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Interview with John Daley

Date: 9 May 2007

Location: Office of Cook County Commissioner John Daley, Chicago, IL.

Present: John Daley, Dr. Robert V. Remini, Dr. Fred W. Beuttler, and Dr. David W. Veenstra

Robert V. Remini: Well, let me begin with some preliminaries. First of all, thank you for meeting with us and agreeing to do this. I hope you don't mind—I hope you don't mind the camera.

John Daley: I don't.

RVR: It's May 9, 2007. We're in Commissioner John Daley's office. You know that we will not use any of this material without your consent and approval. What we will do is that we will transcribe it and send it to you, and you can delete anything you feel that you want to delete or add any material that you want to add.

JD: Okay. That's fine.

RVR: Good. Does that cover everything?

FWB: Yes, that covers all of the initial stuff.

RVR: We're very interested to know more about your mother and father, and of course, what he did in creating the University of Illinois at Chicago. So I will begin by asking you—What's your earliest recollection of your mother and your father?

JD: You mean, just in general?

RVR: Yes, in general.

JD: It would probably be age three or four, maybe. It would be coming home, to our home on Lowe, to family parties there, with my mother's sisters, her brothers, and my dad's family. He was an only child, as you know. He had an aunt that was a sister in the Dominican Order, Sister Laurean, and she would come and visit us. It was at age three that I remember that. She would come every Christmas and visit us, during the Christmas holidays.

RVR: She was your mother's sister?

JD: No, she was my dad's aunt.

RVR: Oh.

JD: That was my grandfather Mike's sister, Sister Laurean. She would come with another sister, because at that time, when they left [the convent], they would always have to come with someone. So I remember that. Then that went on, as I grew older. Again, it was mainly with family. My dad—in reference to him, in knowing that he was the mayor, in that sense, it was probably in grade school. I remember someone saying that they had these signs saying, "Keep Chicago clean, Mayor Richard J. Daley." And a nun said, "Your father made these signs?" (JD and RVR laugh.) So the whole room busted out laughing. I said, "No. He's the mayor of Chicago." She said, "Oh." That was in the fourth grade.

RVR: You always knew him then as the mayor?

JD: Yes. He was the mayor to the other people, but not to us.

RVR: Right.

JD: But everyone referred to him as the mayor, yes.

RVR: What was he like at home?

JD: At home—when he'd come home, he would not bring the problems of the city home and discuss them. He'd discuss them, but I mean he would never bring the problems that occurred every single day and weigh us down. First of all, he was interested in what we were doing. He knew if we were having a test. The night before, he'd say, "Do you have your homework? Are you having a test?" Then, the next day, he'd say, "How did you do on that spelling test? How did you do on that math test?" So, he would come home and try to have dinner every night with us. If not, he'd be at the dinner table, because he had numerous banquets to go to. But he'd try not eating at those banquets—He'd stop and just make an appearance. But he had a pretty full schedule. He had a number of wakes to go to every night, and numerous times we would go with him on those.

RVR: He sounds like an ideal father.

JD: He was. And as I said, he was very involved, not only in our homework, but in our day-to-day lives. At school he was involved. He would go to the parent-teachers conference and listen to what the teachers said. We were at St. Ignatius—Bill and I went to Ignatius. That was unusual, because he went to De La Salle. Rich went to De La Salle, and Mike went to De La Salle, and I chose to go to St. Ignatius. I remember in eighth grade and the doorbell rang—It was in May, about this time—I saw the principle from De La Salle standing there. I thought, "Well, Rich must have gotten into some trouble." (JD, RVR, FWB, and DWV laugh). I said, "Can I help you?" He said, "I'm here to see you." I said, "Me?" I was like thirteen years old. Brother Theodore was his name. My mom was behind me—She said, "Come in, Brother." So we sat down at the table. He said, "Do you realize what you're doing?" I'm thinking, "What did I do?" He said, "You're ending the tradition of your family, and all of this. There's the history of your family at De La Salle." I'd never thought of that. I just wanted to go to Ignatius, without thinking of the reflection on De La Salle. So he said, "Well, I want you to rethink it." My mom said, "He's not rethinking it." He said, "Well, I'd like to meet with the mayor on this." As soon as he said that, I said, "You made a big mistake." (JD, RVR, FWB, and DWV laugh). So she said,

"No, we've decided. But if you want to meet the mayor, you can call and make an appointment." He was walking out and I walked him to the door—and as he was walking out, my dad was coming in. He stopped, and I could hear him say, "No, he made his choice, and that's it. It's over, Brother."

RVR: Let me ask—Is that the St. Ignatius...?

JD: It's on Roosevelt Road.

FWB: It's just south of UIC.

RVR: Wasn't that a scholarship school?

JD: No.

RVR: I thought it was.

JD: No.

FWB: They have scholarship students.

JD: They have some, yes. So anyway, we ran into him and my dad said, "He's made his decision, and that's it." And that was it.

RVR: Was he disappointed that you didn't go to his school?

JD: Not at all, no. He said, "It's wherever you want to go." He never made Rich go to De La Salle—or Mike. They made their own choice. I had one son go to Ignatius and one son go to De La Salle. My daughter went to public school. (RVR laughs.) But no, he never...

RVR: He was bipartisan. (RVR, FWB, and DWV laugh.)

JD: Throughout our lives, they would guide us. They would say, "It's your choice. It's your decision, you make it." It was the same with college.

RVR: I wonder if that Brother had gone to your mother and said, "Your son is breaking a tradition. Would you help us?" ...

JD: Well, she was sitting there. No, that was not smart. (FWB laughs.) Well, she was very strong on it, if he challenged her. And I said, "You've made a big mistake" (laughs).

