar to you and just to refresh memories of the listeners here. Here's essentially what the commission—and you said that it was unanimous when the commission came out with its findings.

Feurer: That was my recollection; it was pretty much unanimous.

DePue: The root causes of the riots—and this is a direct quote—that "White racism was the root cause of urban violence." And then later on it says, "What the American public has never fully understood but what the Negro can never forget, is that white society is deeply implicated in his plight. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white morality condones it." And here's the most famous quote from the commission. "Our nation is moving towards two societies; one black, one white, separate and unequal."

This is all going to become very much a political football in the 1968 presidential election, and Nixon is going to make good use of some of these things in here, but by that time Kerner is kind of out of the picture to a certain extent. Any comments on just hearing that again?

Feurer: Well, I think you've got a couple of the core statements that were in that report and I think that's true. And when you look at the makeup of the commission, it was certainly not a one size fits all kind of commission. There was a lot of different viewpoints and a lot of positions, and I'm sure they worked through that very thoroughly, to make sure they all could sign off and reach that. I think the conclusions came as a surprise to many of the members of the commission by the end, I mean that they would ever agree to those kind

of conclusions because once they did the study, which they did very thoroughly it appeared to me, I think that they pretty much all came onboard with those kind of findings.

DePue: The commission's report, I think came out on March 1, 1968, a very early March of '68, so right at the beginning of a presidential election year. Do you recall the initial reaction to the report?

Feurer: I don't. There was great attention to it, but I don't call anything dramatic. There was a lot of interest and people wanted comments from the Governor and things like that, but I don't recall anything that adversely or favorably impacted how he was running the governorship for the rest of the time that he was governor, which wasn't that long, of course.

DePue: Well, let's turn our attention to that next step then. His decision to resign and become a Justice in the Federal Appeals Court in the Seventh District Court, how did that all come about? Well first of all, did you see or know anything that would suggest that Kerner wanted to move on from the governorship?

Feurer: I think he probably did but it wasn't something he discussed with me. I don't know if he discussed it with the rest of the staff or not, but I don't get the feeling he discussed it with anybody else. But yes, I think he was interested in that.

DePue: Would Vlahoplus have been the most likely person he would have…?

Feurer: The most likely person. If he discussed it with (someone), it probably would be Chris Vlahoplus, yes. But I think Governor Kerner always kind of hoped, at least in the back of his mind, that some day he would like to be on the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals, because his father had been on it and he thought it would be sort of a nice tribute, to go on the same bench that his father had been on and everything. I think that if he was interested in this, which I think he was, I think the Kerner Commission activities accelerated this, but I think it accelerated it not because of any controversy or anything that happened on the Kerner Commission. It happened because I think he got tired. I think he just sort of wore down. He was traveling back and forth and spending all this time and working seven days a week. No matter how good of shape you're in, that wears you down, and I thought he'd gotten worn down. But I never asked him that and he never offered that or volunteered that.

DePue: Would he have viewed the move from governor of a major industrial state, one of the largest states population-wise in the country, to being on the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals as being a demotion or a step down?

Feurer: No, I don't think so. He had the greatest respect for the judiciary; he'd been a judge. He'd been sort of an administrative judge as Cook County judge, but he had the respect for the judiciary and I think he would have viewed that as—I don't know if he would read it as a lateral move or he even thought about it. I

just think he would do that as sort of the culmination of a career that started out in the law and then finished up in the law.

DePue: There was an announcement in February that he wouldn't seek another term. Did that surprise you? February of '68.

Feurer: No.

DePue: Were you surprised when he was subsequently appointed to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals?

Feurer: No. There were rumors going around that he might be appointed to that, in advance, so that clearly was a possibility.

DePue: What did you think about the decision from his perspective?

Feurer: I thought it was the right decision for him. I thought he'd earned it, I thought he deserved it, and I thought he'd be a very good judge. And once you're a lame duck, you're a lame duck you know, and it didn't matter at that time particularly, because we still had biennial sessions and so there wasn't much going on in the legislature. You were just sort of marking time almost, once you make the decision you're not going to run again.

DePue: His moving to the courts has an impact on you and your life, and you're still a young man at the time. What were your thoughts about your future at that time?

Feurer: Well, I started thinking about it after he moved to the court.

DePue: But not beforehand?

Feurer: No, not really beforehand, no. Governor Shapiro took over and Governor Shapiro kept everybody who was working in Governor Kerner's office, and was a very nice man to work for. He was a good guy and he was very good to me as he was to everybody else. But I realized that even if Governor Shapiro won, that he would be leaving office at some point and that the older I got, the less transient I could become almost, in moving to some other kind of position. Now, many people who worked in those kind of positions later went on and became lobbyists or became public relations men or something like that, and I had no interest in doing either of those things. My wife said to me, "You've always wanted to go to law school; I'm surprised you're not thinking about that." And I said well you know, "I'm not thinking about it until just now."

DePue: How old were you in 1968?

Feurer: I was thirty-four. I thought about it, so I called the law school at the University of Illinois and said, how do you get in? They said well first you

have to take the LSAT test, and I said well when is that offered and they said the last one we'll consider for this next class is this next Saturday. This was on a Monday. I said is it too late for me to get a hold of that or something, how do you do that, and they said, well call Princeton, New Jersey, where they issued it from, so I did and they said if you wire some money, we'll wire admission to you, to the law school exams. I wired it and six days later is when I took the LSAT law school admission test at the University of Illinois, which was where they also offered it, and I filed an application at the University of Illinois Law School.

I was so naïve. I have to tell you about this issue, that I thought I'll just go to my state law school and didn't think further about it. I sent in my application and subsequently got an acceptance. About a month later I got a letter saying we've got fourteen hundred on the waiting list, so it said if you're not coming tell us. I about had a heart attack. (chuckles) I hadn't backed myself up by applying anywhere else; you know I just assumed that I was going to do that.

Governor Shapiro was very good to me about that and he says look, if you want to go to Chicago, the branch in Chicago, you can go part-time and be manager at my Chicago office and go to school part-time, and you can still get through law school in four or five years.

DePue: At the University of Chicago, also?

Feurer: He was thinking in terms of Loyola or DePaul I think, because they had night schools. I appreciated that and I told him that and I said well, once I've made my decision, I now feel I'm fairly well along the way, that I'd prefer to get in and get it over with, which is what I did. I went straight through law school, two and a half years, and got out.

