

**SPECIAL
COLLECTIONS
AND
UNIVERSITY
ARCHIVES
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY**



This oral history interview is part of the Richard J. Daley Oral History Collection at the Special Collections and University Archives Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago. It has been used to create content for the online exhibit, Remembering Richard J. Daley, <http://rjd.library.uic.edu> , published on July 20, 2015.

Special Collections & University Archives
Richard J. Daley Library
University of Illinois at Chicago
801 S. Morgan St.
Chicago, IL 60607
3rd Floor
(312) 996-2742

<http://library.uic.edu/special-collections>

Interview with James McDonough

Date: 17 September 2003

Location: Office of James McDonough, Chicago, IL.

Present: James McDonough, Dr. Robert V. Remini, and Dr. Fred W. Beuttler

(the interview has already begun)

Dr. Fred W. Beuttler: We're ready to go. Do you want to start with some questions?

RVR: Well, why don't we start at the very beginning? Talk about your early career and how you met the mayor.

JM: Okay. Actually, I said I was born at 82nd and Marshfield. I went to Little Flower Grammar School, and later to St. Ignatius High School. Of course, my family had a long association with the Daley's. Going back, my godfather was Joe McDonough, who was Daley's mentor. Daley worked for him. He was the committeeman of the ward, county commissioner, and county treasurer. So my father Morris, who was the brother of Joe, had worked for the board of health for almost 60 years. When I went to Ignatius my senior year, Richard J. Daley was the clerk of the courts. I ended up getting a part time job after school in the Marriage License Bureau, and signing the signatures for the newly married couples. At the time, I had a good signature.

RVR: How old were you?

JM: Well, I was going to graduate. I was 17, you know, somewhere in that category. I called him mayor at the time. I was going to John Carroll University. He called me in and he said, "Well, I want you to come back and talk to me when you finish college." So there was that lull. Then I went to school. I majored in transportation at John Carroll. It used to be a five year course. But if you took an ROTC program and became a transportation officer, it was a four year course (RVR laughs).

I figured that I'd take advantage of that. So I went to John Carroll, then later went to the service for two years in Korea as a second lieutenant, and then came out. Later on,

for about six months, I started looking gainfully for employment at all of the jobs. And there were several. But at that time, it wasn't hard to get a job, especially with a transportation major. There were the railroads, ships, and others, they were all out of Chicago.

RVR: When was this?

JM: Let me see. I was in Korea in 1956 and 1957. It was the early part of 1958. So my dad finally said, "Why don't you see the mayor? He's always asking me about you." And I said, "Maybe I should." So I went in to see him. And he indicated to me that there was this new wonderful opportunity. The Chicago Skyway was opening up. And he wanted me to go out there, as a toll supervisor. So I decided to do it. Well anyway, I went to the Chicago Skyway. Let me see, that was 1958. In 1961, the manager of the Chicago Skyway passed away. The mayor made me the manager of the Chicago Skyway.

RVR: How old were you?

JM: I was 27 years old. That was 1961. I was born in 1933. So I was very young.

RVR: Right. You had a great deal of progress.

JM: Well, you know, when I was there, after a couple of years, I thought, "This is fine." I went to a show by Captain Manley, who was the head of the port district. And I always had an interest because of my transportation background for that kind of work. So I wrote him a letter, indicating that I would be interested if there was a position that he had open. The mayor got a hold of the letter and he called me in. At this point, I was about 32 or 33. And he made me the first Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Streets and Sanitation under Lloyd Johnson, which had 8,000 employees.

Lloyd Johnson was an old tough guy. He came from the sanitary district. He was a brilliant engineer, until about 1:00 p.m. Then, he became a little less of one (JM and RVR laugh). But he got rid of every deputy. So anyway, I went in there. And I said, "Are

you sure? You know, this seems like an awful large assignment." But it worked. And eventually, Lloyd died and I was made commissioner.

Then, the snow storm of 1967 came, which was a very significant time. The city was in terrible shape, from the standpoint of trying to cope with the storm. We didn't have the equipment. We didn't have the telephones. Each ward had one telephone. So a guy would be on there talking to his wife and he'd be out of communication. We didn't have the power. We didn't have the strength. We didn't have a good plan. We didn't have anything. And Mayor Daley pulled it off because of his charisma on television, telling everyone how good we were doing (JM and RVR laugh). We really weren't doing so good (JM and RVR laugh).

And that was the difference. Poor Mike Bilandic, they say he lost because of that. And Bilandic was a brilliant guy and a wonderful mayor. The fact of the matter is, we did a much better job. I wasn't there as commissioner then. But they did a much better job in 1979 than they did in 1967. But the public perception was not the same. Then, after that, the mayor said, "I want you take over the department. And I want you to put together a plan of how we'll never have this happen again." So in early 1968, I became the commissioner. I was 35.

We sat down and he participated. We'd meet. We had a consultant. His name skips me right now. But we'd meet with the mayor on Monday mornings over at the headquarters in the hotel. We'd go over the plans and he participated in it. And we did this for the better part of a year and finally developed that plan. It worked very effectively. We brought the proper equipment. We had the plans. We upgraded the communications system. We did things that we never did before. We set up a new radio communication center, which has really been copied by many cities throughout the country. But his human side to get into that kind of detail was amazing.

From that point on, I was the commissioner. That was from 1967, until when I left in 1974. So, I was first the deputy, then the commissioner for another six more years. And my relationship with the mayor, because of the department, was on a daily basis. I would meet with him. It was rare when I didn't meet with him every day. I hated Monday mornings because he would be out over the weekend, riding around with Mrs. Daley. They'd be hitting potholes, dirt, trees, and everything (RVR laughs). And he'd have this

list on the back of some envelope (JM and RVR laugh) that he'd been writing on all during this trip.

Some days his list was this long and some days it was this long (JM and RVR laugh). We would go on like that and he'd say, "Well now, you've got to take care of that pothole." And I'd say, "Well now, can you tell me where it was approximately?" (JM and RVR laugh) He'd say, "Well, you know, it's down by the hospital. I was on my way to the hospital." (laughs) And I'd say to the security guys, "Where did you hit the pothole?" They'd say, "We never hit a pothole." And I'd say, "I've got to find one between now and then." (JM and RVR laugh). You know, he would come in.

For some reason, the mayor treated me almost like a son at times. It was a very close and a very warm relationship. You know, it went beyond business of the Streets and Sanitation Department directly, that I was involved in. Many of the things that I was involved in, like major fund raising for the party, I was one of the guys that put it together on a national basis, along with other things and parades. For example, there was the time when Kennedy came in and they had the motorcade parade. During the Democratic Convention, I was greatly involved. In fact, there's a funny story on that. Of course, we were sitting in all of the Secret Service meetings. They were going to bomb this, they were going to put arsenic in the water, and a million different things. Some of them, obviously, became true.