RVR: I'm also interested in your mother, because to me, she was the most remarkable woman.

JD: Right. She played an important role in our lives, needless to say, as any mother does in your life. But she was really influential with my dad. She'd give him sound advice. When he'd come home, he would sit and discuss with her. He'd say, "What do you think of this?" and she'd give him her opinion, whether he liked it or not—You know, he'd listen to her.

RVR: Unfortunately, I only had six hours of sessions with her. We never got to the period with him.

JD: Well, they kept that very personal, all of that. But she would keep quiet about, starting with the state representative [campaign], how she was involved, and how her sisters were involved in the campaign. There was the state senator, state representative, and county clerk [campaigns], and I remember when he was running for mayor the first time. We went to numerous rallies that were held. The torchlight parade was held on Halsted. And he always concluded his election with a rally in the ward, and it ended up at—It used to be Ramova Theater, at Thirty-Fifth and Halsted. There would be a parade

down Halsted, and it would end up in front of the theater. Then, you'd go in and listen to the speeches and all that.

RVR: Did you go to that?

JD: Yes I did.

RVR: How old were you?

JD: In 1955 I was 9. There was a big one at Orchestra Hall, too. It was a big one for the city. I think it was Orchestra Hall. Then, there was another one in the ward. He usually ended his election for mayor with a rally in the ward, whether it was there or Healy School.

FWB: He didn't have a parade from there to Orchestra Hall?

JD: No, they were two separate ones. One was downtown for the whole city. At that time, as you know, there were the ward organizations. They were so strong and so influential. He not only went to those, but also to the numerous groups.

RVR: I'm surprised he was home at all. He was the chairman...

JD: He was the chairman of the party. He had an important role in slating candidates. We would go to those different meetings and watch the candidates present themselves when he was the chairman. I remember him trying to balance the ticket numerous times—statewide ballots—geographically and racially to make sure that all of the ethnic groups were represented. There were judges as well. John Stroger has told me numerous times of how influential he was on helping John Stroger start in the Eighth Ward as committeeman, and that gave him the opportunity to start his political career.

RVR: Do you remember when you took more of an active part in your father's campaign?

JD: Mom and dad insisted that we pay attention to our studies, but in 1975, I really worked on that one—and 1971 as well. But 1975 was the main one I worked on.

RVR: That was 1975?

JD: It was 1975. Well, it was 1971 and 1975. I'm sorry—It was both of them. There were different groups—We would organize young people for Daley. We had it set up. It was run out of the Bismarck Hotel—It was where the theater used to be. It was all of these young people for Daley. They had all of these signs. The media was so much different. He had individual mailings that pertained to it. I remember in 1971, and maybe even the election right before that, where they would send out individual mailings to the various wards about what occurred in that ward, and the improvements made in that ward, rather than a general thing on how great the city was. It related to the individual ward—It might have been earlier.

RVR: In 1975, do you recall whether you asked to participate? Or did he ask you?

JD: I asked to participate. Now, let me clarify—Prior to that, we would participate, attend rallies, and all of that, but it wasn't any formal thing to the degree that I did. In 1975, we were really running—I was very involved in running it.

RVR: Now, going back then to an earlier period, you did go to the White House.

JD: That was in 1961.

RVR: It was 1961?

JD: It was 1961, yes. It was after the election, and I remember the torchlight parade for Kennedy. It was an amazing parade. I remember going to the convention for Kennedy in Los Angeles.

RVR: Oh, you did go to the convention?

JD: Yes, we went to the convention.

RVR: Was that your first convention?

JD: No, I attended the 1956 convention at the Chicago Amphitheater when Stevenson was nominated. But in 1960—We were at the 1960 convention when Stevenson came in—I remember, he told my dad that he was not going to be a candidate. Then, he changed his mind—He came in with Eleanor Roosevelt. And there was a tremendous rally for him when he walked into the convention hall. The whole place went up for grabs. And he came right to the Illinois delegation, and my dad said they sat down and had a short conversation, and it became apparent that Stevenson knew. He said, "Adlai, you said you weren't a candidate—I asked you numerous times. I pledged my support for Kennedy, and we're staying there." They had had a vote—The Illinois delegation voted already for Kennedy. He said, "The vote is there for Kennedy, and it's going to stay." But at the convention, I remember Bill having a sign that said, "Oregon supports Kennedy." (RVR laughs.) Then they took a picture of it.

RVR: Why Oregon?

JD: He was coming into the convention hall and they were passing signs out. He just picked it up and someone took a picture of it. I assume it made the paper.

RVR: Do you have any other stories about...

JD: Yes. Going on—After that one, we went to the inauguration. We were the first family, as you know. We were walked into the White House the day after the inauguration. Truman was waiting to go in—I'm sorry, Truman had gone in, and we were waiting. When he came out, he stopped and talked to my dad and asked how he'd been.

We met him. He said that that was the first time he had been back to the White House—He was never invited by Eisenhower. They did not get along at all. I read a book recently on all of the ex-presidents, and it was apparent that they did not get along. So anyway, we went in—My brother Rich was not with us. He was at Providence—The first thing he [Kennedy] said was, "I would not be here if it wasn't for your dad. I would not be the president." Then he showed us the office, and then later he took us for a tour of the White House. But he repeated numerous times about the support that my dad had given him. At the inaugural ball, when the Kennedys came in, my dad was sitting up, oh maybe ten rows—And there's a picture of him turning around—He was waving for my dad to come down and talk to him. So, it was a very interesting time.