DePue: I'm thinking it wouldn't hurt for a law school to say we've got somebody who's a student here, who was working in the inner circle for Governor Kerner's staff.

Feurer: I don't think they paid much attention to that. Governor Kerner was invited over some time in the fall of my freshman year, probably just a month or two after I was there, to speak to an all school convocation of the law school. He spoke about the Kerner Commission and I knew he was there. It was a big crowd and so I thought, I'll catch him afterwards you know, because people just wanted to shake his hand, talk to him. So I sat in the back of the crowd and got there at the last minute, and so he got up and he says, "Before I start my speech, I want to tell you about one of my former staffers." I didn't even know he'd seen me. He had excellent vision. At that age, I couldn't see as well as he could obviously, and he introduced me, so I stood up.

Later I saw him and he was with the dean, and we talked for a few minutes, and then he turned to the dean and said, "How's he doing?" The dean says great, great. So we go on and the dean bounced back and said, "You're doing all right aren't you?" (both laugh) He had no idea that I had been on the Governor's staff and had no idea how I was doing.

DePue: So like the Governor himself, you were successful in keeping a fairly low profile in law school.

Feurer: I did my best to keep a low profile. I think the Governor appeared to like me and I appreciated it, and I wonder if he liked me because I kept a low profile.

DePue: What did you think about Sam Shapiro?

Feurer: I liked Sam Shapiro.

DePue: Do you think he was up to the job?

Feurer: He was clearly up to the job, but he ran one of the worst campaigns I ever saw in my life. Sam Shapiro was an excellent legislator when he was a legislator, and when he became governor, he wasn't the kind of state officer that went out on the campaign trail all the time. He went back home to Kankakee, Illinois, where his wife lived and his family. He didn't have children, but his brothers and sisters all were there and he hung around with them. He basically was like the guy next door almost, a smart guy next door but the guy next door.

DePue: Interesting he's from Kankakee; that's a Republican stronghold.

Feurer: That is a Republican area but he first got elected because we had the cumulative voting system, and so they always would elect, even in the Republican area, there would be three legislators elected and one of them would always be from the opposition party, so he was that opposition party guy, because it was a very heavy Republican area.

When he was lieutenant governor, he showed great deference to the Governor all the time, and when we were on the Governor's staff, there would be occasions when the Governor would be gone; not often, but like on a trade mission one time, there was a prison riot. And we had a lot of trouble getting Lt. Governor Shapiro to make decisions that had to be made. The Governor would be out of touch and they didn't have communications like they do now, and he would finally do that very reluctantly you know and do it and say, you understand I'm just doing this because we've got to. And that happened three or four times, and I was a little concerned about when he became governor, whether he'd be very capable of making decisions, because he seemed to work so hard to avoid making decisions when he was lieutenant governor. Well I was very surprised by that, because the minute he took over as governor, he was very decisive and quick and sharp, and I finally just

concluded that he was being very deferential to the Governor and he was reluctant to make a decision that might be different from the one the Governor would make, and so he wanted to keep that to a very minimum.

But once he was governor, he was very decisive, he was very attentive to detail. He was kind of a low key guy too. He was very different from the Governor. He would wander out at lunchtime and go to the third floor concession stand at the State Capitol, get a hot dog and Coke, and then lean on the rotunda rail and have his hot dog and Coke. There's the Governor of Illinois all by himself. One gentleman told me he was up there with his son and he went over and introduced him as the Governor. His son was maybe twelve or something and his son wouldn't believe this was the Governor. The guy tried to persuade him that he was the Governor, and of course, Sam Shapiro thought that was very, very funny. This guy was very, very embarrassed, because he couldn't convince his son that this guy having a hot dog and Coke was the Governor of the state of Illinois. But that was Shapiro's style.

Shapiro I think became the logical candidate for governor then, but I don't think he'd even made up his mind then that he wanted to be governor almost, and I thought he took two or three months before he realized not only that he liked it but he was good at it. But by then, I don't think he ever got himself rolling again in his campaign to be sufficient to beat Governor Ogilvie. Shapiro was very personable, and if you had taken Governor Ogilvie, who was a smart, bright guy, but no one would claim was a real personable kind of guy. If you introduced him to a hundred people and then say who you voting for, Shapiro would get most of the votes I think, because he was that kind of guy, he was a good guy, but he just hadn't done any homework. If he had been like a Michael Howlett or somebody, who went to every Democratic meeting in the state of Illinois for five or six years, Shapiro, I think would have been a winner even based on that, because he had been around a lot, but just he wasn't out campaigning.

I'll tell you one very interesting story about Shapiro that I still remember, when I was still working there. I don't know where Chris Vlahoplus was, but I was still around. Nelson Rockefeller was running for President of the United States and had wangled an invitation to speak to a joint session of the Illinois General Assembly at a certain time. So Rockefeller, who must have been Governor of New York at the time I guess, he rolls into town with two busloads of people following him, all reporters and everything. So he comes up to make a courtesy call on Governor Shapiro first. Well, before he can do that, somebody from the press bus contacts me and said they'd like to have the photographers get in there and take a picture of him coming through the door, so he could greet the Governor, is that possible? I said yes, that's possible.

So I went out to meet Governor Rockefeller, so he comes in followed by this horde of people and just myself, and I said Governor, they've asked if you can delay just a moment, just for the reporters and photographers could get in there and take a picture of you coming through to meet the Governor. So Rockefeller said fine, and immediately turns to one of the secretaries and starts chatting with her, and they all stampede past him like a horde of locusts you know. They get in there and once the secretary gives me the word, I said, "Okay, he's ready to see you now Governor."

So then he goes in through the door, you know, and the Governor gets up to greet him. I go through a minute or two later, after they stopped taking the initial pictures, and watched. Governor Rockefeller sits down, they just said hello and Governor Rockefeller said, "I'm really pleased to be here Governor," he says, "I haven't been to Illinois in many years, it's a lovely State Capitol…" Blah blah, and he goes on and on. It was very clear he's on camera, where the cameras were, and these guys are elbowing each other and swearing at each other, get out of my way and so forth. Anyway, they get pictures, and they're just hanging all over the place, they just surround this desk. And so when he finishes his speech he says, I think they're waiting for me upstairs, I have to be going, and so they stand up. Shapiro hadn't said a word hardly, the entire time. When he finishes Governor Shapiro says, "I'm glad we could have this nice, informal chat." And Governor Rockefeller said, "Yes, thank you Governor." And so Rockefeller heads for the door and just before he gets to the door, it sinks in what Shapiro just said, and he turns around and gives a very genuine laugh, and goes on his way and goes through the door. Shapiro sits down and starts working again at his desk. (laughs)

DePue: Those are the kind of anecdotes I like, because it illustrates both those personalities.