But the mayor took great pride. One day he called me in. Earl Bush was sitting in the meeting, along with the heads of ABC, NBC, and CBS Television. And they were complaining that they couldn't get spots for the television cameras. And I wouldn't do it, because I knew his sensitivity. I said, "I'm not giving you any sites." So we talked it over and found out. So, the mayor turned to me and he said, "Well, this gentleman over here will let you know where you can put your cameras. And where he tells you is where you're going to put your cameras, and the only place you're going to put your cameras." (RVR laughs). And with that, I said, "Okay."

I sat down and I figured with our guys around the Sheridan. "This is too tight, over here is too tight." And I picked the Conrad Hilton Hotel (JM and RVR laugh). So they had a nice, wide sidewalk and it was the only side. What I didn't realize was that the park district gave them a permit to camp out in the park overnight. And as a result, they

had a perfect venue to cover that area on television. I was there during all of it. I was at the convention when the riots took place, and Jim Rochford was the Superintendent of Police. It was a very difficult time. But it all passed and it worked out. And in the end, the mayor was vindicated.

There's a funny one from that story about Daley when I was commissioner. He was interested in bikes, as Richard M. Daley is also. So he formed the first bike path down on Clark Street. So we had a ceremony. The head of the Schwinn Bicycle Company said, "Well, Mr. Mayor, you know, I've got a twin bike here. Would you take a ride with me down the street?" Well, the security guys looked at me and I said, "I've got a bike. You guys don't. (JM and RVR laugh) So he jumped on the bike and I jumped on my bike.

We were going down Clark Street and I was following him. Some guy came out of a tavern. He'd been there all night long. He looked up and he saw the mayor (JM and RVR laugh). He said, "Hello, Mr. Mayor!" The mayor said, "Hi, you pal." (JM and RVR laugh) The guy went right back into the tavern. He went all the way down and the security guys were going crazy. You know, they were trying to scramble to catch up with him.

RVR: Why did he have an interest in bikes?

JM: You know, I don't know. Rich has a lot more. But Richard J. Daley did. He wanted to expand that and, I think, to get people to see the beauty of the city. He was very interested in it. Clean up and beautification was a major part of his urban effort. We had a very strong group of businessmen, both locally and nationally. I was later elected to National Director of Public Works for all of the public works agencies in the United States and Canada. And I carried on a lot of Daley's programs on a national basis. So those were some of the things. I remember another one, when we were doing the alleys. And we were in Vito Marzullo's ward, the 25th Ward.

So we were going to turn on the new sodium vapor lights. You know, the press and TV were all there. What I failed to tell the mayor was that when you hit the switch, they don't come on immediately. There's a pause, a warm up phase. So, we hit the switch

and the cameras are going (JM and RVR laugh) and the light did not go on immediately. He gave me one of those looks down there like this (laughs). And I said, "Hang in there." (JM and RVR laugh) Then the lights came on. And everybody was complaining, "They're going to do this and they're going to do that. They were going to destroy all of the trees." However, they ended as one of the great assets of the Mayor's administration.

RVR: Did he ever read the riot act to you? Did he ever get angry with you?

JM: Oh yes. But it was not too often.

RVR: What was he like when he was angry?

JM: There was a funny incident. I decided to leave the city in 1974, partly because I felt that I was headed for political office. And I think he wanted me to. And even at the luncheon, he said, "I hope Jim will be the next mayor of Chicago. But my wife was not a political person. And I knew that it wouldn't be. So I had an offer to go to, what was then, Murphy Engineering, or C.F. Murphy Associates, which was a prominent firm. So, they were going to make me the president of Murphy Engineering.

So, before I did it, I talked to the mayor and I told him that I would like to leave. He said, "Oh sure, I understand, Jim." Well, you know, he didn't (laughs). So I went back and I said to him, "You know, Mr. Mayor, I really stayed longer than I can. With that company, I've got to go there. The president is no longer there." And he said, "What are you talking about?" And then he said, "Well, you go if you want." It was all very abrupt.

I walked out and I was about as low as I could get. He called me back in and said, "Forget what I said. Those guys on the TV are going to use you, Jim (laughs). You'd better have a contract." I said, "I don't have a contract." So he said, "You get one." (laughs) Then he went over and told them, "You put this clause in there. You put that clause in there." He told me what to do. So I did all of those things.

So, as it turned out, I had been gone a short period of time. He called me into his office on day. And he said, "How are you doing?" And I thought, "Something is going on here." Then he started mumbling. I said, "Pardon me. I didn't hear you, Mr. Mayor." He

said, "We're going to have a press conference." And I said, "Why would we have a press conference?" He said, "Because I'm going to appoint you as the new chairman of the CTA." And I said, "What? I can't do that! I've just been with this firm six months. I can't do that. It's a full time position." He said, "Well quit, then you'll go back." And I said, "I can't do it. I'm not going to the press conference." Well, he was a little upset (laughs).

RVR: Did he even consult you on this?

JM: No. He had the thing all set up.

RVR: He just thought you would.

JM: And I said, "Look, I'll work 24 hours a day. I'll do everything. Make me a board member. I'll do anything I can do for you." He said, "Let me get back to you." So he cancelled it. So he went and changed the law. He went to the state legislature and changed the law to make it a part time position for the chairman of the board. It was called the McDonough Bill (JM and RVR laugh). It was interesting. So, I took on the chairmanship. And then, I was also elected the chairman of the American Public Transit Association. With their chairman of the board and the national presidency, I was like a crazy man for three or four years.

So during that time, the mayor died in 1976. I was on my way to Washington on CTA business in the car. Tom Donovan had called. I'd heard something about him being taken to the hospital. And I said, "Should I go on with the trip?" He said, "No. Come back." So I came back. He had passed away. There was even a lot of speculation at time with my own name. But I clearly stayed out of that. As it turned out, you had to have an alderman as an acting mayor. Mike Bilandic was perfect.

Daley was a good mayor. He was very scholarly on items. If he wasn't, he'd study them. So I felt bad. I stayed on as chairman. Then, when Jane Byrne ran my association with the Daley family became an issue. She and I used to get along, but it stopped, because I made the headlines as a Daley insider. So I resigned as the chairman of the CTA in 1980. I stayed on here as the president of Murphy Engineering during all of that

time. And I've had many associations with the rest of the family, both socially and professionally.

