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Interview with William Daley, Session One

Date: 5 December 2008

Location: Office of William Daley, Chicago, IL.
Present: William Daley, Dr. Robert V. Remini Ph.D., and Dr. David W. Veenstra Ph. D.

(the interview has already begun)

Dr. David W. Veenstra: If the Office of the UIC Historian were to turn over any of these oral history transcripts over to the library we would seek permission beforehand. We would seek your permission to make them public.

William Daley: Okay.

Robert V. Remini: We would have to work out rules with the family. And we've been working with Michael, who's been very good. I guess he pressured you to see us (laughs).

WD: No. I didn't know I was the only one who had not been interviewed.

RVR: No. There's Mary Carol and Richard, the mayor, who we have yet to see. But we have interviewed John, Michael, and Patricia.

WD: Sure. That's great.

RVR: So, shall we begin?

WD: Let's begin.

RVR: Tell us about the first time that you were aware of your father as a presence in the family. What kind of a man was he? What lasting impression do you have?

WD: I would say that the impression that I have the most is someone who really enjoyed his life. He enjoyed who he was. He filled the room. Well, there was the living room. He was active all of the time. He had a great sense of humor. He had a great outlook on life. Most people look up to their parents. And he was a huge force in our lives. And I think you really looked forward for him to be around, to come home, and to walk in the house. That's because there was a buzz about him. He was just always moving and stuff would happen when he came home. So it just made you feel good when he was around.

RVR: Yes. It was that way with your mother, too?

WD: Yes. I mean, obviously, my mother was the constant in the family. You know, she worked in the home. And so, she was there when we walked home at lunchtime. She was there all of the time, so she was the disciplinarian. She was the organizer. She was the person that had to do the day-to-day stuff so my dad had the luxury of being the one to come in and to be the soft touch for everybody.

RVR: He was not the disciplinarian?

WD: No. But you knew that if something rose to the level of being taken to him, he would always back up my mother, and you were in trouble. But basically, he was a pretty soft touch when it came to that. The perception is of this big, rough, tough guy. It's funny, they always used to say the same thing about Bobby Kennedy. And he would say, "Ah, he's a soft touch." He had a very soft heart, Bobby Kennedy. And there's this image of Bobby Kennedy as this tough guy. Maybe, in some ways, my dad was somewhat similar. He could be very tough when he had to be, but not with us. His life—the business he was in—demanded toughness and strength. So he had that. Obviously, he wouldn't have gotten to where he did or stayed if he didn't have that toughness. But there was also a very softer side to him.

RVR: And you saw it at home.

WD: Yes. And probably, in his generation, they couldn't express that. They couldn't show that because that was a sign of weakness. Or it could be interpreted as a sign of weakness. That was something where you could be that way at home and not be that way outside the home.

RVR: You never saw him when he was tough, and difficult, let's say?

WD: No. We were around him. One of the joys of my father was that he included us in a lot of things. And we were around a lot. As young kids, whether it was election night, or in his office, we were around a lot. And so we saw his business. We saw the difficulties, the challenges, and the tough times he went through. So we knew of the difficulties.

RVR: Did you ever see him lose his temper?

WD: Oh yes. Sure (laughs). He would do it quite often in his speeches and in the city council meetings.

RVR: I know (laughs).

WD: He had a great ability to let you know, in some great speeches of his, how he felt about things. There were times when you thought he'd drop dead right there he'd get so emotional, so passionate, and so tough in articulating what he felt.

RVR: Did it bother you when you saw him explode that way?

WD: I was more concerned about him, in a health sense.

RVR: It wasn't, "This is a father I don't recognize."

WD: No. It wasn't that at all. It wasn't as though this was a different or separate life. I mean, he didn't swear. It wasn't as though, "Gee, who is this man?" He was in a tough business.

RVR: And you knew it.

WD: And we knew it. And sometimes, you have to be tough to survive.

RVR: Sure. That's true with a lot of things.

WD: Yes. It's true in a lot of things. But it came through with him. And sometimes, he would use that anger, that emotion, and that passion for a reason. That was pretty calculated.

RVR: Andrew Jackson used to do that, by the way.

WD: Yes. I think that all good political leaders understand that there's a bit of theater to life. And he understood that. He understood that, maybe not in a sophisticated way that maybe people today would articulate it.

RVR: But that's part of the job, in a way.

WD: Yes.

RVR: Jackson used to say, "They thought I was angry (WD and RVR laugh)." And he got what he wanted.

WD: I mean, there were plenty of times where he would blow his top, or he was perceived as blowing his top. But afterwards, he didn't carry it, if we were around, into treating us badly, or being mean to people. One of the things I remember the most about him was that when he would leave his office at night, he would thank his secretaries.