Feurer: Yes it does.

DePue: And what's going on.

Feurer: Yes, yes.

DePue: Okay, this is the question we have to ask though. Every other time we talked about these election campaign and politics, Daley always factors in. So what's the connection between Daley and Shapiro?

Feurer: Well, no Democrat running for governor in his right mind, except for maybe Dan Walker, would ever unnecessarily antagonize Daley. Shapiro had been a Democrat, had been a delegate to Democratic Conventions, was endorsed by the Cook County Organization for lieutenant governor, both in 1960 and in 1964. So he wasn't a member of that organization but he clearly was liked by them and continued to be liked by them and they continued to endorse him.

Now, Kerner had probably forced their hand by leaving office early, because then he became Governor and it would have been kind of awkward to nominate one of the other candidates who indicated they were certainly available, like the other Democratic state officials or something.

DePue: Like Howlett, for example.

Feurer: Yeah, like Howlett or somebody like that. Kerner liked Shapiro and Shapiro always did anything Kerner would ask him to do, fill in for him if he needed him to do anything like that. And at that time, I think it was still the lieutenant governor also presided over the Senate as president pro tem.

DePue: That's right.

Feurer: I think that was still true in '68. So of course, he had functions, he had things he did, and he was a knowledgeable, experienced legislator. He was one that Kerner would call upon for advice if he needed advice in dealing with the legislature, because Shapiro had been a member for a long time, was well liked and knowledgeable.

DePue: Was Shapiro more under the sway of the Daley people?

Feurer: Well, the lieutenant governor didn't have a lot of responsibilities except running the Senate, so there wasn't much to be held sway over. I suppose you know, he would have supported the positions of the Democratic Party, and some of those bills would have things to do with Chicago or Cook County, and typically the Democratic Party would support those propositions because the Democratic organization was so important to the Democratic Party of the state of Illinois. I would expect that Shapiro would have supported those positions too.

DePue: And I'm assuming that Ogilvie, part of his campaign was that Shapiro was a tool of the Daley Administration?

Feurer: Probably, probably, or would be.

DePue: Okay. Do you recall Gene Callahan? Was this the timeframe that Callahan started to work for Shapiro as well?

Feurer: Well, he took my place. I left for law school in September.

DePue: September of '68?

Feurer: Yes, and Callahan took my place.

DePue: So you don't have any direct experiences with Callahan?

Feurer: Well, I know Callahan extremely well, he's a very good friend of mine, but I didn't work with him. He was working I think, for the Department of Agriculture at that time, but I knew him when he was a reporter for the *State Journal Register* or the *Illinois State Register*, at that time I think, and so he was around the Capitol all the time, was a very knowledgeable reporter. He probably got more information than any other single reporter.

DePue: How about Paul Simon? Was that somebody that you dealt with during those last years?

Feurer: I knew Paul Simon very well, too. Paul Simon: I always had great respect for his judgment, because he offered me a job once, being editor of one of his weekly newspapers. He had a chain of weekly newspapers that he owned with several other people, and he asked me if I'd consider that. It was a small town near here that I liked, but my wife was from Chicago and she decided it was too small a town and she couldn't probably bring herself to live in that small a town, so I didn't take that. I liked Paul Simon though, very much.

DePue: I don't know if you want to or if this is appropriate, but I wanted to talk a little bit about… Sixty-eight is such a crucial year in American history, so I wanted to get your thoughts about Kerner's views about the Vietnam War. In our last session, we talked a little bit about he personally knew William Westmoreland, because he was on Westmoreland's staff from World War II.

Feurer: Sure, sure, he was second in command to him.

DePue: And I think he took the trip to Vietnam in 1965. All of this is leading up to, I guess, what's going to happen in Chicago at the Democratic Convention in '68, in August, and both Kerner and Shapiro thoughts about all of that.

Feurer: I don't recall having ever hearing Kerner discuss the Vietnam War. He probably followed it with interest, particularly since Westmoreland was over there, and he was very high on Westmoreland. He thought Westmoreland was a wonderful officer, but I don't recall ever hearing him speak pro or con about the Vietnam War. That doesn't mean he didn't. I just don't recall that. It wasn't much of an issue in state politics in the state of Illinois.

DePue: You've got Martin Luther King's assassination in April of '68, you've got Lyndon Johnson bowing out of the race, I think right before that time. You've got Robert Kennedy's assassination in June or early July, I think it's June. These are tough times for the United States psychologically, and then you've got the Democratic Convention. Your thoughts about all of that and especially about what you saw going on at the Democratic Convention.

Feurer: Well, I was on the staff of the 1968 Democratic Convention, because Governor Shapiro was the Chairman of the Rules Commission. But that was the week I was starting law school, so I told him I'd be glad to go and help him out, but I can only do that for about three days, because then I had to go

to law school and had enrolled in law school. So I missed most of the excitement. They were having demonstrations when I was there. We were staying in the Conrad Hilton Hotel; there were people in the streets, the hallways were clogged with demonstrators. There wasn't any particular adversity at the time I was there; I mean people weren't even arguing. People were shaking their signs if they were demonstrators. Every time the TV lights would come on, they'd pick up their signs and start shaking their signs, and when the TV lights went off, they'd put their signs back down.

But what happened in Grant Park and everything else all took place after I had left. I had thought it was a very aggressive bunch of demonstrators, aggressive in the sense that they were numerous and they were around all over the place, but I hadn't seen anything that suggested that there was going to be the kind of problems that developed. It clearly was a disaster for the Democratic Party, but I was caught by surprise by it.

DePue: Your personal feelings about the demonstrations that were going on?

Feurer: Well, I wasn't familiar with anything that would have incited the kind of response that the police allegedly demonstrated, and whether that was justified or not, but of course I wasn't out there wandering around Grant Park, taking a walk or anything either, so I didn't know. I was very much caught by surprise by what happened and the disputes and the fighting and the arrests and everything that happened there.