I've got a funny story that involved Rich Daley. Bonnie Swearingen had some kind of a big civic celebration. It was a costume party. So Maggie (Daley) decided that we were going to go as Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz, the Tin Man, and the Straw Man. So Rich was the Tin Man, I was the Straw Man, Maggie was the Lion, and my wife Jackie was Dorothy. She got the good part (RVR laughs). Daley never really liked guys that dressed up or did crazy things. So we went any way. All of a sudden the Mayor looked at me. He didn't know who it was. He didn't even know his own kid (laughs). But when we were first arriving Rich and I got out of the car. The first three guys we saw had tuxedos with red, white, and blue ties. And I said, "I'm not going in there. I look like a goof. I've got straw hang out all over and lipstick." (JM and RVR laugh) Rich said, "I'm not going in, either." Maggie said, "You two get out here." So I walked in, I see a guy, and I said, "Get me a martini right away." (RVR laughs) So off I went. It took us about an hour to get settled down. And we stayed there. But those are the kind of little, funny things that happened. I've stayed very involved with the City. I was the chairman of the Association of Commerce Industry and the chairman of the Convention and Tourism Bureau.

RVR: But you never ran for office?

JM: No.

RVR: But he wanted you to?

JM: He did. I would have liked the administrative side and could handle the political side but I don't think I would relish the fundraising end of it and my wife Jackie is very shy and is a private person.

RVR: She's different from a number of your colleagues' wives.

JM: Yes. It works for some and some it doesn't. But several called me at the time and said, "Would you be a candidate?" I said, "No." Later, there was speculation that I would run for alderman or this job or that. So I stayed. And I've enjoyed what I've been doing. I'm still active in city affairs.

RVR: Give me your impressions of the mayor. How would you describe him? What would best characterize Richard J. Daley, in your mind?

JM: Well, he had great political skills, obviously, and people skills. But he had a tremendous financial mind. One of the things I learned as commissioner is know your budget. And I'd work for weeks, if not months, on that budget. When you went into a meeting with Daley, he had a way about him. If you were there with the three of us, you could say something and he wouldn't get on you. But if there were six or seven of you and some guy was trying to be a hotshot, he'd put you in your place. I mean, he would just zing you (laughs). He knew it so well, and he worked at it so hard.

And I also remember Bud Degnan, who was very, very close to the family. The Degnan family, to this day, are very close friends with the Daleys, Tim Degnan and the whole Daley family. So Bud said to me, "You know Jim, we're going to go before Tom Keane finance committee. And we ought to fill him in on it." I said, "Are you kidding? If Daley sees me going across the street to Keane office, I'm going to be a short term commissioner." (JM and RVR laugh) So he said, "If you foul up in the budget department, you're going to be a short term commissioner." (laughs) So we went over and briefed him. After two hours of our presentation Alderman Keane would comment, "Now there is a man who is well prepared."

RVR: If somebody tried to be a hotshot in front of the Mayor and he saw it, what would he do? How would he handle it?

JM: Oh, sometimes it would be subtle and the guy might not even pick it up.

RVR: It would be subtle?

JM: Yes. He'd say something like, "Well, you obviously weren't aware of something. But that was discounted four years ago." I mean, I learned that when there were two of us, I could say anything. When there was anything beyond three, I was controlled in my comments. But I used to bring all the budget stuff and all of the department heads. There were 8,000 employees. And I think we had seven bureaus. So I'd bring the seven bureau heads in. A couple of them always wanted to do a little showboating. I never said anything to them (JM and RVR laugh). They'd only do it once (laughs).

RVR: How would you describe his people skills and his financial skills?

JM: He was a good judge of people. A good example of that is that he loved to pick people from families that he knew. And I'm a perfect example of that. You know, he knew the McDonough family. And he knew, I think, that I wouldn't do anything in my life to disgrace him. And then, I think he made a better bond with them. He really liked young people in the cabinet. We used to be called the kiddie cabinet. We were all in our young thirties at one point in time. There was Lou Hill, Dick Curry, Kenny Sain, Tom Donovan, myself, and more. And he liked young people. But he was a very astute legislator and he knew the game. He knew politics.

I remember a funny story. I was going through the budget. I said, "Mr. Mayor, I've got a problem." This was after the storms and everything. I said, "You know, we haven't been putting money in the account to buy new equipment because we were running short, and we need the funding. And in fact, we haven't done it for ten years. The account is depleted. We need about \$20 million, minimum, to buy some trucks and equipment. When I go before that council, they're going to kill me. Should I divide it up?"

He said, "Put it in for \$20 million." I said, "Do you want me to put the whole \$20 million in?" He said, "Yes. They never look at the big things. They look at the small stuff." (JM and RVR laugh) And sure enough, I got questioned on some small tools account, from Seymour Simon, and not one question on the \$20 million (JM and RVR laugh). It was funny.

RVR: He knew the budget from top to bottom?

JM: Oh, he did! I remember one time when the Better Government Association was there. They were going on and criticizing the budget and everything. Keane got up and he started ranting around all of these statistics, facts, and figures. I was sitting there and I thought, "Where did he get these? None of them are accurate." (laughs) So I went up to him and I said, "You know alderman that was wonderful. But all of your facts were incorrect." He said, "You know that. I know that. But they don't know that." (JM and RVR laugh) And I think Daley did that sometimes himself too.

RVR: You admired the man very much?

JM: Oh yes, obviously. You know, it was tough to leave.

RVR: You knew about the criticism?

JM: The criticisms?

RVR: I mean the criticisms of the mayor?

JM: Yes.

RVR: In what ways would you say that they were wrong?

JM: I'm glad that you asked me that question, because I've told people over the years that I served as first deputy and as commissioner. And in both of those times, when I was first deputy under Lloyd, he went to me more than he did to Lloyd. And we weren't the largest purchaser. But we had a lot of contracts. And in all of those contracts, I only went to him one time. And it was on a brand new incinerator that we were going to build out on the west side. It was a very big amount of money involved. But there were three firms

involved. Two of them were from Chicago and one was from Boston. And I wanted to select the Boston firm.

So I went to him and I said, "Look, I want to make you aware of this contract. But I want to pick the firm from Boston." He said, "There's nobody in Chicago?" I said, "There are. There are two firms. But they're not as good. And this is too sensitive." He said, "Go ahead and do it." Now, I don't believe that exists today in any form of government. And I don't know about other department heads. But that was my experience.

He was rough on you if he ever thought you were doing something wrong. We had an incident in the Bureau of Parking in which one of the employees took money. He called me in and started talking to me like, "Why didn't you know this?" He said something to me and I thought, "You didn't say this to me like, 'You should have known,'" or something like that. He said, "Oh, forget that." People have told me that they don't believe me when I tell them this story. But it's the truth.

RVR: He was scrupulous, honest, and would not bend.

JM: You know, guys would go into see him. I remember when we had the contract to fix the fence on Lakeshore Drive. There was a guy who was formerly a state representative and somebody who was a heavy handed type of guy. And they weren't doing their job right. We thought that they were shortening us on quantities and things of that type. So we cut them off. And he screamed and hollered and he went to the mayor. The mayor called me in and said, "What's going on?" I said, "Well, here's what's happening." I told him the facts and everything. And he said, "Okay. Put them back. But you make sure that they do it right." (laughs) I said, "Okay." But that was rare. A lot of guys would threaten me and say, "I'm going to go to the mayor." I'd say, "Well, why don't we go and see him together and see how it works out?" (JM and RVR laugh)

RVR: Since you were working with contracts worth a lot of money, surely there was a lot of pressure put on you, by lobbyists and others.