Needless to say, I remember the 1968 convention and attending that. I remember the Ribicoff incident. What I remember is the day before, when Ribicoff was at the Illinois delegation, he was praising Chicago—praising my dad, the city, and how everything was handled, and all of this—It might have been a couple of days before because he was very upset that he wasn't nominated for vice president. He assumed that he was going to be the nominee. And my dad and he had a great relationship because he was very involved with Kennedy's election—So it went way back to that. During the years, he would go out on different causes for the city. He would meet Ribicoff and talk to him on different issues, and he was very helpful. So it surprised me—but not me, the whole delegation—when he stood up at the hotel. And they gave him a ribbing (laughs). But my dad never swore at him at all. Never. He's been quoted by numerous people as to what he said—He called him a faker. And in my dad's eyes, that was the worst thing you could do, because he said, "You know, he was there the day before." At that time, that's what shocked me the most.

RVR: That's not what they say that your father said.

JD: Yes, but I was right next to him—If you look at a picture, I was right next to him—and he did not say that.

RVR: A man that went to mass every day of his life wouldn't use language like that.

JD: No.

RVR: You wouldn't think.

JD: He did not. (RVR laughs.) He would have to go home and meet my mom. (JD and RVR laugh.)

RVR: And that would have been a worse fate.

JD: Right. In 1972, I went to the 1972 convention as well, when Illinois was thrown out. I was there, needless to say, a short time—I was in my early twenties—but it was a great time. We never made it to the convention hall, and then, after the vote, we left. We had to leave Miami—There were a lot of parties, but we had to leave, which I did not appreciate. In that one, I was surprised. In all of the districts from the Illinois delegation, the delegates were elected. And in our districts, they had a good balance of minorities and of women. Those individuals who were elected were thrown out by the so-called Jackson-Singer delegation, which was chosen at St. James Rectory by a closed room—They would not open it up. There were a couple of people that picked the delegates, and that was how they were chosen for the entire delegation. It was not an open process whatsoever. My dad was thrown out of the convention. But that did not stop him from helping the McGovern candidacy. And I think if you look at it, Cook County was one of the few counties that had any activity for him after the convention for McGovern—and one of the few counties that carried him in the 1972 election. As I look back, that changed the party and brought a number of new people and great diversity to the party.

RVR: As you know, we're very interested in your father's relationship with the University of Illinois at Chicago. Can you tell us, do you have any information about how that came about, or how he felt towards the university?

JD: I just know that he felt the children—the young men and women of Chicago—deserved better, and that's why he was pushing the university. The one that was out there was not to the degree that it should be. As mayor, he traveled to so many other cities and saw these great universities, and he always wondered why the young men and women of Chicago did not have the same. And that's basically what it was—He said that they should have the opportunity to have a university right in the city, because we had so many other great universities, but not a public university—a state university. And he was great believer in the junior college [movement], and it grew under him, but he believed that after, that there should be something for people who choose to go on. And those were very difficult and trying times—There were tremendous demonstrations at the house. He recognized that it was people's right to demonstrate. And it was hard for him to move people out of their homes. In that area, the First Ward, which was a very Democratic ward—It was very ethnic and very supportive of my dad—they were very bitter—extremely bitter. But in the long run, when you look at his vision, it was so much better for the area because that area has improved tremendously.

RVR: It's continuing.

JD: Right. My wife's family was from there. I think it stopped at the other side—It did stop at the other side of the restaurant, Tuscany. They were two blocks down. A number of them had hoped that it would come further and take it all (RVR laughs), but they were in the minority. But again, it was very hard for him. But he was thinking, “In the long run, what would be the best for the city?”

RVR: Right. He didn't resent the demonstrations by the students?

JD: No. First of all, he knew that young people would demonstrate anytime. At that time, people were rebelling and challenging everything and he said that wasn't anything unusual—“Students will always challenge authority, and they have that right. The public has a right, when an individual makes a decision, to challenge it and question it.” He would pass it, fine, but he believed that they have a right...

RVR: You know, I was one of the first ones to go, in 1965, after they had moved to the new campus, and I always felt that our greatest asset was that we had the support of the mayor of the city. And yet, every time he came, he was treated so badly. We didn't, and weren't allowed by the president, David Dodds Henry, to make our own connections.

JD: Right. But that was when there was a lot of politics—the politics of the governor and the politics of the president.

RVR: Tell us about it.

JD: I mean, you talk about our politics in our government—The politics among universities, from what I've seen, is very bitter, very personal, and very political. When an individual is appointed the president of a university, he or she starts making his or her own changes, and it can be controversial. But going back to the U of I, there was resentment that this university was being built in Chicago—There was resentment there. I don't think they really wanted to have it come here. There was opposition. And they let the president know, and that translated into the treatment the president gave... My dad could not care less about how he was treated by the president. He knew, in the long run, it would help future generations—That's what it was all about. So he was used to that. He couldn't pay attention to it.

RVR: It was as though the university officials were opposed to bringing it here.

JD: Right. And I think also that they thought they were above him—that they could talk down to him. They thought they were above him intellectually. They assumed they could talk down to the mayor of Chicago.

RVR: That this was just politics...

JD: Yes. After a while, they got a real awakening. They realized that things were occurring, and in order to improve the university, they'd have to have the support of the mayor and other people from the Chicago delegation and downstate.

RVR: They wanted it outside of Chicago.

JD: That's where they wanted it, right. And they fought it very hard.

RVR: How did he manage to bring it back to Chicago?

JD: To keep it in the city?

RVR: Right.

JD: It was with the support of the delegation from the city—It was with strong support, because he talked with members of the city.

RVR: You mean in the legislature?

JD: That's correct. He said, "This is what will help your district. You could go out and urge young men and young women to attend this university. This is about Chicago and future generations." That's basically what he said. Granted, if someone wanted to go down to Champaign or to Southern Illinois University, that was their choice. They have that choice now, but the students in Chicago didn't. It was all about them.

FWB: Do you remember some of his allies in the Chicago delegation who were pushing the university?

