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Interview with Courtney Thompson

5 August 2002

Location: Office of the UIC Historian, Room 628 UH, 601 S. Morgan, Chicago, IL.

Present: Courtney Thompson, Dr. Robert V. Remini, and Dr. Fred W. Beuttler

(The interview has already begun)

Robert V. Remini: It is August 5, 2002. We're in room 628 University Hall. I'm speaking with Miss Courtney Thompson, who is the daughter of Patricia Daley Thompson. She's also the granddaughter of the late Mayor Richard J. Daley. I welcome you and I thank you, Miss Thompson....

Courtney Thompson: Oh, thank you.

FWB: I'm glad you can share with us your knowledge of and background to living as a Daley, with the family. Feel free to share anything you can tell us that you think might be of value to us about the late mayor, or anything else that you think is pertinent.

CT: Okay.

RVR: Shall I ask you questions? Or would you want to start and just reminisce off hand?

CT: Why don't you start asking me questions.

RVR: Well, as you, I've already interviewed your mother and your two brothers. But I'd like to get another woman's view of your grandfather. What was he like?

CT: As my mother and brothers probably told you, we were raised next door to my grandmother and grandfather. So we had a lot of experience with him as young children. He passed away. I was in the fourth grade, so I was nine. For a majority of those nine years, we lived next door. So he was quite involved.

RVR: So you know him pretty well.

CT: I did know him pretty well.

RVR: You have a good recollection of him?

CT: Yes.

RVR: Good.

CT: He took us to school a lot in the mornings. My mother was also a teacher. She would leave for school earlier than we did. So we would go next door to my grandmother and grandfather's and have breakfast. Then sometimes we would walk when we were older. But sometimes we would walk him to his car. Then he would either drop us off or we would continue on to school. So, he was a very involved grandparent. I can only imagine what he was like as a parent. But he was very kind and very patient. I think that would be the two words that come to mind. He had seemingly, for such a busy person, had so much time. I think he was one of those unique people who when he was with you he was really with you. He was in the moment, paying attention to you, if that moment was five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes, or two hours. It makes a difference when someone is really in that moment with you. And that's what I remember.

RVR: And that's what you remember the most about him?

CT: Yes.

RVR: Was there ever a problem when you got to school, as the mayor of the city, bringing you there with the other kids (laughs)?

CT: Our school was two blocks away from our house.

RVR: Oh boy (laughs)!

CT: It was the same school he went to, a little small, Catholic school.

RVR: Yes, right. And did he drive you there sometimes?

CT: I remember we were walking to his car. And then I suppose maybe on a bad day or when we were little, he'd drop us off. He would take my brother to kindergarten a lot (laughs) because that building was right on the way. Or then maybe on the nice days we'd walk. It was a short way.

RVR: I see. Did you have many meetings with the whole family in his house, and watch him let's say, as the head of the household, dealing with all of you children, grandchildren, and such?

CT: Well yes, when we had holidays and so forth. I think in our larger family, the head of the household was my grandmother (laughs).

RVR: She was?

CT: (Laughs) So, she was always sort of the chief at those sort of events, because they were all family driven. We have a larger family now. But we had quite a large family even then. He loved Christmas. He had gifts for everyone. They were thoughtful gifts. He loved that sort of thing. Actually, the night before he died on December 20, on the Nineteenth we had our family Christmas party. We just had fun. It was loads of family fun. That's really what I remember.

RVR: Do you think he went out and bought the presents himself? Or did he decide, "Courtney, I want you to get one thing or another?" Or....

CT: I would probably guess that my grandmother did that. Although, I bet they had conversations because they were always sort of right on with the presents.

RVR: We'll get into your grandmother because she's such a formidable figure (laughs).

CT: She's something else.

RVR: You're lucky to still have her.

CT: Aren't we?

RVR: And still not be so debilitated or mentally diminished. I can't begin to tell you the things that she remembered (laughs).

CT: She could tell you dinner from 1940 (laughs).

RVR: (Laughs) That's right. You know, when I was working on it, I told that I just finished a biography of John Quincy Adams. And she said, "Oh, he's the sixth president." Now how many people would know that? And that's true (CT laughs). She has forgotten nothing.

CT: Not a thing.

RVR: Was she as amiable as your grandfather?

