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Interview with Illinois House Speaker Michael J. Madigan

Date: 10 August 2009

Location: Office of State Representative Michael Madigan, Chicago, IL.

Present: State Rep. Michael Madigan, Dr. Robert V. Remini, and Jason Marcus Waak

(The interview has already begun)

Jason Marcus Waak: For the record, it is August 10, 2009. We're in the district legislative office of Michael J. Madigan.

State Representative Michael Madigan: Of course, at that time, I was late twenties, early thirties. I was the assistant majority leader in the House of Representatives. And over the last couple years of his life, I was the main person that he talked to in the legislature. Cecil Partee was the president of the Senate. Jerry Shea was the majority leader. Bill Redmond was the Speaker of the House.

Dr. Robert V. Remini: You were very close to him.

MM: Yes, I was, in a certain respect. I don't want to overdue it. But I feel very fortunate to have had those years of availability to work with him and to get to know him well.

RVR: When did it all begin? How did it begin?

MM: With me and the mayor?

RVR: Yes.

MM: Okay. It all began with me because my father was a member of the Thirteenth Ward Democratic Organization. He was what was called the ward superintendent, which is the person in the ward who is responsible for the garbage collection and the street cleaning. In those days, the snow removal was under the jurisdiction of the ward superintendent.

RVR: He had all of the important things.

MM: My father worked with the mayor in the office of the county clerk. So at one point in time, the county clerk was a man named Michael Flynn. Flynn was the Democratic committeeman of the Thirteenth Ward. My father was a Thirteenth Ward precinct captain. He had a job in the clerk's office. Mayor Daley, at the time, was the county comptroller. In those days, the comptroller was appointed by the county clerk, not by the president of the county board. The comptroller, of course, was the major budgetary person for the county—That was where the mayor learned so much about the operations of Cook County government and the financing of Cook County government.

I'm not sure of the dates, but he may have held that position before he became the Illinois director of revenue. There was a period there where he was no longer in the Senate. He was the county comptroller. He ran for sheriff of Cook County in 1948 and he lost, and I think that after the loss, Stevenson appointed him as the revenue director of the State of Illinois. Then, he became the chairman of the Democratic Party of Cook County. At about the same time, he was elected as the county clerk, and from the county clerk's office, he ran for mayor. So my father knew him from working together in the office of Michael Flynn. He was the democratic ward committeeman.

Fast forward, I was in law school during 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, and in through that period. I was in law school. I went to Loyola Law School. I joined what was called the Lake Shore Club, which was an athletic club on Michigan Avenue. The building is still there—It's just about a block north of Chicago Avenue. The mayor was a member of that club. I reported this to my father. He told me that I should make it my business to introduce myself to the mayor, which I did. From that point on, he always knew who I was. He had a remarkable memory for faces and names.

Then, in between the second and third year of law school, I had a job as a law clerk in the city law department. I got that job because my father went in to see the mayor. The mayor gave me the job. That's how I got the job. Now at that job, I would see him from time to time because the office of the law department was right down the corridor from the back office in the mayor's office. And of course, he would be in and out

of the back door. He'd be in and out of the back door. He'd be walking through there, and I'd be walking through there, so I got to know him. So I knew him.

My father died in October of 1966. Of course, this speaks of the mayor—The mayor remembered me. He helped get me a job at the Illinois Commerce Commission after I graduated from law school. It was called a hearing examiner for the Commerce Commission. Kerner and Shapiro were the governors—probably Shapiro. So I knew him in that capacity.

I got to know his son, the current mayor. We spent time together. Then, in the spring of 1969, I was slated to be one of the organization candidates for the Constitutional Convention. I was elected in November of 1969. Richard M. Daley was also elected. So Richard M. Daley and I went to the Constitutional Convention together as delegates. I didn't have that much interaction with the mayor at the convention.

RVR: But you did with his son?

MM: I did with his son. We spent a lot of time together.

RVR: So you were really good friends?

MM: Yes. Now, our relationship has been on and off. Sometimes it's not so good. Sometimes it's been real good (RVR laughs).

RVR: It's politics.

MM: That's politics. Let me just jump ahead a little bit—But what's significant now is that when Rich and I do talk, inevitably there's some reference back to his father. And it's a very comfortable zone for the two of us to exist in when we talk. But let's go back to where I was. I was in the convention. A few days after I was elected to the convention, the local Democratic committee was slating for state representative. I was selected to become a candidate for state representative.

Also, in the meantime, I had become a ward committeeman. 1969 was a very good year for me. I got slated by the organization to run for Constitutional Convention in the spring of 1969. In early June of 1969, the incumbent ward committeeman, whose name was Cantone, died. There was a precinct captain's election to fill that job. I won that election on July 31, 1969. I got forty-nine votes. The other guy got thirty-one votes (RVR laughs).

So I was a candidate for the convention. I was a ward committeeman. I got elected to the convention. A few days after the convention, they slated for state representative. I got slated for state representative. I got elected in November of 1970 to the House of Representative. So in 1971 and 1972, I was a freshman representative. I was doing a lot of constructive things. In 1973 and 1974, I decided, "Well, I'm going to start becoming an active legislator." And I had put together my own little program. I was working my program.

Then, in the election of 1974, that was the Watergate election. There were big Democratic victories in 1974. In those days, you needed eighty-nine to elect the Speaker of the House of Representatives. And in the 1974 election, we elected one hundred and three Democrats. So in January of 1975, the Democrats now had the majority. We were in a position to elect the Speaker of the House. The Democrats being Democrats, they couldn't agree (RVR laughs), because of the fight between the mayor and Governor Walker.

So the mayor supported a guy named Clyde Choate, who was an experienced, downstate legislator. He'd been the minority leader in the prior four years. The mayor supported Choate for the Speaker of the House. There was a vacancy for what was called the assistant majority leader, and the mayor told me that he would support me for appointment as an assistant majority leader—not that he had the power to make the appointment. The Speaker would make the appointment.

RVR: By that time, you had become close.