JM: Surprisingly, no. A lot of our things, for contracts, equipment, and stuff, they were big projects. But I never gave it a second thought. I think in my whole career, I only had twice that someone attempted to try me. You know, I just passed it off and said nothing. They sent something to the house. I opened it up and saw what it was. And I said to the guy, "Come back here. Take this back with you."

RVR: The mayor never said to you, "I'd like you to give some consideration to this bid, that bid, this person, or that company?"

JM: No.

RVR: Never?

JM: No. In all of my career, he didn't. It's just hard to believe. But that's the fact. There was something else that I wanted to share. After you guys walk out the door, I'll probably think of something.

RVR: Well, you get in touch with us and we'll be back.

JM: Well, it was a great time. And even after I'd left, occasionally he'd call me in and we'd talk about something. As I said, I always had a close relationship with him. I'm delighted that some history is being made. I hope, in some way, that I can contribute to it.

RVR: You are.

JM: And of course, in the end, there was my involvement with the mayor in other activities. I was on several boards. I was the chairman of St. Xavier University. I was chairman of Mercy Hospital. So the mayor knew what was going on. That was the other amazing thing about him. He knew everything. I was telling you earlier that I gave a speech one time for his wife and a group of women. And I got in my car afterwards. I

was as nervous as could be. And I went to a luncheon and I saw him. A half hour wasn't up, and he said, "I hear you did a good job."

Oh, I have to tell you about this, while I'm on it. As I was leaving the department, Walter Jacobson did an hour program on streets and sanitation. He was critical of the department and the whole bit. I went to the mayor and said, "I want to go on live and rebut it. And he allowed me to do it." And he said, "Are you sure you want to do this?" I said, "Absolutely. I have that much confidence."

So he said, "Well, sit down. I'm going to give you pointers. With the first question they ask you, forget it. Just tell them that the taxes haven't been raised in five years (JM and RVR laugh) or ten years. With the second one, whatever it is, try to answer it and then go back to your next point (JM and RVR laugh). And I did exactly that. I was using a little of Keane's strategies, too. Where I didn't know it, I sure as heck sounded like I knew it (laughs). He called me in right after that. He said, "You can't leave."

RVR: You proved yourself.

JM: Yes.

RVR: That's great.

JM: That was right at the end of the time. So it was a lot of those little incidences.

RVR: He's been called the boss.

JM: Well, that he was (laughs).

RVR: That he was.

JM: Yes. There was no question. You knew who was the boss. And that's in a respectful way.

RVR: What was that based on, would you say?

JM: Well, you know, he came in and was elected in 1955. And he worked hard. He was defeated, as you know, in his first run for elective office, as a Republican, actually. He was running for sheriff. But his work in the legislature was his background for his role as the mayor. And as I said, he had good people skills. He was a tireless worker, as his son is. With someone that is that dedicated, there is no life. I mean, I don't know how they do it. They have to go to every parade, every wake, and every this and that. Richard M. does it and Richard J. does it. It's a tough thing. But I think the boss came from the press, more than from friends or associates (laughs).

Did you read Mike Royko's book, "Boss?" And you know, I never read a book that was accurate. And I read many of the Daley books. But even the book by Frank Sullivan, his own press secretary, was inaccurate. I mean, I sat in on many of the meetings, Martin Luther King, the convention, and all of the major things that were happening in Chicago. It was rare that the Streets and Sanitation Department wasn't involved and I was there in those meetings. You read about them in the book and they were different meetings than the ones that I sat in on.

FWB: How different was the King meeting?

JM: They would say that there was rancor over this or there was something major and somebody was screaming. It never happened while I was there (laughs). I don't know where it came from.

RVR: He's been accused of very bad race relations, trying to set whites apart.

JM: Yes.

RVR: Is that true, with the expressways?

JM: Well, you know, it can happen sometimes without even knowing it. I'll tell you a story. But to get to your question, it was never apparent to me, in my association. I think it was just the opposite. You know, I think he was sensitive to the problems and sometimes didn't know how to solve them. Cabrini Green was there. It was a cesspool and everybody knew it wasn't anything. How do you solve it? It turns out that when you move them, it doesn't work that well either. Poverty is poverty. With King, at times when he thought he was being manipulated, he would show a little animosity. And I think that Martin Luther King was trying to manipulate him.

And he had some of the black power aldermen that were not totally with him. But he always maintained that popularity in the black community. He always ran and I don't think he ever lost a ward. Part of that was organization. Or they trusted him more than whoever else was running against him (laughs). You know, I am prejudiced in my viewpoints. I would be honest if I saw a flaw that I didn't. He had a pretty good temper. I'll say that. When he got mad you didn't want to be around him.

RVR: What would he do?

JM: Well, I mean, he would be very short.

RVR: And he would explode? Did he ever use foul language?

JM: Rarely. When he was in the convention, I was there. But I was behind him. He was yelling, "Sit down." And he never used an expletive.

RVR: The family thought that he was using the word "faker," and not the four letter word.

JM: Yes. Right. Exactly. And I think that's what Matt Danaher, who was next to him, always said that, too. And I think he was. But even if he would use it, he wouldn't lose control that much, in my opinion. But that was an interesting time, in the convention. If you've got a minute, I'll go into it.

RVR: Sure. We do.

JM: We were given all of these warnings that all of these catastrophes were going to take place and everything. So we did everything we could, sealing the waterways, sewers, and everything else we could do. The night that the riots actually took place, I was down there with Jim Rochford. And I saw him attacked. A guy had a ball with all of these spikes in it. There was a young, black police officer. This guy couldn't have weighed 125 pounds. He was the smallest policeman. And he ran, tackled this guy, and he broke his arm in the process. But it was like being in warfare. Then, we had the protest marches. And I was there to represent the Mayor. He always wanted me to go down there and see what was going on.

I remember when Dick Elrod was injured and paralyzed. I was walking next to Dick at a protest march. So I got on the phone to the mayor and I said, "We just passed City Hall. Everything is quiet." I no sooner hung up and, all of a sudden, these guys pulled flares out and they started attacking the policemen. One was an antiwar radical named Brian Flanagan. I know that Elrod ran after him and I followed them down the street. I saw Dick laying in a heap in the doorway. They got Flanagan. Dick was alive. They were putting him in the backseat of a car. And I didn't think that Dick was hurt that bad but I was wrong. There were so many of these kinds of things that happened on a daily basis. I've probably forgotten half of them. But he was always on top of it. He knew what was going on.

RVR: If you were asked, "What defects did he have? Where did he fail, if he did? Were there any criticisms?" That's a bad word.

FWB: Yes. What were some of his weaker points?