DePue: Are you suggesting then, that the police did overreact to it all?

Feurer: I don't know. I don't know whether they did or not. I think it's probably true that they overreacted, because of the fact that you saw enough things on TV to suggest that there was a certain amount of overreaction, just some things that were televised by cameramen that you could see, and you couldn't understand why it was getting that violent. I don't know how much they were incited or how much they were stimulated to do that kind of thing by demonstrators, so I have no idea about that.

DePue: Well, here's one of the other ironies of the whole affair. Dan Walker, I think who was at Montgomery Ward's as a senior executive, and a lawyer, gets selected to head up the commission to study the riots and ends up calling them a police riot. And of course, we know how that's going to play a few years down the road when he runs for governor himself.

Feurer: Sure.

DePue: Let's turn to a different story then, and that's Otto Kerner's legal troubles, that happened entirely after he got out of office. I don't know how to start this. Are you wanting to kind of lay the groundwork for this?

Feurer: Let me tell you a little about it. Everything I know about that is virtually hearsay, but I have some opinions, so I'll give you my opinions, but it's not based upon any knowledge of the facts or anything.

I worked for Governor Kerner for almost five years. I never saw a single thing when I was there that suggested to me he would do anything improper or illegal or would be inspired by money or contributions or stock or anything else, the entire time I was there. I think I told you the story earlier, about when somebody wanted to call and fix the ticket one time. Didn't I tell you that story?

DePue: I believe so, yeah.

Feurer: Go ahead, I'm sorry.

DePue: Well, I just wanted to take a couple minutes, maybe to introduce Mrs. Marjorie Everett as one of the key players, and then kind of turn it back over to you here. Horseracing had been an institution in Illinois for quite a while, harness racing especially. Mrs. Margaret Everett had inherited a couple racetracks from her father and also inherited his passion for the sport of horseracing and harness racing in particular I think. She also inherited his skills as a businessman and seemed to be very wiley and charismatic and persistent in trying to make sure that politicians and newsmen and other people always acted favorably in her respect as far as horseracing is concerned. And here's a quote from the book again, *Kerner: The Conflict of Intangible Rights*. At the beginning of 1970, when the Internal Revenue Service starts a probe, looking into what's going on with Illinois politicians and others in the state in reference to their taxes. "Everett, threatened by state officials' power over her livelihood, had sold Kerner and Isaacs stock in Chicago Thoroughbred Enterprises, at a below market, bargain price." And the two investigators then, had to… "The two men…" I'm sorry. "… in disposing of the stock, had declared a capital gain on which should have been reported as ordinary income from their extortion of Everett." So this is kind of the seed that started the IRS to look harder into what maybe Kerner was doing. I might have jumped ahead a little bit and I'm going to turn it over to you here.

Feurer: Sure. Well, we were in Springfield and I don't recall ever having been involved in a single meeting involving racetracks. I don't remember ever having met anybody from the racetrack industry who had anything to do with racetracks. I don't recall being ever with Governor Kerner, going to a racetrack with him. I never remember him mentioning anything about racetracks or expressing any interest in racing or racetracks or anything like that. Racetracks were almost a non-item as far as we were concerned.

As I say, I personally believe that Governor Kerner was completely honest on these things and very straightforward. I think that you know, he

shouldn't have probably purchased racetrack stock, but I'm not even sure how conscious he was that he had some sort of apparent supreme power over the racetracks, because he appointed the Racing Commission. He didn't even make the ultimate decisions himself. Occasionally, there was legislation that came floating through there. Paul Powell was a big friend of the racetracks and there would be legislation floating through the General Assembly which might give somebody an extra day or change the number of races they could have, or something like that. They tended to be very minor pieces of legislation and I paid no attention to them and I don't think anybody in the office paid much attention to them when they did that kind of thing.

Racetracks of Illinois did not have a cheerful history, however. A number of years earlier—and this is all hearsay too, but I think I recall this story correctly. There had been a group who wanted to start a racetrack called Aurora Downs, and so Aurora Downs got authority from the legislature, and some time around the time they got that authority, Aurora Downs sold a bunch of stock to a number of legislators, all the legislative leaders primarily. And these legislative leaders were allowed to buy the stock at a very bargain price and furthermore, in case they didn't have the money, they were allowed to wait and pay for it until the first dividend was declared, and then pay for it out of their first dividend, which is I believe what happened. Somebody broke this story and won a number of awards I think, but nobody ever got tried or went to jail or was accused of anything as a result of doing any of that. So therefore, the racetracks were a very good thing to steer clear of, from the standpoint of most politicians, and the Governor probably should have understood that there's no way you can come out looking good if you have anything to do with racetracks particularly.

I think the Chairman of the Racing Commission was a guy named William Miller, and if my recollection was right, Miller was a Republican who was a carryover from the Stratton Administration. I'm sure he was a carryover from the Stratton Administration. I'm not completely sure he was a Republican, because Kerner never made a big deal of that, as I told you. He asked me one time and I think I told you, after I joined him, whether I was a Democrat or Republican. He said it didn't make any difference but I probably ought to know, and I said I was a Democrat and he says, good. We had no idea with many of these people, what they were when he named them. I'm not sure he had any idea. I think they told him but it didn't appear to be something he asked. He certainly didn't ask when he hired me, as to whether he did that or not.

But as a lawyer, if somebody declares something as capital gains as opposed to ordinary income, is typically not the kind of thing you go to jail for. You get an audit from the IRS and they say, you've got to make it ordinary income, and you either agree or don't agree and you can fight that out civilly in the courts, you know, instead of bringing out a criminal penalty. But the courts and the Federal Government was relying on this rule, talking

about where they used this "intangible rights," which was a concept that they used to basically charge people when they couldn't figure out exactly what they'd done wrong, but that they thought they had obviously put themselves in a position to do wrong, because they had gotten some sort of uneven benefit that they wouldn't have gotten if they didn't hold public office or something. So that's what they were relying on when they did that.