MM: Yes. This was the beginning of 1975. So Choate never made it. You needed eighty-nine votes. He could never get eighty-nine votes because the governor was promoting

other people to run against Choate. Choate was the frontrunner. The governor's strategy was to throw people into the contest and split the field. And in the end, the mayor shifted his support to Redmond, which was acceptable to the governor. But there were still some Choate supporters that wouldn't go along. There were sixteen Choate supporters who would never vote for Redmond. In the end, we needed some Republican votes to elect Redmond as the Speaker of the House. The first Republican vote for Redmond was Lee Daniels. He was later the minority leader and later was the Speaker of the House.

So when the mayor shifted his support to Redmond, he carried me along. I was not in the room, but I presume there was a deal when the mayor told Redmond, "Okay, we're going to support you, but we want Madigan as an assistant leader." That's when I started to have this everyday working relationship with the mayor.

RVR: Every day?

MM: Well, you see, when you're in session in Springfield, there are issues all of the time. And his procedure was to meet at the beginning of the week. I would meet with him.

RVR: That was in Chicago?

MM: It was in Chicago. Right. It was in his office at city hall. Or it may have been at the LaSalle Hotel, because he maintained another office at the LaSalle Hotel. So I would meet with him just about every week, before I'd go down to Springfield. Then there would be calls during the week. That was because when we were in session with pending bills and pending issues, it gets to be very busy. In those days, of course, he was at the top of his game and he was at the top of his world. Naturally, there would be innumerable people who would seek him out to get his support in the legislature. So it was in that year of 1975.

Now, another significant point is that this was when he was challenged by Bill Singer for mayor. The media thought that it was going to be a close contest. That's because they wanted to promote the conflict against the mayor. Of course, a guy like Singer would say all of the things that the media wanted to hear. So going into the

election, the media thought that Singer would do really well. He didn't do so well in the election.

What I'm getting to is that through all of this, you see, I was a Democratic ward committeeman. This was in the world of Richard J. Daley, where that was very important. And in that election we had the second best result in the city for the mayor. The best ward result was the Eleventh Ward. Number two was the Thirteenth Ward. So I was doing that. I was down in Springfield as an assistant leader, so I would spend a lot of time with him.

RVR: When you met with him in Chicago, and he was at the top of his sport, how would you describe the relationship? Did he ask you for your opinion (MM laughs)? Or did he just tell you, "This is what I'd like you to do?"

MM: From time to time he would ask how I felt about things.

RVR: Most times?

MM: I'm sure that others who would talk with you would tell you that he made his own judgments. He was the commander. He would give his orders and give his directions. And this is an important point with me—It's because there was a group of people like myself, about the same age, that came in as ward committeemen in the early seventies. There was Alderman Burke, Ed Vrdolyak, Tom Hynes, Congressman Lipinski, Alderman Mel, and Ed Kelly. This was the group there that came along at about the same time, and if they were being honest with you, they would tell you that they would have trouble living under his methods.

So they were duly elected to whatever office they held. After a while, they would think, "Well, I ought to be part of the decision-making." So they would be troubled by that. They would struggle with that. There would be complaints when he would make a decision and they didn't like it. But with me, I had no trouble with that at all. That was because, to me, the mayor was just a carbon copy of my father. So I'm the only son. I

have a sister. There were two children in our family. My father was very strong-willed. He was not inclined to change his opinions on things (RVR laughs).

RVR: I know the type.

MM: Right. And in terms of what would happen between he and I, he would just issue the orders. The way I say it is nowadays—I have a twenty-three year old son—
Nowadays, nurturing is a very big word and a very popular concept. You should nurture children. I've come to believe—mainly because of my wife—in something that I did with my son. But there was no nurturing back in the fifties and sixties—not between the father and his son. Maybe there was between a father and his daughter.

RVR: It was a different generation.

MM: Right. So, coming off of my life experience with my father (MM laughs), with the mayor it was just natural. Here's a good example. This probably happened in the summer of 1975. That's because in March of 1976, there was the primary election for governor. Michael Howlett defeated Walker. Somewhere in the summer of 1975, there was one event in this one conversation. Let me do it this way—

One morning in the summer of 1975, I got a telephone call from the mayor, and he wanted to know about a planned motion to override the governor on education funding. So Walker was the governor. He didn't have a good relationship with the legislature, in part because he was fighting with the mayor. The legislature passed education funding at a certain level. The governor brought it down. He would say it was to balance the budget.

But the way it worked was that after the governor took his action, there could be a motion to bring the level back up. It's called a motion to restore the reduction of the governor. That motion was put in. In those days, it required eighty-nine votes to restore the money. That's just a simple constitutional majority. The mayor called and asked, "What about this motion?" I didn't think that much of it. I hadn't given that much thought

to the motion. I just kind of passed it off. So in that first conversation, he was very animated—his usual self.

RVR: Was he that way?

MM: Oh yes. It was the way he was. "You should be working on this. This is a good thing." So I hung up. I thought it would go away, but it didn't. Three or four days later, he called again and said, "What about this?" So now I thought, "Well, I'd better get to work on this." So I started calling representatives all over the state. And then it came down to a fight between the mayor and the governor. So for people in the legislature, they were called upon to choose sides—It was one or the other. But the mayor was very busy. He was calling me over to meetings. He was laying out his strategy and a plan. He was calling upon the educational community to support the override, and the teachers' unions.

He was making a big campaign out of this motion to restore the education funding. And then, in the end, he actually put together a huge delegation of people that took a train down to Springfield. He was on the train. They were showing their support for the motion to restore the money. In my office in Springfield, in the capitol, I have a picture where, after the group got down to Springfield, they had a rally over at Springfield High School. It's four or five blocks from the capitol. It's a picture of the mayor sitting at this rally. On one side is Joe Hannon, who was the superintendent of the schools. On the other side was a guy named Bob Abboud, who was the main person at the First National Bank of Chicago at the time.

So he was like the leader of the Chicago business community. The mayor had him. Then behind the mayor, I was sitting, so my picture was right behind him. He then went over to the House of Representatives, and he made an impassioned speech for the motion to restore. Redmond was the Speaker of the House. We had to prevail on Redmond to have a committee in the hole. On the floor, this was where the mayor spoke. He submitted himself to questions. Some smart aleck representatives thought that they were going to intimidate him (RVR laughs).