They were called secretaries at that time, not assistants. He would say good night and thank them for just being there. And I always thought that was an enormous statement about him. You know, he felt that.

RVR: He didn't carry grudges against individuals?

WD: No. I think he knew that you couldn't in that business. It's hard to do that in politics and survive over the long term. And you know, life is a series of compromises. Sometimes you get your way. Sometimes you don't. And to hold a grudge would probably block you from accomplishing what you wanted, at some point. You know, politics is a game of addition, not subtraction. The more friends you have, the more supporters you have. You usually win with more, not with fewer.

RVR: I've asked your brother and your sister whether he ever brought politics into the house, and I was wondering what your thoughts would be.

WD: Yes.

RVR: He did?

WD: He didn't bring in discussion of people. He wasn't a gossiper, either. You never heard him gossip about people or things like that. But he'd talk politics at the table with my mother. He'd talk about what was going on. And we'd be there. Now, as we got older, we joined in or gave out two cents worth. But he talked to my mother about it. It wasn't like he came home and didn't talk about the big crisis of the day. It was the exact opposite. They would talk about politics all of the time.

RVR: Did he bring politicians to the house?

WD: No. Never.

RVR: Was that your mother's rule, his, or both?

WD: Yes. And it was the same with the press. With my mother, there was election night, when she opened up the house, and the press came home with them. John and I were not down there on election night. So we were home.

RVR: That's because you were so young.

WD: Yes. I was six and a half, or almost seven. And the press came in. My mother found one of them walking upstairs. So that was it. That was the end of it (WD and RVR laugh). Never again. That was, until Richard was running. Then she allowed the press in to do an interview when he was running for mayor. I think it was in 1983. But that was the rule. He never brought politicians back to the house. Never.

RVR: That's what your brothers and sister said.

WD: Yes. But it's ironic. I remember Richard gave Barrack Obama the same advice. He said, "Don't have meetings at your home (RVR laughs)," when he was running for president. It's hard sometimes. It's easier to have people come out to your house and say, "We'll meet here."

RVR: Sure.

WD: But my father would never do that.

RVR: Michael was always amazed that she allowed me in the house to talk.

WD: Yes. Later she did, in 1980, when Richard got into politics.

RVR: I want to quote you on what you said, in one interview (RVR reads from a printed copy). "Public service often is demeaned and denigrated these days. But I have a very

different view. I came from a family in which we were taught, by word and example, that there is no higher calling or greater trust." You were taught that.

WD: We were taught more by example and word. My father talked about politics and talked about government. It was almost always positive, even in the difficult times. He saw government and public service as the way to accomplish something. It wasn't a means to make wealth as the private sector is. It was the means to do something for somebody else. Sure, there's an ego in it. Yes, there is success. You move up. You're a county clerk, then you become the mayor. That's fine. But he taught us by both example and in word that you can do things in government that you can't do in the private sector, and people in the private sector don't do. They don't look out for the little guy. They don't look out for the greater good. And that's what the private sector is.

RVR: He never ever wanted to be anything more than the mayor of this city.

WD: No. He told the story once, he used to joke that Kennedy asked him once why he wasn't running for governor. That's because there was speculation. He had been the mayor, and he was re-elected in 1959 by a very substantial margin. The city was beginning to move. And he said, "If two Irish Catholics run, one for governor and one for president, one of us is going to lose. And it's not going to be me (RVR laughs)." It is so rare in life to find someone, I don't care what business you're in, who is content with what they're doing. And I would say this for our brother Richard, very much. When you're not looking for the next job, generally you'll do a much better job at what you're doing. And for twenty-one years, my dad was never looking for another job. It's the same with Richard. And it's very rare. It doesn't happen.

RVR: Unlike Mr. Blagojevich

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WD: And it's unlike most of the people in business, much less most politicians. Most politicians are like, if you're in the state Senate, you want to be in Congress. You want to be a United States Senator. You want to be the governor. You want to be this. You want

to be the president. If you're a business person, you want to be the CEO. Or you want to be the CEO of the next company. You're always looking. My dad and Richard never had that problem. They got what they wanted and they were very happy. Richard never wanted to be the governor, a Senator, the president, a cabinet member, or an ambassador. My dad never wanted to. The only time I ever heard him talk about something was saying that there was speculation that he was going to be the HUD Secretary. That was in the 1960s under Lyndon Johnson. It never crossed his mind.

He must have had that sense, probably, during the 1960 period, if Kennedy hadn't been running and he wasn't with him….If there were ever a chance you wanted to see him move somewhere, to be governor, it would have been then.