JD: John Touhy and Jerry Shea and some of the leaders downstate joined him.

RVR: Why was that?

JD: Again, it was because of the influence of the state ticket for future elections. There was Paul Powell, and some other people—They realized, "Hey, if we need support for other issues—our causes downstate—then we need to support the mayor of Chicago." But they also knew each other. They would go to the various conventions, delegations, and meetings. At that time, they were more social. They fought tremendously, but they really respected him. I don't remember the personal attacks that are going on today to the degree other than when my dad ran. I'll go back and reflect on that a little—When he ran in 1955, you know that they were making tremendous accusations against him. They said that the city would be turned over to prostitution, to crime—everything. These were on the radio. My mom insisted that we listened to it, and she would have us read the paper about it. She did not want us growing up isolated, because we would have to know about this if it was brought up in school—and it was brought up numerous times. Kids would bring stuff up. Later on in high school—that's where it really started. In grade school, there wasn't as much as in high school and college, where professors would challenge you in the classroom.

RVR: Really?

JD: Yes. They'd joke about the community, about our dad, and we'd just defend it. It occurred at Ignatius numerous times. And it occurred at Loyola—when I was at Loyola.

RVR: It did?

JD: Yes.

RVR: Were these priests or students?

JD: It was both.

RVR: It was both?

JD: Yes.

RVR: Did you respond?

JD: Yes. Then they'd want a parent-teachers conference. I think they would assume that my dad would not come—but he always showed up.

RVR: He just sat there?

JD: They would both be at the conferences at grade school, and at the others as well—
But yes, we would challenge them. I assume that Rich and Mike had the same at De La Salle.

RVR: Did your mother go too?

JD: Yes, they both attended. I know my sisters—when they were at St. Mary's of Notre Dame, they wanted to have a rally for Kennedy. Apparently, to my understanding, Notre Dame would not allow Kennedy on campus at all.

RVR: Really?

JD: Yes. That was during the campaign. They were both all for Nixon. (RVR, FWB, and DWV laugh.) So they had to go downtown.

RVR: Not having him on campus, I could understand.

JD: Father Hesburgh was very supportive of him. So they had the rally downtown. My sisters were involved in it. So, each of us had challenges—and like any others, we had to defend their parents.

RVR: Did your father urge you to get into politics?

JD: No. He would say, "Get into your life. Enjoy it, whatever you do." I taught for a while—I substituted after I graduated from college. Then, I taught English to Spanish people in the Little Village area. And then I was a substitute in the public schools, and I enjoyed that. But he never said to any of us, "Go into politics."

RVR: But he was an influence.

JD: He was an influence in his public service. When I decided to go into teaching as my sisters did, or another form of public service, he said, "Enjoy your life." At the end of the day, you'd have to enjoy what you did. "If you're bored with you're life and you're not happy, get out of it."

RVR: As Henry Thoreau said, "Most men lead lives of quiet desperation..." because of their jobs. That's terrible. Now, did you get a law degree?

JD: No, I did not. I went for a while and I just did not enjoy it.

RVR: I always used to say, "The girls became teachers and the boys became lawyers."

JD: Right.

RVR: But you're the exception.

JD: Yes.

RVR: The other three are.

JD: Yes, all three of them are—Rich, Bill, and Mike.

RVR: Yes. So in many ways, you were an aberration (laughs).

JD: Right.

FWB: You went into a different business—You went into insurance.

JD: Right, I did... I'm looking at the picture of Dr. King. I'm thinking of different meetings with him.

FWB: You were there.

JD: Right. I was at the mayor's office when Dr. King came in. What surprised me the most was—first, the room was filled with ministers, elected officials, his aids, and department heads, and people were talking—but when Dr. King came in, the silence he brought into that room and the command... And he was not a tall man. I was shocked, but I remember the quietness. As soon as he entered the room, it became quiet, and then he sat right across from my dad. They discussed the problems in the city that he came to address. And he [Richard J. Daley] said, "Dr. King, we're willing to work with you—We will work this out." And they came up with a plan, my dad and him. They announced it. He later admitted that my dad really did him in (JD and RVR laugh)—and he said it. But my dad was very embarrassed and shocked at the treatment he [Martin Luther King Jr.] got at Marquette Park—the hatred that was shown to him, when he marched out there—it was very bitter, very racial—and he was very embarrassed.

RVR: For the kind of man he was, I'm really surprised that that was the kind of reaction he got. And it's the reputation that he still has in some circles.

JD: Right, and I remember my mom telling me how in 1948, in the Democratic Convention, he [Richard J. Daley] voted to throw the Democrats out because of their stance on civil rights—and those were the Dixiecrats.

RVR: They walked out of the convention.

JD: Yes. But he supported the platform to come up with the whole civil rights program. That was one of the main issues that they walked out on.

RVR: Oh, yes.

FWB: So, you were with Dr. King because he was here an entire summer—the summer of 1966.

JD: Yes.

FWB: You were about twenty years old?

JD: I was born in 1946.

FWB: Okay, so you were about twenty years old. So, how did you get in that room? Did your dad invite you?

JD: Yes. Looking back and thinking back, he thought, I would assume, “This would be something for you to remember.” Bill and I were in the room.

RVR: But not your older brothers?

JD: No, it was just Bill and I. Then, for each issue that Dr. King would bring up—whether it was police, housing, civil rights, education—my dad would come up with a plan. But those three main issues are still out there today.

RVR: Sure.

JD: And we haven't really addressed them.

RVR: You know that moment that you had with Dr. King when he walked into the room, and there was the dead silence—I had the same experience with a different man. I was in the office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives when the Dalai Lama, His Holiness, came in. There was a sense of calm and presence in this man. I don't know, maybe we expected to feel that, and so we did. So I can appreciate it.