There was a guy named Roscoe Cunningham—a downstater (RVR laughs). I remember the mayor's response to Cunningham. He was his usual strong personality. He

just went right after Cunningham and told him, "Why, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. This is for children. This is for school kids. You should be voting for school kids." Well, when we took the motion, it failed the first time. It did not get eighty-nine votes.

We called it maybe a week or ten days later, and it passed with eighty-nine votes. But it never passed in the Senate. So at one point, the mayor was on the phone with me. He was calling me over to his office saying, "Do this and do that." I was asking myself, "What the hell is this all about?" Well then, finally one day I realized it—What he was doing was organizing an election campaign against Walker. He was attracting to himself all of these elements and all of these people who would be supportive of more funding for education and taking them away from Walker. In terms of politics, that's what it was all about. That shows his political genius, as far as I'm concerned. That's how he always thought.

The other thing I wanted to tell you was—getting back to the relationship between he and I—somewhere in there—maybe it was while we were working on this motion—whenever it was—I got a call to come over and see him at city hall. We sat down, and he started into a negative conversation about Walker. He said, "He did this wrong. He did that wrong. We've got to take that guy out of the governor's office." So I listened for a while. Then finally, I just said, "Mr. Mayor, you don't have to convince me. I'm part of your team. If you want to be against this guy, fine. Sign me up. I'm ready."

And so, in that election, in this ward, we defeated Walker sixteen thousand to eight thousand—two-to-one. So there are two points—There was his political genius in organizing that effort against Walker, and then there was my relationship where I was not going to disagree with him. Every once in a while, he'd ask for my opinion and I'd give him my opinion. But I was not going to make a cause out of it. I was very happy to be there. Reflecting back on all of those experiences and all of that time, why, even today, when I make decisions in the legislature or outside of the legislature and politics, I still draw upon what I learned from him during that short time. That's because it was about two years—or maybe it was a little less than two years—where I was able to spend a lot of time with him. And I learned a lot just by being around him.

When his wife died, they gave us Mass cards that had a picture of Mayor and Mrs. Daley. And I think they were celebrating their thirty-fifth wedding anniversary in that picture. It happened around 1975 or 1976. And that was the Mass card. It was given out at the church. Well, I have one of those Mass cards mounted on my desk in Springfield and in my law office downtown. So, when I'm sitting there and trying to make a tough decision, I'll look over at him and just ask myself, "What would he do?" It's very helpful.

RVR: He's a real mentor.

MM: Oh yes, for me he was. Sure. There was a Representative Giorgi...

JMW: Was that Zeke Giorgi?

MM: Yes, that was Zeke Giorgi.

JMW: Yes. He's from the Rockford area.

MM: It was Rockford. Right. Giorgi was a longtime representative from Rockford. He was the father and the sponsor of the Lottery Bill. He and I were really the best of friends in Springfield. He died suddenly in, I think, somewhere around 1992. I delivered the eulogy at the Mass in Rockford. I opened up and said, "There are three people in my life that made a difference—that were really significant to me. There was my father, Zeke Giorgi, and Mayor Daley of Chicago." So that's what it meant for me.

RVR: That's pretty good.

MM: I told you you're not going to get any bad stuff out of me (MM, RVR, and JMW laugh).

RVR: We're trying to understand the man. Well, you know the criticism, of course. But I don't think—people don't realize what an extraordinary figure he was, as a father, as a husband, and as the mayor.

MM: Oh yes, sure. The way I see it, he was the master of his times—his time, or whatever word you want to use. There were certain conditions that existed between 1955 and 1975. He mastered all of that. And he was the king of the hill. In some respects, he was more powerful than the President of the United States. Now, if he were trying to function today, in today's conditions, he may not have been as successful. But I don't go on that. I mean, everybody ought to be judged on the time when they lived. So, look at what existed in those days. He was a giant. He was an absolute giant.

RVR: Do you think he did anything that was a mistake?

MM: Oh, I'm sure that even the mayor did. In private moments, members of his family will say to themselves, "Well, he made some mistakes here." But in politics and in government, everybody makes mistakes. I make mistakes. And I spend a lot of time and I develop structures to try and prevent mistakes. So with me, I use review groups. I have different people where we'll sit down and talk about the legislature at least once a week, or once a day at the end of the session. And it's not that any of these people are going to make decisions for me. What I want is to throw things on the table and kick them around. That's because I'm like anybody else—I could miss something, or I could make a quick judgement and not consider something that I ought to consider.

At the end of his life, the mayor was a person with fifty years of experience in politics and government. He probably started in his late teens—He was seventy-five when he died—So he had about fifty years of experience to draw upon. He had all of the power you needed (MM laughs). So it would be very understandable that, in the back of his mind, he would think, "I'm going to make this decision and that's it." I wouldn't complain about that. If he were to seek me out, "What do you think of this? What do you think of that?" I would share my views. And I wouldn't have any reluctance to share my

views. That's because, you see, with him, there was the danger that if you'd say or do the wrong thing, you'd be on the outs for a while. It happened with me.

RVR: Oh it did?

MM: It did early on. This was back, probably around 1970—something like that. So I told you that I was elected as the ward committeeman, forty-nine to thirty-one votes. The losing candidate was a man named Robert Umpirowicz. So in that ward in those days, politically, the groups were Polish, Italian, Irish, and Lithuanian. The Polish had the biggest number of voters. Maybe not fifty percent, but they had the biggest number of voters. And they were the most troublesome because the opponent Republican ward committeeman was a guy named Ed Kucharski, who had a lot of power.

So I came in as a ward committeeman, and my job was to bring all of these groups together. Where I started on this was that Umpirowicz was the loser in that ward committeeman's election. But at that time, he was the ward superintendent—the job that my father had. Now, in those days, the ward superintendent was a very significant position for the functioning of the precinct captains. That's because there were a lot of political favors that were done by the ward superintendents. The precinct captains would be in with the alderman or the ward committeeman.