RVR: Kennedy was willing to give him almost anything. And all he really wanted was a tour of the White House with his children.

WD: (laughs) Well, I think he probably had a bigger list than that that we don't know…. (WD and RVR laugh). I think that's a little….

RVR: It's a nice anecdote.

WD: Yes. It's a nice anecdote. But I think the next day, he probably had a few other requests (RVR laughs).

RVR: I'm sure. Did he ever encourage you children to go into public office the way he did?

WD: No. I think he consciously avoided encouraging us by word.

RVR: You do?

WD: I think his allowing us, or encouraging us to be with him a lot, whether it was to go to Governor's Day in Springfield, or the inaugurations, or a dinner downtown at night, or a political meeting, or a wake, I think that was his way of exposing us to his business without saying it. I mean, he knew the negatives of it. You know, as we got older in life, trying to raise a family, which we were doing, getting married young and having kids, there was the cost of that. You can't make money in politics. And don't try to. It's difficult. You'll get in trouble. The world has changed. People years and years ago were in elective office and made a lot of money, either off of that business or by the virtue of it. Those things have changed. There was never a moment where I heard him say, "You know, you ought to think about running for Congress," never.

RVR: Or even with public service. [He didn't say] "You ought to think about becoming a public servant."

WD: He didn't say that. But you could tell, as he talked about what you could do in public service, what you could do in government, and the joy that it brought to him. I think that's the way he told us.

RVR: He did talk to you about the joy that…?

WD: Yes. I remember coming home one night. It was a rally for Jimmy Carter in 1976. This was right before my dad died. This was at the Medinah Temple. It was after a torchlight parade, down Michigan Avenue. It was an abbreviated torchlight parade. It became very abbreviated at the end (DWV laughs). It used to be all the way from Michigan and Madison to Stadium, for Jack Kennedy. Then it suddenly became from the Michigan Avenue bridge to the Medina Temple, which is about six blocks.

And that night, people were just falling all over and saying great things about him (laughs). It was almost embarrassing, and I think it was to him. We got in the car and I said, "Boy, people were really getting carried away there." He said, "That's great and all of that. But that political piece isn't as important to me as the government stuff." My success, and the things we've done in the city, was to him much better than talking about

this great machine, the politicians, and the system that would deliver for Jimmy Carter—the politics. He knew that that got success in government. And you needed that, at least in those days. To have that governmental success, you needed to have a political system, and to control that system. But to him, to talk about the chairman of the Democratic party, all of the great successes, how many people won, and the great victories, compared to moving the city forward, and then the creative, innovative stuff he did as the mayor, to him, this was what he wanted to be remembered for, not that power, political boss.

RVR: Right. Did he ever talk to you about larger issues, such as democracy, or federated government?

WD: No. Well, he always had this thing of, "The federal government is creeping in too much," like the controls, the battle in the 1960s, and the Great Society. “Did they go through the political system, or create it?” And there was this big move, during the Johnson years, of going around the institutions—the mayors, the governors, the community groups—writing to the community, and setting up stuff. And that he always saw as undermining the authority of the institutions.

You know he came from a generation, and this was the difficulty with the war, my country, right or wrong, my country. Even though you questioned it, he struggled with that, I believe. That's why, publicly, he would always be defending Johnson, and defending the war, even though, privately, he knew that it was a bad situation. In his generation, and this was the clash of the 1960s, there was a growing belief that….

RVR: You don't quarrel with your president.

WD: No. You don't publicly attack your government or president.

RVR: Do you think he was against the war?

WD: Oh, there was no question. He was against it.

RVR: That's what your brother said.

WD: Right. I mean, he came to that, as many Americans did. You know, there's been much written about him proposing a commission. He wanted Bobby Kennedy to chair it. It was to help get out of the war. And he would go into the White House and argue with Johnson. He had a phrase that my grandfather would say. He'd say, "If you've got a bad hand, don't bluff your way through it. Throw it in." Then he would go out to the press, defend the president, and defend the war.

But it may have also been, to be frank with you, he saw the politics going so bad for the Democrats that he, forgetting the right or wrong of the war and all of that, or the bigger picture, I'm sure the difficulty of the politics was probably what was motivating him more than anything. Forgetting the politics of it, he always told the story of when Jack Kennedy came out for one of his first speeches west of the Alleghenies. It may have been his first speech west of the Alleghenies, with the Democratic party of Cook County. This was in 1954, right after my dad became the chairman. [Kennedy] talked about what was called the war in Southeast Asia, Indochina, or whatever it was then, but not Vietnam. He said there was no way you could fight this war ten thousand miles away, have a supply line, it was just not going to work. Boom, that was in 1954. Six years later, he was expanding the war. He was talking about the French, obviously, and the difficulty that they were having. [Daley] would always mention that. And that was more of the sort of policy problem of that. Probably in the 1960s, his anti-war position was driven as much by the political difficulty that it was causing the Democrats and the breaking up of the fabric of that. And there was seeing all these kids in the neighborhood and other places going to war.