JD: But then, I also remember meeting the queen too—Queen Elizabeth. It was totally the opposite. (RVR laughs.) I mean, they're different people. It was in 1959, she came. She said to Bill and I, "You're about the same age as my son." She had a great welcome. Again, I remember my mom and dad telling the story of how they were very concerned about the Irish delegation and the demonstrations and problems that they might present. So I think my dad met with different leaders of the Irish community, and there were no problems whatsoever. She went throughout the city. She went to the Art Institute—she went to the museum. She had a state dinner. Then she left the next day, and they had great fireworks as she pulled off on her smaller boat. I said, "Thank God, there were no problems." (JD and RVR laugh.) I met King and Kennedy, and then I met Carter—I remember my dad being impressed with Carter.

RVR: He was?

JD: Yes. It was just because, coming from the south, what he had done. I'm thinking of Kennedy too—when Bobby Kennedy was assassinated. You know the story of how we got the call late at night. We had been watching in Chicago—Just a short time after that, the phone rang. Mike might have answered. My dad went to the phone. We went out to the service in New York. They asked the four of us to be honorary pallbearers—We stood there, the five of us, including my dad. And we went to the mass the next morning, my mom, my dad, and the four boys.

RVR: Did you go to the cemetery?

JD: No, we did not go to the cemetery. That was private. So that was very interesting.

RVR: You've really experienced a great deal of history.

JD: I also remember traveling—going to Washington, more when we were in college. When they had the conference of mayors, we went there. The conference of mayors was always in the summer, so we went to those. And those were great. We went to Hawaii one year. And that year was the year—the summer before Kennedy was assassinated. We saw him out there—He stopped and spoke to all of us. That was the last time we saw him. That was the last time my dad saw him. But going to Washington, he'd go out on urban issues for the city. He was fighting for city causes along with other big city mayors—Lawrence of Philadelphia, Marion of New York, and the mayor of Pittsburgh, Barr. But anyway, the respect that they had for him, not just from the Illinois delegation, but all around... But again, the problems in the city are the same things that the present mayor is going out on today.

FWB: What was his relationship with President Johnson? You've talked quite a bit about Kennedy.

JD: Right. He knew Johnson—He was closer in age to Johnson—and he had tremendous respect for Johnson in the sense of how he was able to pass legislation. And he had a concern with Kennedy that many times, people in Kennedy's cabinet tried to take Congress on, rather than working with them. And then when Johnson became president, he said, "I will work with you. The delegation will work with you." But he respected Johnson. He was able to accomplish things on his own, and passed many things Kennedy was unable to pass. It was because they [Kennedy's cabinet] had sort of an attitude against Congress, which we mentioned earlier about the university—towards my dad. I think some of the people around Kennedy—not himself—thought that they did not need the congressional leadership. And they found out very quickly that their bills went down in defeat.

FWB: When did your father meet with President Johnson? I know that there were a couple of meetings.

JD: There were a couple of meetings, right. I thank you for mentioning it. We were out in Washington—I, Bill, my dad, and a couple of his assistants. We had lunch at the White House. And then Johnson said, “I’d like...” so we went back to his office, and he was specifically trying to explain the war in Vietnam to my dad—how we were winning it—and going on and on and on. He did say, "Mr. President, if you have a bad hand, you should throw it in. And this is a bad hand. I'll support you—I'm not going to do it—oppose you publicly—but this is a bad hand. And what are we gaining in the long run?"

RVR: He was really opposed to the war.

JD: Right. He defended him, because he believed that he was the president of the United States. He said, "He's the president. You only have one president to set policy. That's because if you start having other people set policy for this country, you'll have problems." He truly believed that. But we were at the White House. My mom went to the White House under Johnson and stayed as well, a couple of times. We—my brothers and sisters—also went and stayed overnight under Johnson at the White House.

RVR: Was that the first time?

JD: It was the first time. My parents had stayed under Kennedy.

FWB: But you hadn't?

JD: No. But we stayed under Johnson. And they were very friendly. We came in for dinner. We went over and stayed at the White House. We each had our own room.

RVR: You each had your own separate rooms.

JD: Yes.

RVR: Well they have a lot of rooms on the third floor.

JD: We were up on the third floor. And at night, he came to the upper floor, where we were—He came down the hall and said, "Do you need anything?" Mrs. Johnson was extremely friendly. My mom and she developed a very close relationship, and they were friends for years after that—even after my dad and the president had passed away. And they went out to the dedication of the library for Johnson.

RVR: His relationship to the Congressional delegation from Illinois, can you tell us about it?

JD: The members I remember were Congressmen Dawson, Congressman O'Hara, and Congressman Murphy—and John Kluczynski, I believe. Rostenkowski came in later. But it was Dawson, for a while, who really led the delegation from Illinois—Bill Dawson.

RVR: Right. Did he dictate to Dawson or...

JD: No, I think there were issues he would talk to them about. I think they met a lot more and said, "Okay, what are the issues about Chicago?" and, "If someone votes with us..." It was basically that. They voted as a block, the Democrats—the same way that they're doing today (laughs).

RVR: It's said that all Bill Dawson did was move a finger—they got the word, and they voted accordingly.

JD: Right. Johnny Fary came in later. Rostenkowski came in later. He worked very hard at it—developed it—and my dad respected him. Then he sort of took over control of the delegation. He [Richard J. Daley] still respected Dawson tremendously, but I think Rostenkowski sort of assumed that role. But if there was an issue for the White House,

my dad never went through Rostenkowski at all—He would go directly to the president. He would not rely on anyone. And the president knew not to rely on Rostenkowski or any member of Congress—just to talk to my dad directly. And he would call himself, whether it was the president or the governor.