Somebody would be doing some minor construction work around their house. There would be a lot of concrete, and either they would pay a dump to dump it, pay a truck to haul it away, or get the city to come and take it away. So the ward superintendent would send the truck. I worked on that truck at one time. You see, I worked under my father, so I know what it's like to take orders (RVR laughs). Umpirowicz was the ward superintendent. Although I won the election, we were still at odds.

I picked up information that frequently he was off the job as the ward superintendent. He worked for a funeral chapel right up the street called Wolniak. It's right up the street at 57th and Pulaski. He was not an embalmer. He was a director. So when they'd have a funeral, he'd be standing in the street. So I made a contact with a guy who was in charge of a unit at the city who was supposed to chase after these people who were off the job—He turned in Umpirowicz. So they confirmed the allegation and they

moved him out of the ward. They brought him to a desk job downtown and took him out of the ward, which was what I wanted. This guy was a political nuisance—I wanted him out of the way. Well, he had his own connections to the mayor. He exercised them, and sure enough, the mayor told the commissioner of streets and sanitation to rescind the order. I went in to see the mayor (MM laughs). I pleaded my case. I got nowhere. At the end of the conversation—people have told you that at the end of a meeting, he'd rise out of his chair, he'd extend his hand, you were out the door (RVR laughs)—So he rose out of his chair, and he just told me, "Well, you may not like it, but I'm the boss and this is the way that it's going to be." So me being me, I said, "Okay, you're right. You're the boss. But do you know what? I'm going to prove you wrong." I spun on my heels and I walked out of his office. Well, I got my say in. But I didn't get to see him for about nine months (MM laughs).

RVR: Did you ask to see him?

MM: Oh yes (MM and RVR laugh). That's how he did things. So if you were viewed as someone who was not supportive...

RVR: But ultimately, he took you back?

MM: Yes. Every day of his life, he was about politics. With every day of his life, when he was the chairman of the party and the mayor, he was all about bringing people together. He wasn't about pulling them apart. That's exactly how he said it to me that day. He gave me a little lecture before he dismissed me. So the lecture was when he brought his hands together like this. He said, "You're the ward committeeman, and this Guy Umpirowicz—you've got to bring everybody together. You can't be pulling them apart." Well, I wasn't going to hear that. I was young, so I wasn't going to hear that. That's when I spouted off. I paid for it (MM and RVR laugh).

RVR: And you laugh about it now.

MM: Oh sure. Now, I didn't get to see him, but he didn't cut off the patronage. That was the big thing—the patronage jobs. They would come out of city hall. So in terms of what the Thirteenth Ward would have, we would get our share. He wasn't going to cut me off, but he wasn't going to waste his time with me for a while (MM and RVR laugh).

RVR: How old do you think you were at that time—twenty-five, thirty?

MM: Oh no. At that point, I was late twenties to early thirties.

RVR: Now, as you know, he really founded the University of Illinois at Chicago.

MM: Right. That was despite Florence Scala (JMW laughs).

RVR: Did he ever discuss that with you?

MM: No. That was because that all happened before I came along. I mean, I knew about it because I had heard about it and read about it. And of course, I went to school down at St. Ignatius. A lot of it was established even then, but not all of it. It was a rough neighborhood in those days. Blue Island Avenue still went all of the way through to Halsted Street. The neighborhood was basically the same old neighborhood, but it was rough and tumble. Here's an example—School policy provided that we couldn't go outside of the building during the day. You know, like the idea at lunchtime, you might not leave the campus.

JMW: There was no open campus.

MM: It was a closed campus. That would have been from 1956 to 1960. It was a closed campus. I just know about the University of Illinois at Chicago from reading about it.

JMW: By that point, you were at Notre Dame. When the campus construction was going on, you were off to undergraduate.

MM: Did it happen in the early sixties?

JMW: Yes. The construction went on between 1963 and 1965, so you must have been off at school at that point.

MM: Yes, I was at Notre Dame. Then I was at Loyola Law School. I was not around St. Ignatius.

RVR: Did you know that Sis Daley directed that all of his papers come to UIC, and we have them in the library at special archives? We've been going around asking people. When you retire, for example, would you consider the University of Illinois as a depository?

MM: I might burn all of my stuff (MM and JMW laugh).

RVR: Oh please don't, because ____ might say things about you, and you may not like what we historians say (MM and RVR laugh). You want to get your word in (MM laughs).

JMW: The secretary of the State of Illinois and the state archivist is trying to put a depository for state documents on campus. What we're hoping to do is to partner with the Daley family and take these papers. Within the function of this building, there's a state component for state archives, but also, we envision a presidential museum and a mayoral museum. We've got a collection of William Daley's papers and the mayor's papers. Who knows if the current mayor has any papers? That's the hope. But as you know, from politics, trying to get everyone to agree... (JMW laughs)

MM: Sure.

JMW: Can you talk about the period of the mayor's death—the outlook within the party and your perspective? What was your perspective? What was it like? Was it chaotic or not?

MM: It was somewhat chaotic. This is where Richard M. Daley and I had maybe our first disagreement—I told you of my relationship with the mayor. I had developed a personal and political friendship with George Dunne. So in 1971 and 1972, George Dunne's ward elected a guy named Ira Colitz as a state representative. Ira Colitz was a constant companion with George Dunne. They would have dinner together five nights a week. Colitz sat right behind me in the House of Representatives in 1971 and 1972, and because of that, I developed a really good, personal friendship with George Dunne. It lasted until he died.

So the mayor died, and I made a judgement that George Dunne should become his successor. I think I went to see George on the day that the mayor was buried, to tell him that. George became the chairman of the Democratic Party—There wasn't a lot of resistance to that—but when I went to see George, my pledge of support was for both chairman and mayor. I presumed that he wanted to run for mayor. Well, in the end, he decided not to run for mayor, and I think that happened because—George being George—he was not like the mayor. He did not seek out confrontation and conflict. He was more of a person that wanted to make nice with everybody.