CT: Yes.

RVR: Did she ever discipline you?

CT: Oh yes, oh sure (laughs).

RVR: She did?

CT: Yes.

RVR: Did he?

CT: No.

RVR: Never?

CT: No. I'm sure my mother probably told you similar things. I think my grandmother said her children will never forget her for the number of times she said no (laughs).

RVR: You know that story?

CT: Yes (laughs).

RVR: In what ways did she discipline you, your grandmother?

CT: Oh, well it wasn't anything too major. But she, for a little person, means business. She didn't tell you twice to do something (laughs).

RVR: You knew, right....

CT: You sort of got the picture.

RVR: She was never physical, in any way?

CT: No, no.

RVR: Or verbal?

CT: Well, she sort of had a way to say, “Don’t do that” or “Please do this.”

RVR: Yes.

CT: In a way, you sort of did it right away.

RVR: It’s amazing the child psychology that the woman instinctively understood, I would think.

CT: Yes. I don’t know how she did it. She had seven children, sort of one right after the other, in short order. I don’t know how she did it.

RVR: Yes. Was your father still living with you at that time?

CT: No. My parents divorced when I was five.

RVR: I see. But you remembered your father.

CT: Oh sure. My father lived in Chicago. We spent all of our weekends with my dad and everything.

RVR: Then you moved right next door. So you practically lived in both houses, so to speak?

CT: Correct.

RVR: Do you recall any events or happenings that are indelibly fixed in your mind?

CT: He would take us to things. If he had to open a park, festival, or a building, something that we would enjoy, we’d go. I remember we went ice skating, maybe it was

a new park facility, I think he was opening it. He would just take us along. If it was something enjoyable, he would take my brothers, too (laughs). If it was a sporting event, boxing matches, when they were little.

RVR: But never you?

CT: No. That wasn't my....

RVR: Did he take you to anything special?

CT: You know, he would take me to.... I remember that I was at something at Navy Pier. It was something international, I don't know. Different countries were represented or something. I got a doll. I can't remember what country it was. Poland, I think it was. So I went along with that because he thought that might be something I'd enjoy.

RVR: But not to, say, a skating thing?

CT: Oh, I would do all of that. We have a lot of cousins. We have a set of five older cousins, my brothers and myself, and two Vanecko's. So he would sort of take us as a package to those things.

RVR: Are you the oldest granddaughter?

CT: Yes.

RVR: I see. The Vanecko's are both boys?

CT: They are both boys.

RVR: So you were the only granddaughter?

CT: For a while, yes.

RVR: Until others came.

CT: Yes.

RVR: So that must have made you special.

CT: Yes.

RVR: Do you remember anything they did that helped you to think of yourself as special?

CT: Well, I know that when I was born, my grandpa gave pink cigars to the city council (CT and RVR laugh). I read it in a newspaper clipping or something.

RVR: Pink cigars? I didn't know that.

CT: Or maybe they were those pink candy cigars or something, whatever they were.

RVR: Oh yes, I would think so, right. But you weren't conscious of that at that time.

CT: No.

RVR: How about later?

CT: I would sleep over all the time at their house, an awful lot. My mother's sister, my Aunt Ellie, who passed away a few years ago, she never married and didn't have any children. So we spent a lot of time together. So I would sort of always be over there, milling around, doing whatever. I remember that I'd like to try all of my aunt's perfumes, all at one time (CT and RVR laugh). It doesn't make for a pretty smelling girl (CT and

RVR laugh). I remember my grandma saying that my grandpa would laugh and laugh and laugh. Then he'd say, "Open the windows! Open the windows, please!"

RVR: (Laughs) That's good. Tell me more about your Aunt Ellie. What was she like?

CT: She was terrific.

RVR: She was?

CT: She really was terrific. They think because she didn't have her own children, she was really involved with her sisters'. Well, all of her nieces and nephews, but she was primarily involved with her sister's.

RVR: Was she a nun at one time?

CT: No, but my mother was a nun.

RVR: Yes, that's right. She told me that she had gone and then she left, but not Ellie.

CT: No, Ellie was a teacher. She was a kindergarten teacher in the Chicago Public Schools.

RVR: Right. And she continued....

CT and RVR: Until she died.

RVR: So you did stay over there a great deal?

CT: Yes.