RVR: And they answered the phone.

JD: Yes they did. (RVR laughs.)

FWB: Was that the same way with President Nixon?

JD: Well, he had respect for Nixon, despite the fact (laughs) that Nixon lost Illinois. And as you know, there were all of these accusations about vote fraud and all of that, and I remember being told apparently the party offered to do a complete recount of the southern precincts downstate as well. Well, the Republicans got a little squeamish when that was offered on the table. They said, "Absolutely not," because they knew there were problems downstate. But after Nixon became the president, no matter who the president was, my dad respected the office of the president. He would greet the president at (laughs), well it was at Meigs Field at the time—They would fly in.

RVR: He would go to the airport.

JD: Yes, he would go to the airport numerous times. The last time Nixon came—just before he resigned—my dad met him. And he was probably one of the only elected officials to greet him.

FWB: I have a question, since you're also in the insurance business. One of Nixon's big supporters—financial backers—was W. Clement Stone. He put quite a bit of money on the west side, just south of the university. Could you explain some of the relationship between your dad and Stone?

JD: I just remember meeting him once, Mr. Stone. They had a good relationship. But to what degree...

FWB: He was a solid Republican.

JD: Right. But as you know, my dad had a great relationship with the business community in Chicago, and most of the people were Republicans. But he knew that for the city to be sound, you needed a good sound business community and a strong relationship with them. And they respected him and were very supportive of him on issues. They disagreed at other times, but he knew that he needed that base for different causes, whether it was the university or whatever. The business community helped him tremendously—It wasn't just politicians. They really put a strong effort when this university was built, as well as with other issues. He needed that support from the civic community.

DWV: You said that you had to have a job that you enjoyed going to every day. What did he enjoy most about being the mayor? Was it the planning? He did a lot of planning in finding a site for the university. Or was it the negotiations?

JD: I think it was a combination. He loved being the mayor of Chicago. It was a great job. He truly loved it. I think it was helping people and knowing the decisions he made would help people in the future—and the day-to-day activity. He just loved the job. As you mentioned, the planning—Everyone talks about the university, and that was tremendous, but it was other visions, issues that were brought up, improvements in and throughout the community. And that was a sell because everyone thought that the university was being built—all of the money was going there—and our communities will be hurt. Again, he would try to put lights in the alley, which was a big improvement—streetlights, and sewers. It was basic service. And that was basically it.

RVR: So many people will use a position to get to a higher position, like governor of a state, or the president.

JD: Right. I'm sure he had many opportunities to move up. He could have gone for governor or senator. I think he liked being an executive—governor would have been the same. He enjoyed his years in Springfield. I remember him talking about them. And he developed a great rapport with Abe Marovitz down there. They were both in the Senate together—He was in the House, as you know, first, and then he went over to the Senate and worked under Stevenson.

FWB: He enjoyed being an executive.

JD: Yes. That was very much so.

FWB: More than a legislator.

JD: Right. But he knew that it helped him tremendously, because he knew that you had to work with people and come up with a compromise. So, by working in Springfield and dealing on certain issues that would affect downstate suburban communities, or wherever, you had to compromise. So when he became mayor, he knew that if anything was going to pass in Springfield, he would have to work with the legislative leaders. I was there from 1985 to 1992. I was in the House, and then in the Senate, and it was a great training ground. It is unbelievable how it has helped me out on the county board. What surprised me the most is how the decisions you make really affect the entire state. But it's so removed from people. People relate to their local community and the problems in their community even though the state issues could be the driving force. In 1987 I was sworn into the Illinois House and Speaker Michael Madigan gave a copy of the agenda from fifty years prior—My father, Richard J. Daley, was sworn in on that date fifty years earlier.

RVR: He was always very supportive of what you wanted to do. Did he ever sit down with you and have a long talk about issues, let's say, or, "These are the things I believe in?"

JD: Well issues, I'll go to that. But I remember one of the worst days of his life was the Our Lady of Angels fire—That was probably the worst day. It was in December of 1958, I believe. I remember, when he came home, he just reeked of smoke. As soon as he hit the door, you could smell the smoke from his coat. It was in December, and his overcoat just reeked of smoke. That was by far, I think, his worst day being mayor of Chicago—seeing those young children die in that fire—and three nuns. It was just a shock. After that, they came up with this new plan to redo the school sprinklers and all of that.

RVR: Did he ever sit down and talk with you about religion, per se, or...

JD: Yes, he would talk about it. He was very proud of his religion. He went to mass as often as possible.

RVR: He went every day.

JD: But he never would force it, or try to judge other people. If they had problems in their lives, he was very strong on not judging them. He would say, "We are not in a position to... We are not going into that." He was not judgmental if someone didn't go to mass. Well, we had to go to mass. (JD, RVR, and FWB laugh.) Let me go back a little and clarify something. I remember at Ignatius, that was during the... In one of the religion classes, they were saying that you don't have to go to mass [regularly]—that you could choose your day, and you don't have to go to confession, and all of this. My dad said, "That's well and good—The Father can say that, but as long as you're in this house, you're going to mass."

RVR: And there was your mother, too (laughs).

JD: Yes, and my mom—They insisted on it. But again, with the moral issues of people—problems that came up in their lives—He had individuals in his cabinet who were gay,

and he never judged them. People tried to make jokes about them, and I remember him cutting them right off. He really, really told those individuals off.

RVR: Did you ever resent the fact that you were expected to go to mass?

JD: No. That's because I enjoy my religion and I really believe in it. And also, a part of it was that the school went as a group every Sunday, so we went with the school. But in the summer, we would go as a family. So that continued on.

RVR: You always went as a family?