JM: Well, you know, the Irish always have a short fuse (laughs). At times, he could be capable of that. He was a wonderful communicator, if he didn't read things, or if he didn't use a prepared type of text. But he wasn't the greatest orator. Richard M. does it too, very

well, just being spontaneous. He could, at times, listen to things without verifying them. Someone would come in and say, "This guy did this to me and something else." He'd find out later. But I think that's how it happens.

RVR: The Irish are also accused of having a long memory.

JM: He had a double long memory (laughs). There wasn't a thing he didn't remember, good or bad. Fortunately, I have more good. I have very few that are bad. Let me tell you. He'd get after me pretty good sometimes. He'd say, "You know, you should have had this done, blah, blah, blah." When I went over to the CTA, it was more distant. You ran the thing on your own. It's really been a part time job ever since, and it probably should be. The executive director is the key.

When the chairman starts running the operation, you've got problems. I knew the CTA very, very well. The gentleman I talked to on the phone during that brief time was Bernie Ford, who was the vice president. He was the executive director of both the CTA and the RTA, and a brilliant guy in transit. So when you have someone like that, or George Krambles, you let those guys those guys run that place. And you do the administrative stuff that you have to do as chairman.

RVR: Did he carry grudges against anybody?

JM: I think so. All of us do.

RVR: Who were the people who really fought him?

JM: Well, I think some of those aldermen did. I'm trying to think. Some of them would be like Seymour Simon. He'd come in to see me and ask me for all kinds of things. I'd say, "Seymour, I'd be happy to help you." And he'd get up on the council floor and he'd tell an outright lie. He'd say, "Well, I tried to get the commissioner and he wouldn't even talk to me." Or, "He wouldn't do this or that." (laughs). He was a son of a gun. I'll make sure he doesn't do that again (laughs). And I think there were some of those aldermen

that just wanted to go to him. There was Leon Despres. He'd make a lifetime out of sticking it to him, and vice versa.

RVR: There was Dick Simpson?

JM: Yes. There was Simpson. With Despres, you knew where he was coming from. With Simpson you were never too sure.

RVR: He disliked them?

JM: He was annoyed by them (laughs). Absolutely! I remember one speech. I thought that he was going to break his hand. I don't know what got him so riled up. He was pounding the thing, just pounding the thing (laughs). One day, I had to go up to see him. We never had a garbage strike in the history of the city. So we had a stupid problem on who should sweep the floors over at the maintenance garage. And the teamsters decided to go on strike. So I had to walk up to the podium and tell them that we were in the midst of the first strike in the history (laughs) of Chicago.

He looked up and he said "What? (JM and RVR laugh) I'll see you in a half hour." (JM and RVR laugh) So in I went. He said, "What happened here?" I told him and I said, "It's goofy. But I can't do anything about it. I mean, they're insisting that they take over the duties. And it's not their duties. And we're going to have all kinds of problems." He said, "You did the right thing. Let them go." It lasted 24 hours. Then they came back. He knew when to say okay. And at other times, he'd call up someone and say, "You know, call this off."

RVR: Some of those scenes were recorded on television.

JM: Oh yes. He would get mad. And Richard M. Daley does too, occasionally. It's amazing to think that they've been the mayor of the city for such a long time.

RVR: How would you rate Richard M. as a mayor? Do you think he is a great mayor?

JM: You know, I hadn't had the first hand experience but he demonstrates some of the same qualities as his father. The only mayor I worked under was Richard J. Daley, and then for Mike Bilandic in my role with the CTA. But it was not in the kind of day to day function. So, it's hard for me. And going back before Daley with the Kelly's and Kennelly's, Kennelly was not a strong mayor. Kelly, I think, was a pretty good mayor. And then with Jane, going forward, I liked Jane when she was in the cabinet. I kidded her a lot. I mean, the only reason she went after me was because of my relationship with the Daley's. But then, she married Jay McMullen.

I have to tell you a story about this event that happened. Jay wrote a story as I was leaving the city. It happened over the parking meter contract. There was a company by the name of Duncan Parking Meters. So the head of this company invited me to play golf. So I went back to his house. And it was the biggest mansion I'd ever seen in my life. So I was on the plane going home and I was saying, "It's too much money for parking meters." (laughs) So I started thinking and I thought, "I ought to figure out something here, because nobody ever bids against them." So I talked to Dick Curry. I said, "Dick, I'm going to manufacture somebody to put Duncan on the hot seat and see if we can reduce the cost of parking meters."

So we found someone that could do it and they went through the process. Jay McMullen came to me, who was obviously on the payroll of Duncan Parking Meters. And he said, "You lay off, or I'm going to write you up in the headlines." I said, "Jay, you don't have the guts (laughs). You don't have anything on me. I couldn't care less what you do." And he said, "Well, you'll see." So we continued with this thing. And in the meantime, Duncan was having a heart attack. The bottom line was their bid was substantially lower.

In the meantime, he wrote this story, "McDonough double dipping at Murphy's, being paid by Murphy and being paid by the city." Well, I lost it. I was in my office. It was an early edition. So I called Frank Sullivan to tell him. I said, "Frank, I'm going down to the press room to punch out Jay McMullen. And I want you to know that I'm out of control. I'll resign, or whatever the hell comes after this." I walked in there. And every guy in the pressroom, with the exception of one, looked at me like I was a madman. I

must have looked like it (RVR laughs). I came down there a mile a minute. He jumped on the table and I took a whack at him. I didn't really catch him. I missed him.

RVR: Oh really?

JM: Yes (laughs). So all of a sudden, I went, "What have I done?" One guy that was there, Mike Flannery, he's still with CBS. And he was the only guy there. So I went back to my office after I called him a crook. An hour later, three guys from the Sun Times are in my office. And they said, "We're here about you." I said, "I lost it. It is my fault, it wasn't justified." They said, "We're not worried about that. We're worried about you that you called him a crook." And I said, "Geez, did I say that? I don't know I remember it." They said, "We know he's a crook." (RVR laughs)

They removed him from the city hall over that incident and they put him in the suburban real estate section. And what happened? He married Jane Byrne (laughs). So you can imagine, here I am in private business, trying to survive. Here I had Jay McMullen and Jane Byrne looking for me. And we did hardly any business with the city during that whole period of time. But in a later time, when Jane was still mayor, we were doing work for the suburbs and they were putting a new water system in. It was city water out in the western suburbs, about six or seven of them.

The suburban mayors wanted me to go in the meeting with Jane Byrne. I said, "Are you kidding? Not me." They said, "We want you to." So we went in. And she greeted me very cordially. Then she said, "Well, what do you think of this?" I said, "Mayor, you're trying to improve relations with the suburbs and improve Chicago's image. There's a more perfect way than you do this, but don't overcharge them. Give them a fair rate." And they did it. She did exactly that. So Jane forgot it, by that time. And then, Jay died, not too much later. I was sensitive, because my whole career had to do with honesty. Knowing Daley, that's the one thing he would never accept.