And I think that he saw that there would be terrible resistance from the Eleventh Ward to anybody outside of the Eleventh Ward taking the mayor's office. And that was when Bilandic eventually became the mayor. At the point where we were selecting the new chairman of the party, Richard M. Daley was supporting Ed Kelly to be the chairman of the party. Now, he and I never talked, and he didn't tell me why he was supporting Kelly. Clearly, in my judgement, Dunne was the better choice than Kelly. And I'm not making being negative on Kelly, because I know him, too—but in my judgement, Dunne was the logical person to follow the mayor.

But that's where Rich and I had a difference. It didn't last that long because, you see, in terms of being the chairman of the party, there wasn't that much at stake. It was a significant position when the mayor got it in the early fifties. That was because in the

early fifties, you had a functioning organization. You had these ward organizations that had a certain amount of resource. But in the fifties, it was not as centralized as the mayor had it. The resource that the mayor used to centralize it was the patronage coming out of city hall.

Well, now it was 1975 and 1976, and the truth was that the real power was the patronage in city hall, not the position of the chairman of the party. So George became the chairman of the party, and I think that George thought that the conditions would be the way they were back in the forties—It was where, even though the power and the resources were disbursed, a lot of it would flow back to the county chairman.

At one time, there was a procedure where, let's say there was a vacancy for a job in the county recorder's office—Well, the county recorder would call the party chairman and tell the party chairman that there was a job opening. Then the party chairman would contact me or some other ward committeeman. So the placement would go through the party chairman. That's how it was in the forties. Dunne may have thought that was going to happen. That was because there were some instances where George, as an example, thought that the placement of jobs in the park district should go through Dunne and not Kelly.

JMW: Right. That was with Kelly being the head of the park district.

MM: Yes. So that's probably how George was thinking. Richard M. Daley was thinking a different way. Rich Daley was thinking, "Well look, all of the power here is in the jobs at city hall," which was true. So that's what you want to go after. For that short period, it worked out for Rich Daley because he got Bilandic out of the ward, and they continued to keep everything they had in the Eleventh Ward. It was okay with me. I had had a very good relationship with Bilandic when he was the alderman of the Eleventh Ward. It continued on when he became the mayor.

RVR: We have Bilandic's papers now, too.

MM: Yes. Did Heather give them to you?

RVR: Yes.

MM: Good. There was some turmoil, but not a lot. It kind of settled down. I would think in large part it was because Dunne wasn't ready to go to war over it. And Kelly had his little fiefdom over at the park district, and as long as he kept that, he'd be happy. And of course, the cataclysmic—Is that the word?—The cataclysmic event was when Jane Byrne defeated Bilandic. That was the first one. Of course, the second one was when Harold Washington defeated Rich Daley and Jane Byrne (RVR laughs). That was the big one.

JMW: The world turned upside down.

MM: Yes. Right. That was the big one.

RVR: I think that Richard J. Daley was the first man to be both the chief of the party and the mayor. Previous mayors, when they were heads of the party, had resigned as the head of the party. He had no intention of doing it.

MM: That's probably what he said. There's a little white lie to it (MM, RVR, and JMW laugh). You know that? When he was campaigning to be the chairman of the party, he told the ward committeemen, "I'm not going to run for mayor."

RVR: Oh he did?

MM: Right. But then, down the road, he claimed that there was a draft—people were drafting him to run for mayor. Now, he didn't get that consolidation because, going back to what I said, each ward committeeman had their own little operation. Well, those guys were smart enough to know that they didn't want centralization. They had their little fiefdom going—whatever it was. It would be better for them if everybody got a little bit and there was no central command, which is what the mayor would have been thinking. When he was seeking to become the chairman of the party, and then the mayor, he was

thinking to himself, "Well look, if I get these power positions, I'm not going to let these ward committeemen dictate to me what I'm going to do. I'm going to do this in such a way that I'm going to tell them what to do, and I will use them and their organizations as a resource"—which he did. So his approach was to build his personal power. And then, he'd have that personal power—then he'd have that personal power for what he wanted to do. Now, maybe it was to build a new university over on the west side. A weaker person probably wouldn't have been able to do that.

RVR: Especially with the opposition.

MM: Right. He would have been scarred by Scala. And so, the mayor was like anybody—He had his detractors. He has his detractors today. Of course, in time, one of the arguments was, "Well, he uses his political power for public good, for civic good, building, and building the city," and that was true. Now, there were people in the city that didn't like that. They were called independents in those days—loyal independents. They would organize around opposition to the mayor and his methods. Okay, that's American politics.

Here in the Thirteenth Ward, when I came in as a ward committeeman, it was a very weak organization. I wanted to be the ward committeeman. For a couple of years, that's all I did as the ward committeeman. I wanted to build a good strong ward organization. And I saw that as how I would enamor myself for the mayor. This was the guy who wanted strong organizations, and if I build a strong organization, I'll be viewed much better by the mayor than others. So I spent all of this time running a ward organization. And I would run it myself.

We had eighty-nine precinct captains, and I would talk with every precinct captain at election time. But I came to the view and the understanding that when people in this ward would vote, it basically broke down the two types of people. Type one would be a voter who would respond to the appeal of a precinct captain. So, a precinct captain would be appointed by me. He would become my agent. And in those days, he was an agent of the mayor.

He would go into a precinct, and our basic proposal was, "Look, we'll do favors for you. We'll do you a favor. We want you to vote our sample ballot. We will work and implement programs to maintain a good, solid neighborhood where you can raise your family. But we want you to vote our sample ballot." That was our basic approach. And that was a lot of what the mayor was saying also. That was group A.

Group B were the people who didn't agree with that. They were people who would be against the idea that they would trade their vote for a favor. They would be against that., or they didn't like the mayor's methods of heavy duty power. So, I came to the view that we would distribute our sample ballot. And there would be voters who would want the ballot because they would want to vote the sample ballot for the precinct captain, or for me, or for the mayor. Then, there were people who wanted that ballot so that they would know who to vote against. And if you were to study the election results they way I did, you could see that that was the case.

The against voters were far more efficient than the ones who were voting for us (RVR laughs). So you would have these long ballots—You'd get down to the last name on the ballot, and the count against us would be very consistent, like one hundred, one hundred twenty-five, one hundred fifty against us—all the way down to the end. Meanwhile, we'd start at three-fifty or four hundred because the against voters were far more efficient and far more committed.