RVR: Were you given chores to do? No?

CT: No. Probably, I don't know. I'm sure I always sort of helped out.

RVR: In the kitchen, maybe?

CT: Maybe.

RVR: Drying dishes or washing?

CT: Probably.

RVR: But there's nothing that stands out particularly, in your career?

CT: No.

RVR: When were you conscious of your grandfather being mayor and an important man in this town?

CT: I don't remember an exact point. But I always knew he was something, because everyone always knew him. He never had to sort of introduce himself. People would always know him. I remember thinking, "Oh, that's interesting." (laughs)

RVR: Did he introduce you?

CT: Yes.

RVR: Always?

CT: Yes.

RVR: He had real regard for your presence?

CT: Yes. You were an equitable participant in whatever you were attending.

RVR: Did you go to his office very often?

CT: No, probably not so often. But I remember being in his office.

RVR: Tell me what that was like.

CT: I remember it seemed gigantic to me. I was six years old. I remember one time I came in, it would have been in the summer. And we would have been in Michigan. I remember that I came into Chicago with him. He must have been making a quick round trip. I wanted to go too, it was then Kroch's and Brentano's, the book store. I wanted to buy a bunch of books. I remember that he took me to the book store. I bought whatever eight year old books I needed to buy. Then I went to his office. I sat and read them and waited until he had his meetings or whatever. Then we went back up to Michigan together (laughs). So I remember sitting in the chair outside of his office with my bag and books. That was kind of fun.

RVR: It was fun?

CT: Yes.

RVR: Is that because you realized that he is an important man and that everyone is coming through to see him?

CT: Probably because everyone was so nice to me and everyone got me candy while I sat and waited (laughs).

RVR: Sure. Did you ever see him angry?

CT: I have no memories of him being cross or raising his voice.

RVR: You have seen, of course, the t.v. films when he's....

CT: Yes, he was at the convention or whatever.

RVR: Well, in sounding off with the city council, at times....

CT: Yes, I've seen some of that.

RVR: Right. But that was never....

CT: I never saw it, ever.

RVR: Do you think the man had.... I don't want to say two lives because that makes him sound as though he was schizophrenic (CT laughs). But he tried to keep his private family life separate from his public life and that they did not come together.

CT: Yes.

RVR: Did you have the sense that he had business meetings in his home?

CT: No. Oh no. I doubt it. We were over there all the time. It was very normal coming over for cake and milk or something on a random evening. So I can't imagine....

RVR: So you never saw anybody who was an official of the city?

CT: I can't imagine that my grandmother would have that, either.

RVR: No. She felt the same thing?

CT: No. Their home was their home.

RVR: Well, we had one man who was an architect who said he went to his home. But that was because he was hiring him to look at the Michigan house.

CT: Oh sure.

RVR: He was shoring it up because of erosion or something like that. But other than that...?

CT: No.

RVR: Probably nothing.

CT: I can't imagine. He was home a lot. I don't know how.... I guess that was the benefit of having your home so close to downtown. But I mean he would come home and be home for a little while. I remember that. Then he'd go out again in the evenings. Then sometimes we'd tag along, if it was something appropriate.

RVR: Did he come home for lunch much?

CT: I don't know because I was probably never home that much. I was in school.

RVR: Oh, that's right. You were in school.

CT: I'll bet he didn't, because I'll bet he had meetings and so on. But he was home for dinner an awful lot.

RVR: During the summer were you home, or did you go to camp?

CT: I was in Michigan. I was with my mother for two months in Michigan. Then I was with my father for one month in Chicago. Then we'd take a trip.

RVR: Was that a problem for you, separated that way?

CT: No. I think....My parents divorced when we were so young. You don't miss what you don't know. And at the end of the day, probably all a child wants is a happy parent. I had two happy parents.

RVR: And you really had more than that.

CT: I had loads of family on both sides who were involved. So no, it was always fine.

RVR: Well, I hope you don't mind my asking.

CT: No, not at all. We're lucky. It's pretty rare.

RVR: Sure. Tell me what life in Michigan was like.

CT: It was fun. It is fun. I'm looking forward to it. I'm going up there Friday. Well you know, we all have homes, sort of together. With such a large family and so many cousins, when you're together two months of the summer, you really are close. I think my grandpa was very wise when he bought his home and encouraged everyone to get their own. It's because of Michigan I think that we're such a close family.