JD: Yes, that's correct—and during the holidays. But usually, every Sunday the school attended as a group—It was a nine o'clock or ten o'clock mass. But for Christmas and the other holidays, we'd always go as a family.

RVR: Did he ever talk to you about civil rights?

JD: Yes. He talked about the convention, as I mentioned earlier, in 1948—on that issue and the platform of the party. He was concerned about the direction of the city and the country. That's why he always wanted to balance a ticket. One of the first African American women that ran for, and was slated for, a statewide ticket—I think it might have been in 1964—her name was Jones, Fannie Jones—but there was tremendous... And he said, "No, we need this." Also, prior to that, he put Joe Bertram on the ticket—the city ticket—and insisted on that. And then, as the wards were changing, he would urge the party to slate people he knew in the various minority communities. He had, as you know, tremendous support in the African American community as mayor. Now, a number of people have said to me—and it did not surprise me—at the wakes for both my mom and dad, people in the African American community came up to me and said, "Your dad did this for me," "Your dad helped me with this issue," or "He helped me with this position." And my mom would come to the church group and bring clothes from us. She would not make a big thing of it—She wouldn't drive up in a Cadillac or any of that.

She just drove up herself and was very involved with one of the churches, just south of Wentworth Gardens, close to her house. And she got involved helping the pastor there. One of the captains in our organization was Jamie Bailey, and she remembered my mom's involvement in the community there. As I said, it was just her coming in and being herself.

RVR: Yes. You know, it's been said that he directed the development of the expressway to separate the whites from the blacks.

JD: Right, that has been said.

RVR: Do you agree with that?

JD: No, I do not, because of how he acted. I never heard him say, "This community should live on that side or wherever." You're talking about the expressway. Originally, when the expressway was built—the Dan Ryan—it was to go from downtown all the way out, almost to Ninety-Fifth Street, maybe with a stop at Fifty-Fifth Street. Then, he insisted—working with the Illinois Congressional delegation—that they have stops along. He said, "You're making it an expressway out to the suburbs. What about the people that live in the city? They have to be able to have access." So, that was one of the main reasons for that and the other expressways. Now, they've changed it—They're starting to change some of the exits. But that was one of the main issues he had with that, in making it more accessible for Chicago residents.

RVR: He never got the cross-town expressway.

JD: No he didn't, which was unfortunate. Now, you can see, Speaker Madigan [is working on it]—who by the way, my dad had tremendous respect for. He knew that he was an individual that would really go in politics and be a successful individual. He's very much like my dad—He's very methodical, he knows how to run a group and keep a caucus together, and he's very strong-minded. He doesn't hold a lot of press conferences

(RVR laughs)—I mean Speaker Madigan—but he would be one individual to talk with. I don't know if you've met with him.

RVR: No.

JD: He would be one individual that would be very good to interview as well.

RVR: Yes. For the qualities of leadership—How would you define your father's qualities? You said that he was able to keep groups together.

JD: I think working—His whole life he worked hard. Listening to him, reading about him, and hearing my mom tell the stories—In grade school, they did not have it easy, neither one of them. Both of my parents had to go to work at a very early age. My mom started out very early. She was able to get a letter from a pastor saying that she was a different age, maybe a year or two older, in order to work at the phone company. She worked at the phone company for a number of years with her sisters, and then later on she ended up working at Martin Senour Paint Company. My dad worked, as you know, at the stockyards, and then went on to law school. He worked his way through law school while working at the county.

RVR: So, you would say working hard?

JD: They had a strong work ethic—they both did. My mom worked very hard. Once she married my dad, she stayed home. But that I consider—a woman that stays at home—a harder job many times, than people with jobs outside.

RVR: Did you ever see your father angry?

JD: Not very... Well, on TV I've seen him angry, yes.

RVR: He was talking to the city council (laughs).

JD: Yes. There was one time—I don't know who it was—maybe it was Leon Dupress he exploded at. But he knew he had made a mistake.

RVR: Yes. How about your mother? Did you ever see her angry?

JD: No I didn't, not really. No. She traveled with my dad frequently to Washington, and to all of the various parties at the White House and downstate—going to the different inaugurations for...

RVR: How did she discipline the family? After all, there were...

JD: Yes, there were seven of us. She was very firm. When she would tell you this was it, you knew it. We would try, as everyone else does—We'd go to my dad—We'd say, "Well, what about going out here—out on this trip?" And he'd say, "What did your mom say?" And we'd have to admit what she said (laughs). And he'd say, "No. That's it."

RVR: He always backed up whatever she said?

JD: Yes. Correct. But my mom's relationship with him was such a strong one. To us, she never lectured us on anything. She would just say, "Make your decision. If you make a bad decision—and everyone's going to make some—but you're going to learn by your mistakes." That was a great thing. I lived close to my mom. I lived just two blocks south of her. I stayed in the community—in the ward—so I was able to have a very close relationship—I tried to stop every morning. And my children had the same. They got to see her tremendously as well.

RVR: I never saw a family so close knit.

JD: Right. The weekend before she died—it was St. Valentine's Day—I ate dinner with her. My children were going away—They'd seen her a couple of days before. She told them, "Have a great time." Then she passed away.

RVR: What a tremendous loss that was.

JD: Yes, it was. But we were blessed, because she lived up to ninety-five. She had a great life health-wise. She had a stroke at two o'clock and died at five o'clock. So we were lucky.

RVR: You were very fortunate.