RVR: And it wrecked Johnson's Great Society, pretty much.

WD: Yes.

RVR: On social issues, how would you describe your father, and his position?

WD: You know, for someone born in the early 1900s, he, probably by virtue of the business that he was in, of coalition building, saw the political need and the unfairness in the racial situation. The tension around race was more in politics than lots of other industries or businesses out there, because most of the businesses could ignore people. Whereas, in politics you couldn't, because you had to build votes, and you had to build coalitions. So you had to take the white southwest side and find some way to work with the Bill Dawsons of the world in order to get an agenda going.

If you were in the private sector, if you didn't want to hire blacks, you didn't hire blacks. You didn't have to deal with it. I mean, if you didn't want to do business in that neighborhood, you didn't do business in that neighborhood. Whereas, if you're in the political system, you had to. So, with the racial situation, again, he was kind of a soft touch in many ways. He understood that that created support politically. But he also understood that he had to deal with that all of the time, in a positive and negative way. It was even back when he was in the legislature, when the hotels in Springfield wouldn't let blacks in, when they couldn't go in and have dinner.

He always told the story, back in the 1940s when I think he was the revenue director, of Ralph Metcalf being turned away when they were all going to dinner one night. Then all of them said, "To hell with this restaurant." They all walked out and went to another restaurant. And there weren't many restaurants in Springfield in those days that would allow even black legislators to have dinner. Or hotels would not allow blacks to stay in them. And these were legislators in the state capitol!

So, when it got in to other issues in later years, he was not judgmental, whether it was priests that left the priesthood, whether it was people who had shortcomings with alcohol, or if they had crime in their family, not violent criminals. It probably came from the Depression Era. When you're in a neighborhood that's a relatively poor neighborhood with lots of challenges, you accept failings more than those of us who were raised in pretty comfortable settings. You understand that there's a lot more failings in people's lives than there are in difficult areas than you have in a society, say in Lake Forest.

RVR: You've heard, no doubt, that he directed the building of the Dan Ryan—the direction, and the place that it is now—in order to separate the white community from the black community.

WD: Do you know what? I really don't think that was the reason that it was laid down like that. My sense is that you had a swathe, if you look at the history of Chicago, of south side poor, there were black immigrants from the south. It was a horrendous physical area of….

RVR: Violence?

WD: Violence. But there were frame homes, and just a blight of the city. I mean, there was the whole thing of public housing, with all of these high rises which, when they opened, they probably rivaled anything you saw, surely from a high rise perspective in just about any part of the city, when they were opened. As far as cleanliness, with modern facilities with elevators and all of this, those weren't there on the south side of Chicago in many places, especially in that swathe that started from Chinatown.

To be honest with you, at that point in the 1950s, I'm not sure how far south black Chicago was. It was all the way out to Ninety-Fifth Street, where that was still white. My sense is that it was probably still white pretty close to where the Dan Ryan was built, when you got further south. In the near south, there was no doubt about it. It was all African American. But I think that as you went further south to Fifty Fifth and beyond, that was still fairly white. Maybe I'm wrong.

RVR: I don't know.

WD: Yes. I think it was. So the idea that from Chinatown all the way to Ninety-Ninth Street, this was an attempt to wipe out a black neighborhood, that they'd put a wall up, I don't think anybody was stupid enough to think that people couldn't walk across the bridge. Well, when I was little, Halsted Street was very much an integrated shopping area. It was not a big deal. I mean, it was a big deal in the sense that there was this black-

white sort of thing that was just in the culture. But black people were in white neighborhoods. There was always that tension. It was noted. You noted it. It was the way people were back then.

RVR: So you don't think that it was done deliberately to separate the two groups?

WD: No. I think there was as much. There may have been some feeling. But my sense is that nobody would have thought, "Oh, this is the wall that you're going to keep this from that." I mean, obviously, if that were the case, it sure didn't work very well. And it was pretty quick to fail. I think that was one of the worst swathes—the private frame houses, poor, blighted—of the city of Chicago. I'm sure somebody said, "This is making it better. We're giving them access." If you're going to pick a place to do it, nobody puts a freeway through Lake Forest, or Wilmette (RVR laughs). That's just the political nature of life. You're not going to see that.