I also came to the view that most of the against voters would also be in the Democratic primary—they would apply for the Democratic primary ballot. They'd ask for the sample ballot and then vote against us. And then, in the general election, they'd vote for a Republican. They were just against. That's how I would structure it for my precinct captains. When I was sitting there, and I was trying to take somebody who never thought they'd be a Democratic precinct captain, they'd turn into a salesman. These were people that never did sales work in their lives.

But they wanted it for the office of the ward committeeman. They wanted a job in the patronage system. I would tell them, "Yes, we can put you in a job. But you're going to work for the Democratic Party." This was raw material. I would sit there—try and teach them what to do, and I would go about it. And I would use that analogy with them to try and make them better.

I would tell them, "You've got to understand that when you're out talking to people, you've got to make a judgement on every person. They're either with you or against you. They're not going to tell you that they're against you, but you have to pick it up from what they say about things. If you walk into a house and they're just negative and negative on Mayor Daley, they're against you. I don't care about the election. They're going to vote against you. And you have to understand that. You try to make them better." A lot of times they'd make themselves better and sometimes they wouldn't. That's because they didn't want to. And they really didn't want to do sales. That's what it was—ring a doorbell and a cold conversation. They were trying to sell a vote—sell a sample ballot. It was like trying to sell the Encyclopedia Britannica (MM and RVR laugh).

RVR: You were very successful at that.

MM: Oh yes. I devoted myself to it. That's all I did. That's what I wanted.

RVR: Was that because of your father that you learned this—or the mayor, or both, or yourself?

MM: Well, you'd learn this from being around the mayor. The mayor would treat me the way I treated the precinct captains. He'd be a little rougher than I would be with the precinct captains. But most of that stuff I picked up myself, just being around it. And what I did learn early on was that there were some people who were naturally just very good precinct captains. They didn't know it, but they had good sales skills. They didn't know that (RVR laughs).

RVR: But you did.

MM: Well, I could pick it up and listen to them. They knew how to work with a voter and work on a conversation. So I learned a lot from them—the good ones. You'd say, "Well, how are you going to carry this election? What are you going to say to people? How will you handle people?" And they would want to throw themselves on the table, if you would

just listen. So as an example, around here, we tell our precinct captains, "We're still running a ward organization." We tell our precinct captains, "When you walk into a home, you should open up the conversation by just saying to somebody, 'How do you feel about the election?' That's all." It was just blank.

Well okay, they were not thinking about the election. This could be good, because this could be a prospect for a sample ballot. I first picked this up probably with the first Bush. Maybe it was Reagan. It was the primary. So if a precinct captain was in a home for a primary election, he was asking people to apply for a Democratic ballot and to vote in a Democratic primary election. This precinct captain told me this one day—he said that he went into a home and he said to somebody, "Well, how do you feel about the presidential election?"

This was the primary, and the guy said, "Well, I kind of like Reagan," or, "I kind of like Bush." Well, that tells you that they're real Republicans and they're going to be Republicans. They just come right out with it. That's how they're thinking. These are the things you worked with. This was ward organization politics. You know, it's creeping into its grave (MM and RVR laugh), but in the mayor's time, this was everything.

JMW: It was the way it all worked. Well, when we interviewed Tom Donovan—He grew up in an era when patronage was a dirty word—and with talking to Tom, it was like, "That was just the way it was." But you see this cultural shift.

MM: I told you that my predecessor Cantone died. And we went for about a month without a ward committeeman. That was because there were four candidates and all four of them were campaigning for votes. There was no resolution. In the end—you'll appreciate this—I told you about the different ethnic groups—each group had a candidate. The Italians had a guy named Cardelli, the Polish had Umpirowicz, the Lithuanians had Savickas, the Irish had me. I won because I was able to put together a coalition of the Irish, the Lithuanians, and the Italians. My count was forty-nine, the rest were Polish. What was I talking about (MM and RVR laugh)?

JMW: You were talking about developing ward salesmanship.

MM: I'm trying to think of what the hell I was getting to with the ward here.

RVR: You lost your train of thought?

MM: Yes, I lost my train of thought. But in those days, when I became the ward committeeman, that was the biggest thing around. I mean, everybody wanted to be a ward committeeman. They knew the power of the patronage system.

RVR: How would you sum up, or what would you say were his greatest attributes, other than his political skills that I think you were talking about? Was there anything else about him—his personality (MM laughs)? He was a very good man.

MM: I thought he was. He was a straight shooter. Now, in politics, you've got to throw some curve balls.

JMW: Hang on. Let me switch tapes. We're about to run out.

(End of videotape one)

JMW: Okay. We're back.

MM: You were asking about the mayor. On a personal level, he was an extremely strong person. That was not insignificant. So, there are all kinds of people in this world. Some were like the mayor—they were involved in major matters. Others are not—they're involved in minor matters. Some are strong. Some are weak. In my life, I live in a lot of situations where you'd better be strong or you're going to be gone. So, number one—without regard to the personality, without regard to the patronage system, without regard to the power—he was very strong guy.

RVR: When you walked into a room, did you sense that immediately?

MM: I did, yes. Everybody in the room did (MM and RVR laugh), because they all gravitated to him. He'd walk into a cocktail reception or whatever, and everybody would gravitate to him.

RVR: There are such people.

MM: He was extremely strong and obviously very devoted to his family. So, at the end of the day, when they drop you down, the only thing that really counts, as far as I'm concerned, is this—What did you do for your family? Next, how did you conduct yourself? Did you conduct yourself with a sense of honesty, honor, and values? Yes, sure he did. He did all of those. And did you pass your values along to your children? The only way you can do that is by example. You know, you can sit and talk to the kids until the cows come home. They're going to do what they want to do. But they'll be greatly influenced and will be more influenced if they see it firsthand from how you do things. That's the way he was. I'd highly recommend it (MM and RVR).

RVR: I'm not surprised.