I think an awful lot of people in Illinois, including myself, were sympathetic. Just let me read you a paragraph, if I might, from this. This is a book, an author who was a lawyer, who formerly worked for the Justice Department, who wrote a review of the book that we just talked about, by Schlickman and Barnhart. Just let me read you this first paragraph, because I thought it was interesting and I thought it represented the position of many people. This author, his name was James L. Swanson, wrote:

"When I was a boy, I asked my grandmother, Elizabeth Kosloff, a veteran employee of several of Chicago's now defunct dailies, about the glossy photo hanging on her wall, 'Who was that man standing beside her at a black tie dinner, holding her arm-in arm? With his good looks and distinguished bearing, he looked like an actor.' 'That's Governor Otto Kerner,' she sighed. 'e was a good man, then they got him.'" That, in a nutshell, was the sentiment of a new biography of Kerner. That was the start of his review of this, a very extensive review, he wrote about this. That was the sentiment not only of that book, that's the sentiment I think, of an awful lot of people.

There was a field of thought, which I will mention but I don't subscribe to, which thought that Kerner was charged by the Nixon Administration because he had won so handily, the governor, in 1960, that he had also caused Kennedy to beat Nixon by ten thousand votes and therefore, Nixon was still mad. Nixon may have still been mad, but even if it had gone the other way, Nixon still had Texas to contend with, where there was some dispute. I mean he wouldn't have won the election and Nixon, in fact, never made a big deal of that and I never subscribed to that theory.

I tend to subscribe more to another theory that went around, which was that Republicans in Washington had an enemies list, and that included anybody who was a successful Democrat. If they could find some way to get them, they would get them, and therefore, they wanted to get Kerner. And the rumor, a substantial rumor, a longstanding rumor that went around was, is that Thompson in the U.S. District Attorney's Office in Chicago didn't even want to prosecute Kerner but was ordered to do so by Washington. Now Thompson was asked that.

DePue: We're talking about the same Jim Thompson that became governor in '76?

Feurer: The same Jim Thompson, yes that's right. Thompson was asked about that and he denied that was true, so perhaps that's true. That would hold more credibility for me than the first rumor.

DePue: To make sure I understand, what is it that Thompson denied?

Feurer: He denied that his office had recommended to the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington that they not indict Kerner. He denies they recommended that, that that had been ordered to do so anyway. That's what the rumor was.

DePue: And Thompson is also an appointee of the Nixon Administration?

Feurer: Yes, oh yes, he was, I'm sure. And you do what your boss told you to do. I mean, I'm sure when Kerner was U.S. Attorney, if he didn't want to prosecute somebody and was instructed to do it, he'd do it.

DePue: Well here's another irony. Thompson has got the same job that Kerner previously held.

Feurer: Yes, that's right, that's right. You know, I'm not familiar with the circumstances; I didn't attend the trial, but I read about it fairly avidly and was concerned, and I just have several comments. They all relate to the fact that I think Governor Kerner was innocent. Why was he convicted? And so let me address that if I can briefly, and then I'll drop the subject.

DePue: Absolutely.

Feurer: One thing was, I thought he had poor defense lawyers. I've read two or three critiques of the defense and they all suggest that he had poor defense lawyers; they did a very poor job. They were from out of state, Washington, D.C. They were a member of the firm of Williams & Connolly, I think. [Paul] Connolly was his defense lawyer, but I believe at the time they were engaged, if you read again, the book, it says [Edward Bennett] Williams was a much better known and nationally renowned defense lawyer, was the one who was supposed to have been the defense lawyer, and then dropped out and Connolly, who was mostly a civil practice lawyer, took over the defense.

Secondly, they were out-of-state lawyers. And I've never asked Governor Kerner about most of these things, although there's one thing I did ask him about at one time. They were out-of-state lawyers and no one could understand why he hired an out-of-state law firm, as opposed to one of the lawyers in Chicago he'd be very familiar with. Most people felt, for example, that the lawyer that Ted Isaacs hired, whose name I don't recall, was a very good lawyer and did a very good job for Ted Isaacs, while they felt that the lawyers that Kerner hired did a poor job for Kerner.

I asked Governor Kerner once why he hired an out-of-state lawyer and he said well, because when he was found innocent, he'd go back on the bench,

and if he hired a lawyer from Chicago, who was a defense lawyer in a criminal matter, who did a lot of criminal work, he'd have to disqualify himself every time that man's firm came before him as a judge. He said he'd just have to disqualify, because the criminal bar, particularly the high price criminal bar, was a fairly small group. It was very likely he'd have to just disqualify himself as a judge many times doing that, and he felt therefore, he'd be better off getting an out-of-town law firm. That might well have been true with him sitting on the bench, but I don't think that was true in him getting a good, competent defense.

One of the things that makes me suggest that I didn't think they did a good job, for example, is it has been described to me; for example, one of the witnesses who was called by the defense, which would have been Governor Kerner's lawyers… No excuse me, he was called by the prosecution, I'm sorry. He was called by the prosecution, somebody who had worked on legislation, and they said that when the gentleman was testifying, the man examining him from the U.S. Attorney's Office says, "Do you remember House Bill 424?" The man would say no. So the prosecutor would look over to the jury and sort of nod his head and he says, "What about House Bill 568?" No. He would look over, nod his head again, you know, would do this with about eight guys, and the guy felt completely guilty by the time he was finished, because he didn't remember any of these bills. And then the defense lawyers let that go. If you had anybody that knew what they were doing and knew anything about state government, they would know first of all, that in Governor Kerner's Administration, there were four House Bill 564s, one each every biennium.

Secondly, they would have known that there was, as I just read to you, approximately twenty-five hundred bills every biennium, about twenty-five hundred that passed. There were more than that. I mean the ones that didn't pass counted too, so you probably had four thousand numbers to keep track of or something, for each biennium. And if you had asked the man, how many bills do you remember by bill number, he would probably think of none, unless there was one very prominent one that he'd had something to do with. So he wouldn't have known any of them. They apparently were all racetrack bills but who knows, but they didn't make that point at all, so the jury was getting a very good idea that it was part of a big cover-up you know, when you get those kind of questions. But it's just not the kind of question a person could answer correctly. Well, that's one of the things that made me think that.