RVR: Did he ever talk to you children about the poor, the blacks, the underdogs in Chicago society?

WD: I think he talked about it in the sense of poor, not black and white poor.

RVR: Just poor.

WD: Just poor. I mean, to some degree almost, especially in later years, he was the mayor for life. He had a certain paternalistic attitude of him that he had to take care of the city, and that people he had to take care of were the poor. And he had to bring things to that community. I guess one would say that some of them were paternalistic. He probably viewed himself after a while as mayor, that he was the one person that had to do it all, take care of things, and balance all of this.

Obviously, race and the race riots of the 1960s played an important part. I mean, summer was a tense period in people's lives in urban America. He always had lots of security. There was always that. So you had that tension in the 1960s. We had marches

around our house every night for months in the summer. People would be chanting and shuffling their feet. We'd have to leave before they got there and come home later. This was when I was in high school in the 1960s.

RVR: This was in the 1960s?

WD: Yes. This was 1962, 1963, and 1964, during those summers. Then you'd have the riots. Summers were always tense in urban America in the 1960s. And it was all around race.

RVR: How about the Democratic National Convention here in Chicago?

WD: You know, during the convention, I spent the entire week kind of at his side, as most of my brothers did. And I always described the Chicago Convention as in 1968 being one of the worst years in the history of America. We had a war. We had a president chased out of office, basically. We had the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, jr., with almost every urban setting on fire.

WD and RVR: There was Robert Kennedy.

WD: The Russians invaded Czechoslovakia and nobody cared. Nobody lifted a finger in the world. You had the youth riots in Paris, which were much more violent. You had four people killed in Miami Beach during the Republican National Convention. And this all rolled to Chicago (laughs) in August, okay (laughs). And there was a war going on with four hundred fifty thousand kids that nobody was liking anymore. And this all rolled to Chicago.

Well, do you know what? Everybody played their parts. The mayor played his part (laughs). The police played their part. The protestors played their part. The media played their part. And it all blew up. The pot finally boiled over. It had been boiling and bubbling. And terrible things had happened around the world in 1968. The whole thing

blew up and boiled over in Chicago for those five days. Nobody was killed. In his mind, the city didn't riot. The outsiders rioted.

The world and all that went on, all of the things that I named, including the global difficulties that were going on in the world, people underestimated, in my opinion, the Paris youth riot, and what that showed. What that meant was that it was not just a U.S. change that was going on. There was this thing going on around the world. Again, the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia and nobody did anything, not the U.S. no other countries. But in his mind, his city did not riot. You know, the entire police force was downtown at the Amphitheater, the parks, and all of that. And to him, that was a statement. Nobody was killed.

Again, four people were killed in Miami Beach in the riots of the citizens of Miami in the black neighborhoods. What happened in Miami was that the delegates and the protestors didn't riot in Miami during the Republican National Convention, but the people of Miami, in those poor neighborhoods, the black neighborhoods rioted. It was in anger over the system of what was going on. And four people were killed in those riots. So for him, that, in his world, would have been much more of a statement about Chicago and him had that occurred in his city than, God forbid, how terrible it was at Michigan and Balbo in his world.

RVR: Yes. Yet, it has now been defined as a police riot.

WD: Yes. Dan Walker described it that way in a report.

RVR: Do you think that's unfair?

WD: Using it as a descriptor phrase, no. But what does that mean? What were the factors that got the police to the point of losing control? There's no doubt, the police lost control, whether they rioted, or whether they just lost their discipline, or whatever. That alone didn’t define what happened in Chicago in any way, shape, or form. Had the police kept their cool, we still would have had a very bad situation in Chicago.

RVR: It would have been very difficult (laughs) to maintain your cool, if you're being attacked.

WD: Yes. But even if you take that night at Balbo, there were plenty of other incidents that week, from stink bombs in most of the hotels, to the threats of assassinations, to the marches, to the band shell event. You know, there was a lot of other stuff going on that week that was bad.

RVR: You know what you didn't mention? So many other major cities were going bankrupt, like New York, and Cleveland.

WD: There was Detroit.

RVR: Chicago had a AA rating.

WD: Well that gets back to the sort of two parts of his life. There was this national piece, both as a political powerhouse around national politics. And then, there was this, in his mind, the City of Chicago, what functioned here, the progress that he was making here with the finances—not becoming a Detroit, a Cleveland, or St. Louis. It was working with the business community, keeping the business community strong, and seeing development downtown. So there were these two worlds that he lived in.

RVR: How do you explain his success in keeping Chicago so financially strong, where other cities at that time, and those were desperate times, were failing.