RVR: Is that right? That's very interesting.

CT: I think so, because everyone is busy. Even if most of us live in Chicago, everyone has their careers, their schools, their families, and their lives. They travel and everything else. But in Michigan, you'd better like your family (laughs), because we're all together.

RVR: Did the Thompson's have a separate house from the Daley's, from the Vanecko's, and from the....

CT: Yes we did. When my parents were married, well, they weren't married too long. We'd probably stay with my grandma and grandpa. Then when my parents got divorced, we got our own little house. But every family has their own house, yes.

RVR: But you'd all come together?

CT: Yes.

RVR: Do you still have the house?

CT: Yes.

RVR: It's owned by you and your brothers?

CT: We have. My mother and stepfather have a new home.

RVR: Oh, your mother? Of course (laughs)!

CT: Then, our house was connected to one of my uncle's houses. And his family is growing. That's my Uncle Mike. Our house was connected to his house. It was built by another family. I think they built the main house and then a little connecting house for the grandparents. So we had the smaller house and he had the larger home. Then my mother and Peter got married, they built a separate home. Michael expanded to what was our home because his girls are getting married and having children. And he needs a little more space.

RVR: You say you're going up on Friday?

CT: Yes.

RVR: Is there something special?

CT: No.

RVR: Do you try to go every weekend?

CT: In the summer, I try to get there most weekends. I travel a bunch, so I haven't been up as much as I'd like.

RVR: Do your brothers and your grandmother...?

CT: Oh, she's up there all summer.

RVR: She is?

CT: My mother is up there all summer.

RVR: She is?

CT: She's back and forth occasionally. My brother Peter has his own home. My brother Patrick will probably soon have his own place.

RVR: Right. He just had a baby.

CT: Peter just had a baby.

RVR: Oh, it was Peter?

CT: Peter just had his fourth baby.

RVR: Oh really?

CT: So he's got a lot of work....

RVR: He's in the Daley tradition.

CT: Yes, exactly.

RVR: (Laughs) The family meets together regularly?

CT: Oh sure.

RVR: For big occasions?

CT: Yes. We always get together on December 20, which is the day my grandpa died. Some people might think that's a little odd. But, he would love nothing more, I think, than for all of us to be together, first of all. And secondly, it falls nicely with the holidays because on Christmas and New Year's, it's so hard. Everyone has additional family, or they travel, or they want to have a nice little Christmas.

RVR: Do you still have your Christmas before Christmas Day?

CT: It's always on December 20. That's when all of the Daley's get together.

RVR: And at the same time, they recognize and they remember him?

CT: Yes.

RVR: Do they all go to church?

CT: There's a mass that morning. So those who can go will go. It's usually seven a.m. or eight a.m., before work.

RVR: Is this in Michigan?

CT: No, that's here in Chicago.

RVR: I see.

CT: Then, our family is so large now. In the old days, someone could host it. But it's a little too much now. So usually we'll go to a restaurant or something for the meal. Then we'll go back to my grandma's or someone's house. She gets presents for everyone, my grandmother, at ninety-five.

RVR: Still? That's unbelievable!

CT: (Laughs) You know, it's kind of fun because it keeps her busy all year. She's always looking for something you need for Christmas, for the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren. It's really amazing.

RVR: I forgot whether I asked her how many grandchildren she has now. But I'm hoping we're going to have a second meeting. I only got to, about, the mayor's legislative days in the state legislature. I really haven't discussed with her the years when he was the Mayor of Chicago.

CT: I'm sure she'd be delighted to talk to you again.

RVR: She wants to. But I have to wait until your Uncle Mike calls me, because he was there. Somebody has to be there from the family. She did have me go downstairs and see....

CT: See all the pictures?

RVR: I saw the pictures. The pictures are wonderful. And his study or den, which is still kept, is beautiful. We're going to try to re-create that, or something like it, or his office. You know, like the oval office in a presidential museum? This is because they're going to have to build a new building for the archives, with everything coming in. There's stuff from Mayor Richard J. Daley, Mayor Richard M. Daley, and Bill Daley. I'm hoping that the other members of the family will contribute what they have, too, with what they think is of value. But we're not going to receive the papers until you grandchildren have had a chance to go through it. That way you can sort of find out if there's anything that ought to be kept personal and unimportant for scholarly purposes.