RVR: Of course, you're Irish, too (JM and RVR laugh).

JM: Yes. I'm not a very good puncher though, I decided (JM and RVR laugh). I'm glad I missed.

RVR: Of course, it's like when Richard M. Daley ran against Jane Byrne.

JM: Yes. That's right. It was Ed Burke, who was running. It was too bad. Tom Hynes was the candidate, but he dropped out.

RVR: Yes. Did Richard J. Daley ever talk to you about aldermen or national figures?

JM: Yes he did, very much. In fact, it's funny you should say that. He would call me over in part of this thing, when we were over for the snowstorm. He asked me to stay on. And he would talk to me about exactly those kinds of things. He would say, "Jim, so and so is...." He would talk to me about national figures. I couldn't figure out why. He would talk to me about the mayor of Boston, the mayor of New York, etc. When I left the city, I think it was a year later that he was the president of the Conference of Mayors, meeting in Boston. So he asked me to come down. I said, "Why would I come down?" He said, "I want to introduce you to all of the mayors."

I said, "Mr. Mayor, I've got a small company here in Chicago (laughs). They're certainly not going to be giving me business." He said, "I want you to do it." So I went. We were sitting at one of the seafood places out on the water with Mrs. Daley and all of the Daley children. So I was sitting right across the table from the Mayor. Speaker McCormick came in and I moved down a chair. Then the Cardinal came in and I moved another chair. The Mayor from Boston decided to come in (laughs). I was almost out of the restaurant by the time dinner came in (JM and RVR laugh). But he would do that. And sometimes in the office, he would do it with me. With aldermen, he would tell me, "Now, watch yourself. They're going to build you up, do this, and do that."

RVR: Do you remember anything specific he said about national figures, whether it was a president, a governor, or a candidate?

JM: Yes, but I cannot remember the specifics of it.

RVR: Was there ever anything said about Adlai Stevenson or John Kennedy?

JM: No. There was nobody on the state level. It was rare that he would talk about anybody on the state level. It was always national or local.

RVR: There was none that you recall.

JM: No. It's funny. You would think I could. But I can't. He would say, "I remember the guy from Boston. He would be a good guy for you. He's an Irish guy. He knows you." And I knew him, ironically, because I was the national president of public works. I knew a lot of the public works officials around the country. And the guy from Boston was Joe Casazza. I'll never forget him. He's still there, if you can believe it. And he's lasted through about ten mayors.

But he would say, "He'd be good for you." And I always thought that if we were to try anywhere, Boston would be a place where we'd have a chance, because of my association with Joe. We had to open an office. Several times, we had national friends who wanted to buy our firm. We'd always sit down with them. And we'd find out that we made more money than they did. Those big firms were really strange.

It's a little off Daley, but it's on the same subject. They'd come in the city and they'd think, "Well, I know some guy that's a former chairman or a former commissioner. And he'll be my access to the mayor's office." They'd send guys in and they'd wine and dine these guys. Well, they couldn't get an appointment with the mayor to save their life (laughs). And they'd spend money like crazy. They'd come in for a meeting and they'd send 6 guys that required one person (RVR laughs). You know, no wonder they didn't make any money.

RVR: How about national issues?

FWB: Excuse me.

(end of video tape one)

JM: I don't know if it was too much to me. But on the Vietnam War, he was very opposed. And he used to talk openly about it.

RVR: He did?

JM: Yes. I believe he did.

RVR: I always thought that he supported LBJ as the president.

JM: Well, you know, he was a master politician at bringing not only Democrats, but Republicans together. And Richard M. Daley has got the same thing. How he can sit there and beat them up on local issues (laughs), and then go down there and get the doors open like he was the King of Siam is a great asset to have.

FWB: What did he say on Vietnam?

JM: Vietnam was a quagmire. I was a transportation officer in Korea. I was put in charge of this whole big unit, because the major's wife died and he left the service. Here I was, a 22 year old. And I had thousands and millions of dollars of trains, airplanes, trucks, and men. We had more alerts. They would come in again. If they did, we were all gone. They would go right through Seoul and they'd go right over us. So I think everybody wanted to get out of there. It was a delicate time.

RVR: Right. What do you think was his major accomplishment as the mayor?

JM: That's an excellent question. Well, I think he made Chicago the most livable city in America. He paid attention. He stuck to his knitting. I use that word in our own business, too. He knew what they needed between neighborhoods, good streets, good highways,

and water systems. And he did those things. He did the public works projects well. Some of the housing projects and that, I think, fell a little short. It was either his expectations or ability to do it, either financially or otherwise.

In the educational area, Richard M. Daley came in and took a very bold move to take it over. In those days, it was ran separately and not ran that very well, either. I think most people find the city with many historical places of interest, its beauty, and its cleanliness. I'll tell you a story about cleanliness and Daley, which epitomizes him. We used to hand sweep the streets at night with a small crew in the downtown streets only. But it was a pretty wide area.

Well, all of the visitors would come to Chicago. And these guys with the hand brooms would get between the cars. They'd get all the debris. If you went to New York, you'd see it all over. Well, people would come and they'd see all of this wonderful, cleaned up, downtown area. And they attributed it to being the same throughout it (RVR laughs). If you went down Milwaukee Avenue, it was the same as New York. We did this for years. Then we came up with the smaller sweepers. He started it before I was the commissioner. But he was a stickler. You'd see these guys, who would be up at 4:00 a.m. in the morning, out sweeping the streets downtown, doing litter control, to keep Chicago clean. He was very active on that. And I was too, on a national basis, because of my role in public works here and nationally. I think that's it.

RVR: One of the things that he himself was very proud of was his role in establishing the University of Illinois here in Chicago.

JM: You know, how could I have forgotten that?

RVR: Well, you're not in education.

JM: Yes. But that was such a difficult time. There was all of the opposition, including the press. I think he listed that as his number one accomplishment as the mayor.

RVR: Can you tell us of your achievements with him, that he did there?

JM: Well, in the Streets and Sanitation Department, we weren't as involved, like Lou Hill, some of the planning people, and things of that type. But the fundamentals of going through, taking that much land, and taking the political heat, it brought about a lot of things. What was that woman's name again?

FWB: It was Florence Scala.

JM: It was Florence, yes. She used to have a restaurant there. Didn't she?

RVR: Yes. It was a good one, too.

JM: I think it's closed now. But he always felt that. There were a lot of hard times. And now, it's amazing. But I never liked the architecture though, I met tell you (laughs). It's the ugliest campus. But it's coming around.

RVR: Yes. Well, what would you say was his greatest failure, if he had any failures? Maybe failure is too strong a word. Would you say that not getting the Crosstown Expressway built was a disappointment?

JM: Yes. Well, that's a good one, too. And that one I was involved in.

RVR: I figured that you were in on it.