I also think that one of the big problems was that Kerner was an innocent man, and I think when you're an innocent man, you act differently than when you're a guilty man. I think one of the things you do as an innocent man is when the IRS calls you and they want to talk to you about something, you talk to them. You say, well I didn't do anything wrong, and so you go in and talk to them, and talk at length, you know. If you're a guilty man, you say I want to talk to my lawyer. Or even if you think there's a risk you could be

held guilty, or if you're a suspicious man or if you're a skeptical man, if you're a cynical man, it doesn't matter. If you think there's a possibility you're in trouble, you call a lawyer and say, "I'll be glad to talk to you; I want my lawyer here first."

DePue: But in the book they did talk about—the authors did talk about one of those early occasions—when the IRS agents came over to his office, they also read him his Miranda rights. So at that point in time, you would start to think…

Feurer: I think if you're the second highest bench in the land and if you had been a general, a U.S. Attorney, a county judge in one of the largest courts in the country, governor for eight years, nobody has ever suggested you're a liar, nobody's ever suggested you're a crook,—nobody had ever suggested that so far as I know ever, about Otto Kerner—that you get a false sense of security. You think, how can anybody suggest that; my record is clear, it's open, I've got nothing to be afraid of and I'm a judge. I know about this stuff.

And then I don't think they took notes, as I recall. They just interviewed him and then testified based on their recollection I think, is what they had to do. They didn't have a tape or not anything like you're doing right here, for example. Can you imagine how well you would do on this project if you just said, I'm going to talk to you for several hours, two or three times, and I'm going to jot down my recollections later. You'd better stand by them, because I remember what you said.

DePue: Which is what newsmen used to do in the old days, huh?

Feurer: That's right. Well, we wrote down stuff normally, you know, that's why we carried those little pads of paper around. But the fact is it doesn't set you up to be a very smart defendant, when you have that kind of history. People are terrific at telling how great a guy you are all the time. It's just astonishing how hard it is to fight that off; when you're even working in the Governor's office, they tell you how great you are. If you can go to the bathroom without falling down, they praise you practically. It's just, people are professionals at telling you how wonderful you are, and you're surrounded, being watched by sycophants and people who tell you that all the time. It was pretty hard, no matter how modest or demure you are. You start thinking after a while, I must be pretty good you know, and you just start thinking that. I think that happens to people and I think it happens to people in positions of responsibility.

It was suggested in this same review that I read you that excerpt from, that one of Kerner's problems is he'd never been up through the political system, he'd never been through the legislative system, he'd never been used to being challenged and having somebody suggest he was wrong on something. He hadn't been through the trial by fires, and therefore, he was vulnerable to this kind of attack.

The other thing that makes me think that there was a problem is he insisted on testifying and any lawyer would tell you, even these lawyers from Washington must have told him, I don't know, "You don't testify, you don't testify at all." Everybody I talked to who observed the trial said Kerner would have won that trial if he'd never testified. And they tell you not to testify. They say it can get you in too many things, just like the legislation I talked about, when they started asking Kerner questions about certain bill numbers. He didn't remember those bill numbers any more than anybody else, and those kind of things. And it doesn't take much. They prepare their case, they need to find some inconsistency in what you're saying, which isn't hard when you had a long life and all the activities he's had, to do that.

DePue: Are you suggesting because they were saying "I don't recall", that the impression was that they were being evasive?

Feurer: Oh yeah, I think, yeah, yeah. That's the impression the prosecution left. And the one person that testified that told me this, who I prefer not to identify, but told me this, said he practically felt guilty when he left the stand. I mean they were very good at it. He said he practically felt like he was a crook himself when he went up there, because he couldn't remember these numbers. He couldn't remember any of those numbers. Well, they can do that to you. And the other reaction is if they don't beat you down, you know they get you mad. And then when you get mad, well, then that works against you too, and that's what happened to Kerner.

I assume Kerner's lawyers told him he shouldn't testify under any circumstances, and I assume he insisted on doing that. And I think he insisted on doing it because he didn't just want to be found innocent; he wanted to be found justified. He wanted to be found that he was pure of heart and had done all these things and everything, went in there. And what happened is Thompson got him angry and got him mad, and he came across as being arrogant, as they said in the books, I think. And I think he comes across as arrogant because the jury is thinking, wait a minute; this guy is being tried for a federal crime, why should he be acting so angry and mad right now? His manner suggests he's lying, You know, obviously he's going to lie if he doesn't want to be convicted or something like that. So in a sense, it's almost a "can't win" situation for the person to testify if he's a defendant.

And they'll say all these other governor's trials, I can't remember a single governor who has ever testified in any of these trials. Stratton, I don't think he testified when he was tried, and he won. I don't think the ones that lost, Ryan, Walker, those guys, I don't think they testified. They lost, but they still would have been in worse shape.

DePue: Walker pled guilty, so it never got to a trial.

Feurer: Oh did he? Okay, I didn't know about Walker. But the ones I'm familiar with never wound up testifying. So not only did he testify, then he made the mistake of getting angry when he was in there. So I think it was a combination of those circumstances which caused him to be convicted.

You know it's interesting, people told me he was truly angry when he was on trial. I never saw him angry. I never saw Governor Kerner angry in my life or visibly angry, except for one time and that was after he got out of prison. I mean he was very composed, he was very controlled, he was very mature about things. Even when people say ludicrous things or insulting things, he didn't raise his voice, he didn't shout at them. I mean he would say something like "You think that's a real barnburner, huh?", just like I told you about. But he was obviously irritated and angry then, but the fact is he didn't raise his voice. But they said he was visibly very angry at the trial when they were basically insinuating he was lying and doing those kind of things, which is what they did. Any skillful prosecutor suggests that when they're trying to prosecute.

When Kerner came back, out of prison, when he had cancer and was released early, they had at least fifteen hundred people there from Springfield. And I was around him at the time and after they had finished, a local physician came up to him, who knew Kerner well and said, Governor, he said you know, this has just been ludicrous, you had to go to prison, and I just want to tell you, I apologize for all the people of Illinois. He says, everything you did for this state, if you did something wrong you should be forgiven for, you should never have gone to prison. And then Governor Kerner got really mad and says, if I'd done something wrong or I'd done what they charged me with, he said I should still be in prison. He says, I shouldn't have gone to jail because I was innocent, not because I should be forgiven for something. He was obviously visibly angry really, at this man who was trying to support him, but this guy was going on the presumption he was guilty, but that it would be minor compared to all the good he'd done. Kerner's position was that if he was guilty, he should have gone to jail, but he shouldn't have gone to jail because he wasn't guilty.