CT: We're having a meeting next week on that. So that's moving forward.

RVR: Oh you are going to?

CT: Yes.

RVR: Your uncle told me that they're anxious that the grandchildren get to know more about their famous grandfather. I mean, they know him as a person. But they don't know him as a public figure, as a statesman.

CT: Right, absolutely.

RVR: And as somebody who was the greatest mayor in this city. And this is the way you'll get it. Now tell me, are all of the grandchildren involved?

CT: I think so.

RVR: Yes.

CT: I mean, I don't know if everyone will be. Probably more will be involved....

RVR: You're going to meet, when did you say?

CT: It's next week. I have it in my calendar. It's this month.

RVR: It is this month?

CT: If this is the week of the fifth, I'll bet it's next week.

RVR: Okay. That's good to know.

CT: Yes.

RVR: As a result of that, I hope that we'll hear more about your....

CT: Oh yes.

RVR: See, there are some things, like legislative stuff that they had, which are published by the legislature. It's not personal, in any way. There were legislative acts, resolutions, that sort of thing, that can easily be brought over. And I think there's books too, unless there are books that are very special. I saw the books where they were. Have you had a chance to look at the files that are there?

CT: I've seen some of them. I was always helping my grandmother sort photos. You know, most of them are family photos. So I think she wanted to organize that sort of stuff.

RVR: She knows where they are. She was telling your uncle, "You'll find it on top of the...."

CT: (Laughs) And if someone questions her, you're always proven wrong. They'll say, "Oh sure grandma, I'll find it." And then sure enough, it's exactly where she told you it would be.

RVR: Can you tell me anything about those files that might be helpful to us?

CT: The files I was looking at were old. There were some photos. I sorted them for her. Now, I don't what happened to them.

RVR: Yes. Some of them are on the walls now.

CT: Yes.

RVR: But not all of them are. The rest of them I guess are....

CT: A lot of them were family baby pictures of my aunts, my uncles, and my mother. She needs a magnifying glass to see some of those tiny pictures. I was trying to sort a stack of my mother, a stack of my aunt, and that sort of thing.

RVR: Did you know anything about a diary? Is there a diary?

CT: I don't know. I've never heard anything about one. It doesn't mean that one doesn't exist.

RVR: No. And that's what your uncle said. But your grandmother seems to think that there wasn't.

CT: I don't know. I have no idea.

RVR: See, in the back, they have file cabinets. I would presume that they would have paper documents, rather than pictures or films. But you haven't looked through those at all?

CT: No.

RVR: Okay. I just thought I'd ask.

CT: Oh, sure.

RVR: And of course, there's a lot of material in the warehouse.

CT: Oh, there's a warehouse with material too, huh? Oh my, that's a lot to look at.

RVR: You guys have quite a job ahead of you. And as your Uncle Mike said, we're in no hurry. We want to be sure we're doing this right. We're trying to get it as quickly as we can.

CT: Well let me see if I can kind of keep things moving forward for you, anyway.

RVR: It would be nice, yes. And I would appreciate hearing....

CT: And you can't have all of these cousins involved. A committee of twenty-five gets you nowhere, right? So, my brothers are also pretty good about moving things forward.

RVR: Right. I was very impressed by your brothers, as I am impressed with you and your mother, too (CT and RVR laugh).

CT: Oh, thank you!

RVR: They're both lawyers?

CT: Patrick, the younger one, is a lawyer. Peter, the taller one, is in money management. He works for a mutual fund company.

RVR: And what are you?

CT: I work for the Boeing Company, the aerospace company

RVR: Oh you do?

CT: Yes. I just started a few months ago. I love it. You know they've moved their world headquarters here?

RVR: I know, of course. I hope they're still doing business, with the air business being so competitive these days.

CT: Right. With a business as vast as Boeing's, they have the commercial airplane business, which was so severely hit with September 11 and so forth. However, they also have additionally business units like our defense business.

RVR: I can imagine. And you travel a lot?

CT: I do. And they're sort of all over the world. It's great. I'm thrilled with my job there.

RVR: That's wonderful!

CT: I love it.

RVR: Do you do anything special that you'd like to...?