JM: Yes. In fact, it's funny. Marshall Suloway was the Commissioner of Public Works. When Dan Walker became the governor, Marshall was going to become the chairman of the CTA. And Walker blocked it. That's how I was appointed head of CTA. I was already gone out of the picture (laughs). And that's when he decided that he was going to put me in there. The Crosstown was one of the biggest disappointments. However, it wasn't the mayor's failure. It was the failure of the governor, the legislature, and Washington to properly fund it.

The Crosstown would have relieved 25% of the traffic congestion in the downtown area. And it would have been a cinch to do, and it should have been done. The other disappointment was one Marshall Suloway and I both were involved in, was the elevated system. We wanted it done. The guy, Harry Weese, the architect, told the mayor that the elevated was a symbol of Chicago. We had the money for the Franklin line. And then, we were going to go across, well it wasn't Madison. Maybe it was further south. We would have had an entire underground system. We were first on the list. We would have gotten the federal money. And Weese convinced him that the elevated was a necessary part. You look at it as a crumbling, massive, iron, rusting out thing. It is Chicago, at a great price.

But we would have had one of the great underground transportation systems. And then the circular was killed. We were involved. We were the engineers. And we were coming along, albeit a little slow, because every time we picked a street, the aldermen would complain that it was going to interfere. These would be the trolley lines, like they have in Europe. It would have been another wonderful addition to the movement of people in the downtown congested area. The governor wouldn't approve it. The legislature wouldn't approve the additional funds to go to the next stage.

FWB: There are a couple of things I want to ask. First, I want to know a little bit more about your uncle. What was your uncle like?

JM: That was Joe McDonough. Well, he died when I was one year old. He was written up in the books not too favorably, as you have read. But he was a graduate of Villanova. He was an all American football player. And a graduate, at that time, was something else. But Joe was the old time politician. And Daley was a young man, whom he took under his wing, helped him, and vice versa. Daley was very loyal. Joe died of pneumonia. He went to a White Sox game, got a cold, and died.

My father was his brother. My dad died when he was 80. He was with the Board of Health for many years. My dad wasn't political, except he worked for the government of the city (laughs). He used to do 8 million favors for people. Oh, he used to drive me nuts. My father would get every reprobate when I was in the Streets and Sanitation

Department. He'd call up my secretary and he'd say, "You don't have to tell Jim. Now, we have this guy I know he wants to help him." (JM and RVR laugh) I'd call him up and say, "Dad, where did you get this guy? This is the worst one you could find for me (RVR laughs). There's no way." He'd say, "I know you can help him." (JM and RVR laugh). And on and on we'd go. The he'd say, "Could you fix the street for Mrs. So and so?" (JM and RVR laugh) Joe had a slogan, "What are you going to do for McDonough after all that he's done for you?"

There was a fellow in the state legislature. I'm trying to think of his name. It was Egan or something. And he knew all of the words. I've got them somewhere at home. But this was his campaign. He used to give out fruit baskets, food, and all of this kind of stuff. I guess he was somewhat of a character. He paid the price, I guess, for that. But I think he was a very effective political powerhouse at the time.

FWB: Did Daley talk a lot about him, and his relationship to him?

JM: He used to refer to the McDonough's in general, and Joe occasionally. In fact, when I retired, at the luncheon, he said, "I remember when we'd go into the bakery down there. And they'd have the best buns." (laughs) He was talking about this at the luncheon. And he talked about Joe in favorable terms. He'd say, "Your uncle was a great man." I never got into it too much with him. We talked about him once or twice at the most. But other than that, that was it.

FWB: I have a couple of other questions. I've lived near Chicago most of my life. I've always wanted to know. What did Mayor Daley have against street vendors? That's one of the big differences between Chicago and Baltimore, or New York, or other places.

JM: I think the problem was this. I'll put myself in his spot. And I'm not sure I'm going to be able to answer that. I don't think he had a problem with the average ones. It was the ones that went out of their way to annoy the public or to be overbearing. There would be a guy sitting there bang on the drums for an hour in front of a business office, or some guy that would be stopping people from going down the street. He'd become more of a

mugger than a vendor, if you will. But there was opposition, even to the outside sidewalk seating, for a lot of reasons. And to see it today, you know, 90% of the restaurants survive on outside seating. It's quite nice. It works out. But other than just being an annoyance to the public, I don't think it was anything really personal.

FWB: There were some scandals in the early 1970's, especially with Tom Keane. How did you see the mayor react?

JM: Well, that was an interesting relationship. It always used to say in the books that Keane was interested in money and Daley was interested in power. And I believe that was the case. Although, Tom Keane was a brilliant finance floor leader. He was a very, very learned man, a very sharp guy. But he could be tough as hell. And he and Daley had no qualms about the fact that they didn't see eye to eye at times. And I think a couple of times, people thought that they were going to get Daley, and somehow tie him in to Keane, or to somebody else. But it never happened.

I guess my opening story to you is that this is probably indicative. You always can't believe it. Then, when you get behind the scenes, there's nothing there to do. I had to testify for a federal case on Earl Bush who was the press secretary for the mayor, on the wording of a contract. He didn't report it properly or something on his form. They asked me, "Would Earl Bush have any influence over the contracts?" I said, "It's almost laughable. They won't talk to the mayor. They're certainly not going to talk to his press secretary." I remember that Sam Skinner was the U.S. Attorney prosecuting the case. I was a little nervous. I'd never been called before a federal case. He was asking me questions about this, that, and the other. And I said, "Sam, I don't know anything. Besides, I've got to go to a Boy Scout luncheon. I'm chairing it." He said, "Oh, get the hell out of here." (laughs)

Then they called me into court. Skinner came up to me. He said, "State your name." I said, "James J. McDonough." He said, "No questions for this witness." (JM and RVR laugh) He walked back to his chair. But the press picked up on that. And I don't know how the thing ever happened. I don't know who Earl talked to. But he made a mistake of not reporting what he had done.

FWB: What about the west side? One of the things we do as well is the history of UIC. I'm just interested in seeing how the Streets and Sanitation Department, when you were there, functioned on the west side. Was there anything unusual? Was there any sort of pressure from the aldermen?

JM: Do you mean in the black wards?

FWB: Yes. I mean primarily in those.

JM: That's a good question. There's one incident in particular. I was playing golf at a St. Ignatius outing. Someone came out of the clubhouse. And I got this phone call. It was the mayor. He said, "Where are you?" This was a Saturday or something (laughs). I said, "I'm playing at this Ignatias golf outing." He said, "Well, get out of there. They've got riots on the west side of Chicago. Get down there. They're dumping stuff on the streets." I went and I called my office. I said, "What's the problem?" They said, "Well, somebody dumped all kinds of debris on this lot. And they were throwing it all over the street and cars." I said, "Well, get a couple of high lifts, get black operators, get them out there, and get it cleaned up." They said, "We don't have any black operators." I said, "You have no black high lift operators? You train somebody in the next hour (JM and RVR laugh), because I'm heading out there."