JMW: One of the things we've developed is this—In the midst of the seventies, it was obviously not a very good time. Places like Detroit were falling apart. The mayor successfully kept the city solvent. Do you have any stories you could share of ways that you partnered in legislation to kind of keep Chicago afloat, so to speak?

MM: Well, it wouldn't be one or two—It would be multiple. Here again, it was the accumulation of power in oneself, using the patronage system, the election system, providing for Cook County. All of the decisions were made by him. Most of the decisions of the state were made by him. And then, he had accumulated all of this power and his ability to work with the legislature. As you know, there were numerous instances where governmental responsibilities picked up in places like Detroit and Cleveland. In Illinois, they were picked up by the state because of his power.

So you start somewhere back in time, and the welfare system was a county function. Eventually, it was passed off to the state. You could have a situation where the city would primarily responsible for the CTA, but not in Illinois. There is some responsibility, but the bulk of the responsibility goes to the regional agency created by the legislature that the mayor supported in the legislature and in the referendum. So, day in day out, in those meetings I would be having with him, as he's sitting and thinking about all of these things, it was one more time, another event, another action. It was designed, in part, to enhance his power, but also to do civic good, for the city and for the county.

RVR: He ran Chicago.

MM: Yes.

RVR: Did he run the state?

MM: Well, not entirely. But he played a big role. Look at it this way. I told you about eighty-nine votes in the House of Representatives for the election of Speaker of the House. In those days, there would be between forty and fifty of the eighty-nine who would want to know what the mayor wanted. So, you were Ogilvie if you wanted to adopt an income tax. And there were forty of fifty votes there, but you had to go and see the mayor first. And what did the mayor tell you? "Sure. We'll help you pass your income tax, and then take some of it off of the top for the city."

RVR: And then did the mayor call you and say, "Tell my fifty that this is what I want?"

MM: Yes. That was my role when I was the assistant majority leader. Among those that were interested in what the mayor wanted, I would deliver the messages.

RVR: That was the early seventies?

MM: No. This would be 1975 and 1976.

JMW: Getting back to the story from 1975, in the picture with you in front of Springfield High School with the mayor—I've got a question here. During 1975, Mayor Daley came to Springfield against the advice of most key Democrat leaders because his son, Richard M. Daley, encouraged him to make the trip. This was involving eighty-one million. Was that the same Walker-Daley controversy?

MM: Yes. It sounds like it.

JMW: Okay.

MM: So there was an example. There would have been Democrats advising him not to confront the governor. It was probably because they were trying to work with both and get things and favors out of the governors. And they didn't want to be called to choose. Well, with the mayor, because of his power, because he worked at it every day, his approach was, "I know what I'm doing. I hope to get some additional money for the Chicago School System. But politically, I'm going to draw a line of distinction between me and Walker, now in 1975, before the primary exists." He would only be able to do that because he was the guy who worked seven days a week.

RVR: Do you think that Sis Daley, even when they were apart, knew who he was?

MM: Yes, absolutely. Well, I think that she was a stabilizing influence. I think she was probably helpful in terms of raising their children and providing them an environment where there was value-based thinking. This was a guy who was off to his battles and his wars, and so he'd better have a helping hand from her. I think she was more stabilizing than you would think. I think in those days, you didn't get the kind of repore that you get now. But I think that she was a very strong partner.

RVR: I don't doubt that. But I meant that she would go to him and say, "Look, I think in education, you ought to do this, that, or the other."

MM: Yes. And he would listen to her. He made a comment to me. There was the priest that did the sermon on her.

JMW: Was it Gilbert Graham?

MM: Yes, it was Gilbert Graham. Yes. At one time, he was the pastor of that church over on Ashland Avenue—it's St. Pious, or something like that. I know that Rich and I went over there for some kind of a function, once upon a time. Father Graham said that Sis Daley, on the question of abortion, would say that she'd rather have the baby in the lab rather than on her conscience. The mayor said that to me. Now, I remember telling John Daley one day after the burial—I said, "John, I want to tell you. You should know this. 'And that is what Father Graham said,' your father said to me one day," because I was in the mayor's office one day, and we were talking about whatnot, and somehow, we started talking about abortion. And he didn't give her the credit. Or maybe he did. Yes. He said, "Well, I think my wife is right. I'd rather have the baby in the lab than on my conscience." But I think she was a much stronger element at home.

RVR: I was very impressed when I interviewed her. I interviewed her six times before she passed away.

JMW: And that just got him up to the point of the first election, in 1955. The woman was as sharp as a tack.

RVR: Yes. She knew the exact date that they bought the house.

MM: You mean the one on Lowe?

RVR: Yes. She asked me what I was working on. I said, "John Quincy Adams." She said, "Oh, our sixth president." She knew that (JMW laughs).

JMW: We've heard a lot of stories from Morgan Murphy and Dan Rostenkowski about the meetings. Is that what you alluded to? I guess your meetings were on Mondays. I guess that theirs were on Fridays. At any point, a couple of times a year, was there kind of the Richard J. Daley holding court, with all of you guys on the state and federal level, and him saying, "Here's the game plan"? What kind of coordination was there?

MM: No. That wouldn't have been part of his method.

JMW: Okay. It was all kind of individual.

MM: He ran the organization. He ran the county organization. He ran it to build and solidify his power. His method wasn't to bring people together, and to sit and exchange ideas (MM and RVR laugh).

JMW: Right. Did he ever bring you guys together with the federal leaders and lay it out—his plans?

MM: There's the story where he had that stroke in 1974. He had the stroke and he went up to Grand Beach to recover. He didn't come back. He just went up to Grand Beach to recover. He lost all kinds of weight. Then he came back, and he called a meeting of the Cook County Central Committee. I remember sitting there. There was like seventy people. I remember sitting there and I kind of looked up. I saw this guy walk through. I turned and looked back again and it was the mayor. He had lost about fifty pounds. He was a different guy. I said, "Wow." So he sat down. We had this meeting. Now, he had this stroke. So right away, some guys were going to think, "Well, he's weak. It's time to make our move," and that kind of stuff. One guy got up—It may have been Joe Bertrand. He was from the Seventh Ward and was the city treasurer. He may not have been. And the mayor had just opened up the headquarters at the LaSalle Hotel. Whoever it was said,

"Well, Mr. Mayor, some of us were talking." That was a bad way to start—"Some of us," meaning some of us got together (RVR laughs). He said, "Some of us were talking, and we thought it would be a pretty good idea to use this headquarters as a gathering place. We could all come here and exchange ideas on how to do a better job as ward committeemen or whatever (MM and RVR laugh)." So the mayor said, "That's a good idea. We'll do that. We'll do that a week from today." I thought, "He's not going to do this. This is not going to happen." So six days later, the call came from the headquarters saying, "The meeting has been cancelled. We'll let you know when it's been re-set (RVR laughs)." It was never re-set (MM, RVR, and JMW laugh).