DePue: Well, the facts are though that he was convicted.

Feurer: He was convicted, he was convicted of a crime and then as again, the Barnhart/Schlickman book points out, convicted under a law that was later found to be unconstitutional, but when his family tried to appeal, they said it was too late, it's moot, because he's died and we can't pardon him and we can't reverse that.

DePue: Well, I think it was in *Mostly Good and Competent Men*, which is written by Robert Howard, that Kerner was convicted of—or the charges were conspiracy, income tax evasion, mail fraud, making false statements, perjury and bribery.

Feurer: I think if you ever wind up talking to Tony Kerner, Tony Kerner could address many of those issues, because he spent a lot of time looking into it. He's not a lawyer, Tony, but he's learned a lot about this.

DePue: Well, we certainly hope to be able to do that.

Feurer: Yeah, I think he'd be willing to do that.

DePue: So, July of '74, Kerner steps down, resigns from the bench. He's sent to prison in Lexington. This is a federal prison and these are federal crimes. He's convicted for twenty months, but at the time he went, did he already know he had lung cancer?

Feurer: I don't know; I don't think so.

DePue: He's released May of 1975 with lung cancer, and you talked about how emotional that was, when he came back. He dies May 9, 1976, so a year after he's been released. Is his wife still alive at the time?

Feurer: No. His wife died, as I recall, while he was appealing his conviction. I think he'd been convicted but he was appealing the conviction and was free on bond, as I recall, when his wife died.

DePue: Now here's a woman who's had tons of problems in her own case. How hard was it on her to have him going through that experience?

Feurer: Well, I assume it had to be very hard, but I never heard anybody discuss that.

DePue: Okay. Now again, you've expressed very clearly that you believe the man was innocent.

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: But in terms of eventually getting convicted, you've talked about that. So would you be able to identify the fatal error or the fatal flaw in Otto Kerner that led to his conviction?

Feurer: Well, I don't know if there's necessarily a flaw. I think the fatal flaw was trusting his own ability to handle this matter, instead of turning it over to a third party. I think he made a couple of errors even after the trial started. One was taking the stand and the second was becoming angry and coming across as being angry, and some jurors thought it was arrogance and so forth. But the people that talked to me said that the prosecution really didn't have a very good case and hadn't made it until they got Governor Kerner on the stand and got him mad, and got him angry, which he didn't come across as being sympathetic.

DePue: While we're in this territory here, I'll ask you one more question and then we'll kind of turn back to your career here. Today, we look back and recently, it wasn't that many months ago, that Rod Blagojevich was sentenced to prison, and so now you've got Rod Blagojevich; then working our way back, George Ryan, working our way back, Dan Walker and Otto Kerner. So I think four of the last seven governors have been convicted of federal crimes. You go back one more: William Stratton was indicted but not convicted. So this is all part and parcel to this reputation that Illinois has earned over the last several decades, for being one of the most corrupt states in the country.

Feurer: Yes.

DePue: I want to ask your opinion about your feelings, having Otto Kerner included in that mix.

Feurer: Well, I don't think he should be included in that mix, obviously. I mean, it hurts me every time I see it in there, when they mention him also as being in the same class, in the same group as people who had fairly clearly seemed to have committed crimes and then been found guilty of them. I think that the conviction of Otto Kerner did a great deal of damage to Otto Kerner. I heard Governor Kerner say himself, he can't get his reputation back. Somebody said he'd get his reputation back, and he said he'd never get his reputation back, and that was the worst thing he lost.

But I think that in some respects, even more damage was done to the fabric of the government of the state of Illinois, with the conviction of Otto Kerner, because of the fact that unlike most governors, people were still enchanted with Otto Kerner after his eight years as governor. People liked him, trusted him, thought highly of him. I think they had just lost some faith in government and faith in themselves, in somebody that they trusted and liked that well, was found guilty of a crime that they didn't completely understand, but he must have been guilty because he was found guilty, would be their theory. And I think that everybody else has had to operate against that premise almost, because of what happened then.

Governor Otto Kerner still maintained terrific popularity, even after he was convicted, among many, many people. A reporter told me a story that when Governor Thompson joined him for the first time in Southern Illinois or Central Illinois, somewhere, a Republican area, that he basically listed as one of his accomplishments, he convicted Otto Kerner, and the audience booed. This was a friendly audience supposedly and they booed him. Somebody told me later that he never mentioned it again when he campaigned in downstate Illinois. He mentioned it in the suburbs, because the suburbs had very little to do with the state of Illinois. They don't have any state facilities to speak of, they didn't have much experience with him, but the people that had experience in dealing with the state, with people like Otto Kerner, he still had a strong cadre of support. But then what happened is, there's another

substantial group that had strong support, who felt betrayed and assumed that the government was right, he must have been guilty of something, who now said if you can't trust Otto Kerner, who in the world can you trust, was sort of the theory.

DePue: Well, what would you like to say about your career beyond those years?

Feurer: I don't know if I need to say anything beyond it.

DePue: No, you don't need to.

Feurer: I went to law school, got out and came back. I was fortunate to work for Cecil Partee, the first black or African American, who had a legislative leadership position in any legislature in the country, and I enjoyed that for a couple of years, and I've practiced law in Springfield ever since.

DePue: Looking back then, let's focus primarily on your years then, with Otto Kerner. What was the thing that you were most proud of, that Kerner was able to accomplish in his administration?

Feurer: Well, I thought that it was probably the Governor's courage in the human rights field, because I mean he was ahead of his time in a sense, in that when he was for the Fair Employment Practices Commission. He was for fair housing; he was for women's rights. He had demonstrated that even earlier with the Boy Scouts, with the National Guard to some extent, and on equal opportunity and things like that. I think that was, in many respects, the most courageous thing he did, because he had the least to gain politically from it, and yet he did it and continuously did it.

I have been the attorney for the Illinois Board of Higher Education for about forty years, so I know a lot more about higher education than I do about a lot of these other subjects. Working in that field, which is far-reaching for the state of Illinois because of the whole community college system, the new colleges, the kind of things he did in higher education is an impact that will last forever.