JD: When my dad died, I remember when I got the call. I went over and picked my mom up. First, we went down to Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Hospital, because that's where his doctor was, so we assumed he went there. At that time, no one had these phones (points to cell phone), so we were relying on the radio. We went to Rush-Presbyterian-St Luke's, but he wasn't there. Then we went to Northwestern. When we got to Northwestern, they said, "He wasn't brought here." Then my mom and I realized that there were some serious problems, because he wasn't transferred from the doctor's office. So when we got up to the doctor's office, we went up—and he'd died in the other room. My mom said, "Let's say some prayers. He had a great life." But she was very strong during that. She was a very strong woman, not only when my dad died, but also when both of my brothers' sons passed away. She was very strong for them—and when my brother Mike's wife passed away. But she lost her dad at an early age. He was hit by a driver, and he died instantly. As I said, they had a very hard life. During part of her life, she moved in with her sister to take care of her children, but also to help the family. But she never complained. She never thought she was poor. They all worked, had good jobs, and respected and loved each other.

RVR: Were any of your other brothers or sisters with you when you went with your mother?

JD: My brother Bill was.

RVR: Your brother Bill was there?

JD: Yes. Rich had been there already. My brother Mike was at Marshall Field's when he got the call. They announced over the intercom for Mike Daley to come to the office. He went from there to the doctor's office. And my sisters drove themselves to the doctor's office.

RVR: I have one last question. Do you remember Big Mike very much?

JD: Yes I do.

RVR: What was he like?

JD: He was not a tall man. (RVR laughs.) Height doesn't run in our family (RVR laughs)—although my son is 6'2", so I take that back.

RVR: Isn't that remarkable?

JD: Rich's boy is very tall.

RVR: Really?

JD: Yes. He's a good 6'2", 6'3". But Big Mike was a quiet man. He loved to fish. And he was a union organizer, with the sheet metal union. I remember when we would go to Michigan—He loved fishing, so he would take us fishing.

RVR: Would you go fishing with him?

JD: Yes. He would take us fishing up in Michigan. He would also go with Judge Lynch's father, and he would go on at least two or three trips a year with him. He retired at an early age, due to some health issues. Then also, when my dad became elected, he retired and he helped my mom. They lived with my parents, as you know—both my grandparents. I did not know my grandmother, Lil—She had passed away. She died in June of 1946. I was born in 1946.

RVR: And that was never a problem?

JD: No, not at all. He was very helpful to my mom. I also think it was helpful that they had a babysitter when he was there. (RVR laughs.) They didn't have to hire one—They had a built-in babysitter. I remember I was in the eighth grade when he passed away. I came home from a trip—Bill and I were on a school trip. He wasn't feeling good, so he was going to the hospital, and he passed away at the hospital.

RVR: When anything had to be done in the house mechanically, would he do it?

JD: He would do it. Yes.

RVR: Would your father ever...

JD: No. He could not. He was not handy at all.

RVR: No?

JD: No. He attempted it, my dad. But the thing he did, he continued it on—We would go fishing with my dad. We went on numerous trips to Wisconsin, to Florida, and everywhere. But he loved to garden.

RVR: Was this your father?

JD: My dad, yes. He loved to plant a garden.

RVR: I didn't know that.

JD: Yes.

RVR: I hadn't heard that before.

JD: Yes, he enjoyed gardening.

RVR: Was that flowers? Vegetables?

JD: Both. He loved planting trees—That's probably where Rich gets it. I remember at one of the homes we had in Michigan, we had to plant all these—this was back in the late 1950's—all these little evergreens. There had to have been at least eighty of them. I remember one Saturday morning, we had to dig each hole...(RVR and FWB laugh.) It was just terrible. Rich said, "Let's do some more." I said, "No, we're not doing anymore, Rich. You can plant them." But he loved it.

RVR: If you walk around Chicago, you see flowers everywhere.

JD: Right. And as the mayor, he tried to do that—he would encourage that more. He was big into Arbor Day—all of that—and making sure that trees were planted.

RVR: That's wonderful. Well, I'm exhausted. Do you have any questions, David? Go ahead.

David W. Veenstra: Very quickly—In the 1970's, New York City was going bankrupt, and so were other cities around the nation. Chicago was doing wonderful, or well at least (laughs). And one of the reasons—and your father had inherited some of this—was that some of the responsibilities for funding [public services] in the city was shifting, not just

to the city, but also to the county level as well. Do you have any comments or thoughts on that?

JD: On the strong finances of Chicago? Why Chicago didn't go that way?

DWV: Right.

JD: Basically, I would say, besides shifting it—which I'm not sure, but he had a tremendous knowledge of finances because of being the comptroller and working under Stevenson as revenue director, as well as being comptroller of the county, so he understood finances—he had a tremendous rapport, as I said earlier, with the business community. So they would work with him, and he would go out to various markets and say, "Okay, how can we ensure that our finances are strong? We need strong neighborhoods, but we also need a strong downtown base." And with the business community, I think that helped him tremendously.

RVR: It was oversight.

JD: Yes.

RVR: He knew what was going on.

JD: Right.

DWV: Because you had things like the stockyards closing, and the steel industry closing.

JD: That's correct. And the loss of...

FWB: Chicago was de-industrializing at that point.

JD: Right, and every city had been facing that. And he came up with this plan and said, "Okay, what's going to replace the stockyards?"

RVR: Chicago had an AA bond rating.

JD: Correct.

RVR: And these other cities went bankrupt.

JD: Right.

RVR: There was New York (laughs). "New York: Drop Dead." Well, thank you very much, commissioner. We'll have this transcribed.

JD: Oh, there is one thing. My mom told the story... There was a new bishop, I think at our parish. He wanted to talk to our pastor, who was Father Murray, about how good a Catholic Mr. Daley was. (JD and RVR laugh.) Our pastor was very taken back. He said, "If you're half the Catholic he is, our church will be better."

RVR: That's great.

FWB and DWV: It was nice meeting you.

RVR: I hope to see you again soon.

JD: Okay. Take care.

***** END OF INTERVIEW *****