RVR: So he really was a boss?

MM: Absolutely, he was a boss. He should be (MM laughs). He had to be a boss. Everywhere in life, everywhere in the world, there has to be bosses.

RVR: Yes. Was he a great mayor of Chicago?

MM: Yes.

RVR: Should he be considered the greatest, as far as you know?

MM: Yes, I think so. With the ones I know about. Yes.

RVR: The story is, there's a list of the greatest mayors. Guess who was number one? It was La Guardia.

MM: Oh, that's nationwide. Oh La Guardia—He used to read comics on the radio all day (MM and RVR laugh).

RVR: That was among other things. Number two was Richard J. Daley.

MM: My vote would be for him instead of La Guardia.

RVR: Yes. Can you think of any other mayor of any major city that means anything?

MM: No (laughs).

RVR: The Kennedy's could never get over that when they tried to say, "What we Kennedy's do to show our appreciation to the mayor for delivering..."

MM: The presidential election.

RVR: Yes. All he wanted was a tour for his family of the White House. Richard M. Daley couldn't go because he was in college. He had to go to class (RVR laughs).

JMW: Are there any closing thoughts that you want to share with us? We're about done.

MM: I said this earlier—Clearly, you should know, I was very fond of him, as a political leader, a governmental leader, and as a person. And I thoroughly enjoyed the time and the opportunity I had to spend with him. As you can tell, I can remember all of those things.

RVR: You are the Speaker of the House right now.

MM: Yes. That wouldn't have happened without him.

RVR: I was going to say that.

MM: Yes. I never would have become the Speaker of the House had I not become the assistant majority leader in 1975. And he's the one. I didn't make it on my own (MM laughs).

RVR: Are you tough, too? I take it back (RVR laughs).

MM: Go down to Springfield and ask some of the people down there (MM laughs).

RVR: We read the papers (RVR laughs). I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

MM: You know, in government, you've got to make decisions.

RVR: It's not easy.

MM: Somebody's going to be happy, somebody's not going to be happy. In politics, day to day, you try not to make enemies. You try not to make people not happy. But then, as you go along, from time to time, you have to say, "Here. This is the line. I know you don't like it, but this is the line. This is where we're going to go." Now, let me ask you— Have you written about Andrew Jackson?

RVR: Yes. I've written about Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, and Joseph Smith.

MM: Who was Joseph Smith?

JMW: He was a Mormon leader.

MM: He was a Mormon leader. Okay.

RVR: I'm not a Mormon, but I was asked to do it.

MM: Yes. My chief of staff is from Nauvoo. It's the town of the Mormons. Well, I've read at least one of your books on Jackson.

RVR: Did you?

MM: Sure. You should know that at least your name is known by Governor Blagojevich. You see, he fashions himself as a great historian. One of his favorite political characters is Andrew Jackson.

RVR: I didn't know that.

MM: Jackson's wife was Rachel. And he knows your name. Blagojevich knew that I read a lot.

JMW: Yes. We were looking at your history books.

RVR: We always glance at the titles.

JMW: We do. Is he a reader of history or not?

MM: Blagojevich would say, "Well, what are you reading right now?" On that occasion, I said, "I'm reading a book about Andrew Jackson." Before I gave the author's name, he asked if it was you.

RVR: Rahm Emmanuel would always ask me, "What are you reading now? What's a good book on history?" And I would tell him (MM laughs). In fact, I gave him three of my titles.

JMW: That's right. You did.

RVR: He reads pretty good.

MM: I read a lot about the period of the run up to the Second World War and the aftermath of the Second World War. And I read a lot about Churchill. I've read a lot about Churchill, which I thoroughly enjoy. There's Churchill and Truman.

RVR: I've got to see that picture (walking towards a photograph hanging on the wall). It's very striking.

MM: That's only because of the background. There was a guy named O'Grady or Grady. I don't know if his name is on there. Is there a name on there?

JMW: No, there's not.

MM: Okay.

RVR: Yes, I can see what you mean.

MM: At the time, he did a lot of sports photography for Sports Illustrated. That was this one. Then he did this (MM shows RVR another photograph). He gave that to me shortly after the mayor died.

RVR: You were saying something about Churchill.

MM: With Churchill, I very much enjoy his conduct in the war and his leadership of the war effort in England. Now, he was a scruple. He was an eccentric scruple (RVR laughs). The more you read about him, you'll realize that there were all kinds of people around him, trying to control him, especially on military decisions. He came up with the Gallipoli idea. He was still advancing it in the Second World War. He was thinking that they could come in through Turkey. But his leadership to the people, his hope to the British people—it was pretty bad. They were getting ready for an invasion. What I really like about Truman was his ability to make a decision and then deal with the consequences. And he made all kinds of major decisions in his time.

RVR: You mean like dropping the atom bomb.

MM: Well, there was the bomb...

JMW: There was desegregation of the military.

MM: He didn't come from a background that would make you think he would be desegregating. His family was from the South. They were living in Missouri. And it was at a time when you were a Democrat because you didn't like that the Republicans were for the blacks in the South. That was in the family history of the Truman's. And his father was in politics—John Truman. Then Harry got involved with Tom Pendergast in the big city machine (MM and RVR laugh).

JMW: That was Kansas City.

MM: It was a guy named Tom Pendergast. He ran the Kansas City machine.

JMW: Who would have thought they had a machine out there? But yes, they did.

RVR: Thank you, sir.

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