I didn't think Governor Otto Kerner was a perfect man, but I didn't think he was fatally flawed in any way either. I thought he was as good as you're ever going to get in a governor of Illinois. And I liked it, about the fact that he had complete self-confidence, but he never seemed to feel it necessary to have people keep telling him that he was that good or that great or anything. He was a non-politician, I think, almost. Even though he was in politics for a great deal of time, I think one of those reviews I looked up, in fact used that term. I can't remember if that was the exact term they used or not when I was reading that. Oh yeah, here's this, "The un-politician." It says, "The un-politician, the first ever biography, looks at the mixed legacy of former Illinois Governor, Otto Kerner."

DePue: Can I ask you to read the citation here, and what newspaper and the date?

Feurer: Oh sure, sure. This was a newspaper review that was practically an entire page, taken from the *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, and the date of it was Sunday, March 19, 2000, and it was written by James L. Swanson, and James L. Swanson, who I have never met, don't know, is described as being an author and a lawyer who was a clerk for the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C., and served in the Justice Department.

DePue: Well, if we can then, after we get done with the interview, we'll make a photocopy of that and include that with the record of your interview here.

Feurer: Okay, sure, that would be fine.

DePue: You obviously think very highly of Governor Kerner. Of the governors that you're familiar with, and let's start with Stratton and work our way forward, how would you rank Otto Kerner in that mix, and take out the fact that he was convicted.

Feurer: Well, I'd rank him as the best governor in the bunch. I don't know if I told you this story but several months ago, one of the long-time Republican leaders in Sangamon County told me that—to please me I'm sure—but he told me he'd been talking to one of his veteran precinct committeemen and the committeeman was saying, you know, the last good governor we had in the state was Otto Kerner. And he's telling this to this Republican Leader. Of course, these are the people that knew him best, the ones here in Springfield. The fact that I worked for Otto Kerner has never been a black mark against me in Springfield, Illinois, because people in Springfield, Illinois, mostly were crazy about him. There weren't many people that thought he was guilty of anything in Springfield.

DePue: Would you classify him as a good governor or a great governor?

Feurer: Oh, I think he was a great governor. I can't think of a single other governor that's had the impact on the state of Illinois that he's had, in eight years or more. I think there's other governors who have done very good things. That's why I kind of wanted to repeat the litany of some of those things I mentioned. You were accusing me of being a press secretary but the fact is, when you think about how many of those things are with us, you know in higher education, in basic organizational changes he made. Mental health has never gotten involved in politics since he took over and put it on the right road, for example. Children and Family Services. Public aid didn't last but that was a choice administrations made, hadn't done so well. But he's done so many of the things having to do with human rights and so many of the things he's had to do with.

Every once in a while, as I mentioned to you before, that during his administration, a group of business and other leaders created the Lincoln

Academy, with his blessing, which is sort of basically Nobel Prizes, sort of like the Nobel Prizes, for Illinois. I saw something not too long ago they were meeting again, having their annual meetings. That started forty years ago and they're still doing that, giving pride I think, to the state of Illinois. He was always very interested in doing that.

DePue: What would you say would be the most exciting or maybe satisfying experience you had while working for Kerner?

Feurer: Oh, probably the night he got reelected was the most exciting time, because you'd hear what there had been, and you think things are going all right, but you're never sure. So that was a very exhilarating night for those of us who worked for him.

DePue: How about—setting aside again, his conviction—of the things he was trying to accomplish while governor, what was your biggest disappointment?

Feurer: Well, we were late to the non-discrimination in housing field, and that was something that he pushed for regularly and never got accomplished. But I'd like to think it's like the ram butting the dam, you know, eventually another ram came along and butted the dam and they got fair housing. So I thought we could have gotten a better handle on fair housing earlier, and we would have solved some of the segregated housing problems that I think we have in this state, and I think he realized that.

He had some interesting ideas. For example, when he talked about that billion dollar bond issue, he talked about the fact, I think he said there were seven state or federal reservoirs in Central and Southern Illinois, and he would like the idea to explore constructing a series of parkways to connect all of them, making sort of a recreation paradise. He had big ideas on things, doing things that would do that, and I never heard him shoot down even the most ludicrous suggestions without praising the people for thinking of them, and bringing them to his attention. And I think he liked having people run things by him, then he'd make the decision, of course, whether he would do that or not.

He was an interesting person to work for; he was very reserved, he was very private. I never heard him tell a joke, except maybe a humorous response once in a while. I never heard people telling him jokes. Maybe they did but I never heard any. He just didn't seem to lend himself to doing that you know. When you got off the plane in Chicago, for example, if you were with him, and there were four or five people getting off the plane, and somebody said to him, some observer said one of those people is the governor, which one is it? There would be no question who the governor was. He looked like a governor, he acted like a governor, had that military bearing you know. When Governor Shapiro would get off the plane, he looked like the guy next door, you know, and you'd say who's the governor and you'd have no idea who the governor

was, because they all looked about the same. Shapiro was kind of the good old guy next door.

Shapiro had a sharp, fine mind and was a lawyer, and I don't mean to suggest that there was anything wrong. I think there's this book, I think said that Otto Kerner was probably the first television candidate that ran in the state of Illinois, because he looked the part, he acted the part. Percy looked that way too. It surprised you on both Otto Kerner and then Charles Percy, that neither of them were very tall men, because when you saw them, they were built proportionately and they looked like they would be big people almost, but then when you saw them in person you were surprised, because you were taller than they were almost. They came across as being like that.

DePue: This has been a very important addition to our series on Illinois politics, and I really appreciate you spending the time talking to me. I'm very thankful that somebody suggested that I do this one, because otherwise, we might have missed the opportunity. I'll give you a chance to kind of say anything you'd like here in closing up.

Feurer: Well, I appreciate the opportunity to say something. I'm kind of reluctant to talk about these things in many ways, but I really wanted to do that because I didn't feel that anybody had done justice to the things he accomplished as governor, which I thought was one of his greatest accomplishments really. I've been surprised at the longevity of the Kerner Commission Report and how people still refer to it and use it as a bible in many respects. I don't know why I'm surprised, because I thought it was very well done. It's just an awful lot of those reports bite the dust after a fairly short time, and this one has had a great deal of survivability, which surprised me.

But I tend to think, because I'm biased and because I saw it I suppose, I tend to think the eight years he spent as governor were his major accomplishment, because of the major changes he made in the state and the things he did, and so many of them survived and still exist.

DePue: Thank you very much.

Feurer: Thank you.

(end of interview)