WD: I think that a couple of things happened. One, I don't think he underestimated the strength of having a political system that lasted longer than in the other places, so that he had the ability to get through the programs that were creative and different. He had the political ability to pull that off, so that when he came up with creative things, or redevelopment, or programs in Sandburg Village, or the high rises along the lakefront, or building and strengthening downtown, he had the political ability to pull that off. So, he

had the combination of political strength, and also creative governmental things going on that gave him what other mayors didn't have.

As their political structures were deteriorating, in New York, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh, no matter how strong they may have wanted to be, those mayors, they couldn't deliver. And he could still deliver, and delivered longer because of that. That was part of it. The other one was he did different things. He got creative people, and younger people. He understood that the political system was there.

There was this, I forget what they called it, this kiddie corps or whatever, these young people when he got elected in 1955. It was not your political hacks. Yes, there were political people there. They were generally in the number two or the number three job. And that system helped create a foundation. But at the top of many of these departments, he brought in people that were very creative and looked at things around the country. He very much, like Richard, didn't mind borrowing from other places around the country.

RVR: Yes. Do you think he had a native talent for economics and budget-making himself?

WD: Yes, I think he did.

RVR: He could look at these figures and know what to do.

WD: Yes. Everybody that worked with him on budgets and all of that said that he knew the budgets, whoever it was that with him, over all of those years.

RVR: Yes. That's something that we had found.

WD: I mean, he'd bring his budget books home, read them, and go through them. They weren't somebody else's problem.

RVR: I think, at one time, he had a position….

WD: He was the Director of Revenue under Adlai Stevenson in Springfield for two years, after he lost the election for sheriff.

RVR: He knew a great deal about how to run an operation and pay for it.

WD: Right. I mean, one of the things that he kept—and I was talking to Mike Bloomberg one day about it—there was the separation of the park district, the county, the hospitals, the separate taxing entities, and the school board. In other cities, like New York, the hospitals, the schools, everything bleeds together. And he kept them separate. So there were separate taxing authorities and stand alone things, so that the city didn't get bogged down with all of this stuff. And that was pretty creative, because other mayors would have said, "I want it all. Give me it all. I want the whole thing."

RVR: As you know, he was a daily communicant.

WD: Yes.

RVR: To what extent do you think religion played in the kind of man he was, the kind of mayor he was, and the kind of father he was? To what extent did religion play…?

WD: It was a major part of his life and his persona. Again, this was someone from a very different generation than us. I think it gave him a discipline. I think it kept him disciplined. I think it served a bigger purpose. There was something bigger out there than what was in front of him every day. And that helped give him comfort, and a place, probably, to park one's inhibitions, fears, and concerns. That's because people in his generation didn't use therapists or whatever (RVR laughs). And I think it was a big piece of keeping him very focused and disciplined.

RVR: Did he try to train you children in following him?

WD: He was not a lecturer on how to live your life.

RVR: This was the example that he was.

WD: Yes. That was him. And I don't think he would have taken too kindly of somebody….But I don't think if someone said, "I'm not going to church ever again. It's all hocus pocus." I think he would caution to having that attitude. But he wouldn't punish somebody. But as I said, he was somebody who quietly helped a lot of priests who left the priesthood in the 1960s, when, at the time, they were shunned by their own families.

RVR: Really?

WD: Oh yes. When priests and nuns in the 1960s were leaving the priesthood or the convents, their own families were shunning them. And he would hire different ones, like Eugene Kennedy and people like that. They'd get a job at the city. It was all done very quietly. He wouldn't celebrate the fact that someone had left the priesthood. But he understood that there were difficulties in life. And he helped people when they were in trouble, not when they didn't need it. If somebody was in trouble and needed help, he understood that. He saw, I think, a lot of his life and his position as to do things, to be able to help people when they needed it.

And he was. Well, you can't do it any more, or you'll go to jail (RVR laughs). If he went to a wake, the widow was there, and "What do I do?" "Call me tomorrow." Or, "My son is eighteen and he's looking for a job." "My husband dropped dead and I've got six kids." You know, that's what he was in it for. Now, people would say, "Oh, that was cynical. He would then get her vote." I'm sure he would not want that person to turn around and slap him in the face. A lot of people did.

RVR: Really?

WD: They did by not voting or not being active in politics, I'm sure. But he didn't keep tabs on them.

RVR: "He did not feel they owed him?"

WD: I think he just thought human nature that most people would reciprocate. But he didn't say, "Oh, there's another vote for us." That's sort of B.S. It was yes, you would help them. If asked, “Why are you doing all of this?” He would reply, “If you can't help somebody like that, then what are you doing this for?”