It was dangerous. In fact, they were shooting. Some of our trucks were shot at, and things of that type. And several times in the snowstorm, when they had looting and all of the problems, they said to me, "You've got to get that under control." You know, it was very difficult. These guys were under enough pressure. They were tired. They'd been working long hours for weeks. Now, they had people shooting at them. It made things a little bit more difficult. But he was very sensitive to it. I think, at times, more could have been done. I can't qualify that, although I don't know a bunch of constraints from the standpoint of the whole picture.

I remember one time at the CTA when we closed some stations. It was happening when we had the storm in 1979. They closed the southbound section, because people who

wanted to go north were entering southbound trains and riding them to the end of the line so that they could have seats on their ride back north. Then, the people at the other end couldn't get on at all. However, we could bus the people from closer in. So we did that. But the headlines read, "All of the black sections are closed." That was the headline. It didn't explain the reason for the closure. It was a terrible mistake, and I participated in it. I thought we were doing the right thing in busing them from closer in. With my instincts, I'm pretty good at that. I should have figured that was not a wise thing to do. So, those things happened, where we were trying to do something administratively without thinking who we were doing it to.

FWB: You mentioned your father, with issues of hiring, especially in the Department of Streets and Sanitation. You had 8,000 employees.

JM: No. There was a patronage system. Matt Danaher, who later became the clerk of the court, died. He was in poor health. But he was the head of the patronage. It came out of the wards, the ward committeemen, the recommendations, and of course, through the unions, obviously. I had no direct hiring process, except if there was something wrong with the candidate, we'd obviously look into his capabilities. And later Danaher was replaced by Tom Donovan, who used to be my administrative assistant. He was from the Bridgeport neighborhood and was a very smart young guy.

One day I went on vacation. And I said to the mayor before, "That's the first guy I got from Bridgeport that was any good, mayor (JM and RVR laugh). He's marvelous." I came back and Tom Donovan was sitting outside the mayor's office. The mayor recruited him (JM and RVR laugh). I lost him and I went to see the mayor. And I said, "I'm never going to tell you anything again." He said, "You learn to take care of home base first, Jim." (laughs) That's what he said to me. I said, "Okay." (laughs) Later, Tom was a great help to the mayor. He was a very bright young guy and a very politically astute guy. And he headed up the patronage. He was very professional.

FWB: Was most of the Streets and Sanitation Department patronage, outside of civil service?

JM: Yes. Well, there were a lot of unions. Oh, we had so many unions crossing over. Like I told you, the first strike was over who was going to sweep the garage floors. And this is something I forgot. Daley was always after me to reduce costs, and rightly so. I'd go in and I'd say, "Yes. We'll dump somebody off of the garbage trucks. We've got too many." And he'd say, "Well, let's take a look at that." (laughs)

FWB: You guys had three man crews.

JM: Yes. We were used to having four man crews (laughs).

FWB: It was four man crews. I remember that.

JM: So, it would take a while. And then finally, we'd go back and we'd win, but slowly. And the papers were right a lot of times. We had access to people doing things. Guys would goof off. You know, when I was the first deputy commissioner, because I had more time, I would go out in the field to the various wards a lot. That's why, when I became the commissioner, I knew it so well.

I snuck in somewhere unannounced. I remember walking in one time and there were about ten guys playing cards. They didn't even know who I was. I was just standing there. Then, all of a sudden, one guy recognized me. All of a sudden, he looked and he went like this (JM and RVR laugh). He said, "Fellows, the game is over." And I said, "It's more than over, guys (laughs). You're all suspended." We did a lot of that. We'd get hell from the unions. I got threatened to be killed by the unions, the Espositos, in front of my wife. That was at dinner.

RVR: Really?

JM: They said to my wife, "If your husband doesn't let up, you're going to find him in the trunk."

FWB: When was this, and where was it?

JM: It was at a union dinner that I attended. These guys, the Espositos, later, were both killed. But they were tough.

RVR: No wonder your wife didn't want you around them.

JM: Jackie was non-political. I said, "Oh, they do this all of the time. It's just some bravado thing they do (JM and RVR laugh). So be it." And then, we got rid of the asphalt crew. There was one guy raking and three guys watching. There were a lot of inefficiencies. It just takes time. The government works a little more slowly. Business is inefficient.

FWB: So the mayor's interest was to reduce costs, but to protect as many jobs as he could?

JM: Somewhat. And that was always difficult. But in the final analysis, when the budget got tight, he was so reluctant to ever do anything on real estate tax, anything but that, because it was so high anyway. And our budget was a major part of the city budget. I can't remember the exact dollar amount. But it was significant.

FWB: Tell me, real quick, about the street light decision.

JM: The street light decision?

FWB: The street light decision, I mean the shift from mercury to sodium, because that was a big thing.

JM: It was funny. It was amazing, and here you'll see it too, how there were some environmentalists that said that we were going to destroy all of the trees in Chicago. I went out and got experts. And they said, "No. Jim, they're crazy." But I was looking at

the trees for a few months after that (laughs). The problem, when we put them out in the alleys, someone would say, "It's shining in my back window! And I can't sleep at night!" We'd get some of that. But we came up with guards and things that would shield them, when that happened. But they are tremendous crime deterrents. The sodium vapor ones are more efficient. They're one of the great pluses of Daley's administration. It's wonderful.

FWB: You can still see them when you fly into Chicago. Every time, you know where Chicago is.

JM: Well, when you fly over, if you remember, before you'd see the suburbs. You could outline the city. I used to love to do that, when I'd come in. I'd say, "God dang it. I was involved in that." (laughs)

FWB: Did that come out of the mayor's office, that decision?

JM: No. We had a real brilliant guy in the Bureau of Electricity. He worked under John Kelly. I'm trying to think of his name. He came up with it. He said, "You know, we ought to look into trying some of these more efficient lights because of higher pollution." And so, we did it. We took it to the mayor and he bought into it. It was expensive. But in the long term, it was worth it. You know, you forget things like that. And those are really some of the significant accomplishments.

RVR: Well, if you remember more, we'll come back.

JM: Yes. Right. You know, with the water system, I wasn't involved in it that much. But Jim Jardine was the commissioner at the time. The Jardine plant is named after him. There's another story of some great things that have happened. Now, we're assisting the city. They have to go out maybe about ten more miles to get the proper water supply. And it's going to be very expensive to do. But this is the difficulty of having to try and stay up with everything. It's a constant battle.

RVR: Okay. Well, we have no further questions.

JM: Well, I thank you. I hope it was helpful. My voice was hoarse.

RVR: We're sorry that we had you come when your voice was like this.

JM: Oh, that's okay.

RVR: But it sounds great. I hope you do get in touch with us, if you think of anything.
Well, thank you very much.

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