RVR: One of the things we're particularly interested in is his role in the establishment of the University of Illinois at Chicago. We're writing the history of the university. And we can't do it without including Richard J. Daley. What do you know about his role?

WD: Well, I was pretty young. I remember snippets, like the marches, and somebody throwing a dummy in front of our house with a knife in its back during that. He went on t.v. the next day and he was really p.o.'d (WD and RVR laugh). And did he blow his gasket! He said, "I'll be home tonight if you want to come back. I’ll be very happy to be out front." Now, they had five hundred cops around the place. But he was tough. And he took that. It goes back, obviously to when he was in the legislature, of his desire to have a school in Chicago for kids, commuters, a day school, and a great university. I'm sure in his dreams it would rival Champaign for its ability to give an education to kids, to give kids a chance in Chicago neighborhoods, like the one he grew up in.

And again, I wasn't old enough to really go through it. I mean, I do know he carried with him enormous pride in that. And the battle to take on the heart of your supporters from 1955, like the ethnic Italian neighborhood, which was very strong Democratic, it was a very gutsy thing. That's why the question you asked earlier, the reason they put the Dan Ryan where it is, would that motivate him there? I mean, if that's the way he sort of analyzed things, then he certainly wouldn't have put the university where he put it. He would have put it somewhere else, not in the heart of the people who supported him.

RVR: Outside of Chicago?

WD: Oh no.

RVR: That's what Urbana wanted.

WD: Right. But that wasn't going to happen (laughs). It was not going to happen, no way. But it was a battle. It was a real battle for him to get it, over years. And I guess to a large degree, it's sad, because he never really saw the university being what it ended up being and having the impact. I think the university is well on its way to being, probably in his wildest dreams, what he had hoped this university would be.

RVR: You mean the premier institution.

WD: Yes. You know, that's with a campus life, with dormitories, and with research. My sense is that is what it was in his wildest dreams. But he never lived to see that, anywhere near that, when he died in 1976. The university was still very much a commuter campus, trying to find its life.

RVR: Is that what he wanted it to be, a commuter school?

WD: I think he wanted it to be. To him, a commuter school was a good thing. You know, he commuted to school. He never lived in dorms. And for the kids he wanted to see to have the chance to go to school, the odds of them ever being in a dormitory university setting—no, because they were going to be working some part of the day. Some part of their life….So he probably really did. But I think as a real university, with graduate schools, a reputation, and sports activities, that's the sort of life he saw, whether the dorm piece was a big piece of it or not. But the opportunity for kids who couldn't go for a full year, live in a dorm somewhere, and not have to worry about work, for a university to provide as good of an education as was possible for a student was what his dream was. And the university is well on its way to do that.

RVR: Do you think that Urbana dragged its feet about establishing such an institution? In fact, they wanted it outside….

WD: Yes. Sure.

RVR: That's because they were afraid that with the support from a powerful figure like your father that, ultimately, UIC would become the premier institution of Illinois.

WD: You know, to be honest with you doctor, I don't know if it was that dramatic, in those words. I think it was probably just power politics. The politicians outside of Chicago didn't want it. I'm sure the educators at the university said, "Wait a minute. This is it. Everybody should go to Champaign. Send some kids to Southern if we have to, nobody's really going to go down there." But having a premier university in Chicago, it had the potential to drag some of the best, if not the best students, there as opposed to going to Champaign. And over time, you don't have one game in town. Suddenly, you have two big games in town. And most people don't like that, playing two games. They like to play in one, especially if they're the pitcher.

RVR: That's because Urbana fought against our having a school of social work and a graduate school.

WD: Yes. But all of the political forces outside of Chicago probably fought against this as they fought most of the things coming to Chicago. And that was when the political juice was outside of Chicago, which it was up until probably when it really began to change in the 1960s—the downstate, outside of Chicago, was real powerful, until the 1970s and 1980s, really.

RVR: Yes. It's one thing as the mayor of Chicago, and wanting Chicago to be even greater, to see a university, a public institution here, as an ornament of the city. It's another thing if you're motivated by your own struggle for an education, and wanting to

see that the people of Chicago wouldn't have to struggle the same way, and that there would be an institution of higher learning.

WD: Right. But he knew that. I mean, it was part of his belief that the government through the public education system that at that level—DePaul, Loyola, or whoever they were, and all great universities—they were never going to be there for those kids. Now they have become more there for those kids than they were surely up until the 1980s. That changed because of support, federal government support, and other means that allow kids to have alternatives, that allow kids access to the private education system. But surely in his lifetime they were not alternatives for those kids that he thought about. Even DePaul and Loyola weren't. Forget Northwestern and Chicago. But even DePaul and Loyola weren't for those kids. It was only that public system that could do that.

RVR: I can understand their opposition to seeing this university grow. It's natural. It's another thing for Urbana to oppose it.

WD: No. Why?

RVR: It's because of their fear.

WD: Why does that surprise you that they opposed it? I don't get that. Is it because you thought they should have had a more magnanimous attitude for education?

RVR: Well, like Berkeley. We thought of ourselves, that we were going to be UCLA, a major university in its own right. And I don't know much about the California system. But I don't think Berkeley tried to prevent UCLA, from World War I to World War II, to becoming….

WD: Maybe. But there was such a deep anti-Chicago feeling when you got outside of Chicago politically. And the politics drove Champaign so that they didn't want to happen what has happened. Basically, the entire northern part of Illinois is Chicago-dominated,

from Aurora to Rockford. Even when I was a kid, Rockford was like a long ways away. Joliet was another city (RVR laughs), you know, it was like, down there.

RVR: It still is (laughs).

WD: No, I mean, now it's all part of the regional one media market, like the Tribune. You know, there's probably not even a Joliet paper. And if there is, it's probably a free one. Or it's a small one. They're dominated by Chicago in a way that they weren't back in the 1960s, the 1950s obviously, or maybe even the early 1970s.

RVR: Maybe it's the cornfields. Whereas California, Berkeley has San Francisco.

WD: Yes.

RVR: It's a major city.

WD: Yes. If Berkeley had been in Fresno, or out in Bakersfield, or even Sacramento, in those years, the 1940s and the 1950s, it may have been very different.

RVR: That's interesting. What, in your mind, is the single most important thing you'd like to see us convey about your father, in anything that we write about him? What is the most important? How do you see it, his life and what he accomplished?

WD: That's a very difficult question to answer, especially from a family member, who is torn between the personal part. When people say, "Your father was great," I always say, "He was a great father." That, to him, would have been the most important thing to be said about him. To me, as his son, is the most important thing I can say, before you say, "Yes. And he was a pretty good mayor."

RVR: Do you know that it really isn't known very well how a great husband and father he was?

WD: That's because he didn't open his life to people, in a personal sense. And in those days, the press didn't pry. Maybe some politicians in his lifetime began to see the advantage of playing the family routine and all of that. He didn't. I mean, we were there. We were out. He didn't keep us in a corner. He didn't send us away to private schools. You know, he'd encourage us to come when he'd march in a parade. We'd march with him, if we wanted. We didn't get shuffled off somewhere to some nanny or somebody to hide us.

So when you ask what one thing, I guess it would get to be that he was a man of enormous character who lived in a period of enormous change. But he stayed constant to himself. One thing drove him outside of his family. And that was an enormous love for the city, to see it strengthen and not fail. I think he got up every day and that was his motivator. I really do believe that. When he went downstairs to shower or to pound the bag, he was thinking about stuff at the office and stuff at the city.

You know, people have made a joke or a chuckle about his writing down when he'd hit a pothole or see a light bulb out. That was how he viewed himself. He didn't articulate it. But he viewed himself as that he was responsible for that. That's what people wanted him to do, to have that light bulb working, or to have lights in the alley, so that ladies could go out, put the garbage out, and not fear that some mugger was going to come. It was that basic sort of thing, the paternalistic view of people in politics in those days.

RVR: Well, one thing I wanted to ask you is that we have the papers of your father. And we have some of your papers. Are you planning to…?

WD: Yes. But most of my papers that are there, to be frank with you, remember, it's been a while, are pretty public documents. There's very little, I think, of a private nature there.

RVR: Do you plan on giving the rest of your papers away?

WD: Yes. But I don't really have a lot of papers, to be frank with you, since I left government. I do have a couple of interesting things.

RVR: You've been active (laughs). I don't want to continue. It's been very, very helpful to us. I'm very grateful. Do you mind if we make another interview time, when you're available, for additional questions?

WD: Yes. Fanny will set it up.

RVR: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

AFTER TAPE RECORDING STOPS

RVR: David, did you have anything you wanted to add.

DWV: I had simply wanted to touch on what you said about 1968. It is my opinion that your father was worried above all that the demonstrators would destroy the city, what he'd been working since 1955 to build up. Chicago was on an international stage, and all the things your father had accomplished as a building mayor were on display.

WD: I think 1968 was a key year, if not the most important, in recent history. And people forget how tense things were, how fluid. One of my memories from that week was being at home and seeing jets fly overhead. Military jets. And at the office, there were all these maps of the city laid out. There were maps like this of Vietnam, and now there were maps of Chicago. People forget how close the country was to tearing itself apart.

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