CT: Oh yes. I'm part of the communications team.

RVR: Oh, communications?

CT: Right. It's wonderful.

RVR: Now, I presume that the grandchildren will have to figure a time when they can do this. They don't have to do it all together, as a group.

CT: No, it's impossible. I think that's probably what this meeting is about. We'll figure what's our plan, who'll be responsible for what, and then timing.

RVR: Right. Now, were you at the meeting with the chancellor and your brother?

CT: No. I couldn't go. My brother Peter went in my place.

RVR: Oh, he went in your place?

CT: Yes.

RVR: But you are on that committee?

CT: I believe I am.

RVR: Your Uncle Mike was there. I thought they said that somewhere along the line he wanted the grandchildren to meet me and Douglas Bicknese, who is the archivist of the library, to tell you what....

CT: You'd tell us sort of what you're looking for and what you need. Yes, no problem, I'll bring that up at the meeting.

RVR: Well, whenever. Where are you going to meet, at your grandmother's home?

CT: No, I think it'll probably be at someone's office. My grandmother's home is little. Well, she won't be home anyway. She'll be in Michigan. I don't even know yet. I'll have to look at my calendar.

RVR: Does she come back to the city much during the week?

CT: No, she doesn't, not so much. She's actually here today for something. She always has a project going on at her house.

RVR: You know where she is?

CT: Yes.

RVR: She keeps you informed?

CT: Oh, I talk to her all of the time. She calls me, yes.

RVR: She does?

CT: Yes. Oh, she's very funny. We're so close.

RVR: She is? She has that Irish wit?

CT: Oh, she's so funny. I've been travelling all of the time for my job. Oh, I let a week go by and I didn't talk to her, which is very rare. It was my fault. Well, she didn't call, leave me a message and say, "Would you please drop a dime and call your grandmother?" (CT and RVR laugh) It was very funny. I love getting her messages.

RVR: I can imagine. Does she do that with the other grandchildren too, do you figure?

CT: Probably. We have a very unique relationship.

RVR: I was going to say. You're kind of special, because you were there all of the time, a lot of the time.

CT: Yes. I was raised by my mother and father. Then, of course I had my grandmother, and my Aunt Ellie, so we had a trinity of mothers (laughs). So, it's a little unique, yes.

RVR: And you're all women, you see. You have a special relationship then, with her. It continues one now.

CT: Yes.

RVR: I'm hoping that when she comes back to the city your uncle will call me and say, "Can you come?"

CT: Oh, that'd be great.

RVR: She'd like to have another meeting.

CT: I'll see her this weekend. I'll bring it up.

RVR: Would you please? I'd appreciate it.

CT: My guess is that it might be after the holiday, though.

RVR: That's fine. You mean....

CT: Labor Day.

RVR: That's just as well. It's too muggy and hot.

CT: It's a little warm. Did you go down to...? Oh, you went to her home.

RVR: I went to her home. I was really impressed with the size of it.

CT: Oh, it's a nice space.

RVR: Right. It has the basement. There's the protection that she has (laughs). I've never had that before. Do you ever remember having the police outside?

CT: Oh yes, they were in the front of my grandmother's.

RVR: But this was only for your grandmother?

CT: Oh no. I remember that, because it was fun to ride in his car. They had these little seats. I don't know what you call them.

RVR: They were jump seats.

CT: Yes, and you flipped them over. I remember those. We used to love to sit in those (CT and RVR laugh). I guess they're not around. They're probably not so safe. That's why they're not in cars anymore, those jump seats.

RVR: Yes. They don't have them. There're belts and such.

CT: But oh, we used to love riding in them. That was very fun.

RVR: But there was a time, you see, when there was no protection there. And it only came about after the 1968 problem. You know what I'm talking about?

CT: Yes.

RVR: Then, of course, he was threatened.

CT: Oh yes, I remember that.

RVR: They were demonstrating in front their house and such. Do you have any recollection of those incidents that occurred?

CT: No, because I was born in 1967.

RVR: Oh, so you were an infant?

CT: I mean, I read about them. My mom and dad told us some things. I think we all went up to Michigan or something. My dad was working in the city. He said that we went up and he stayed here.

RVR: Did either of your parents or your grandmother try to educate you as to who your grandfather was and why he was important in this city? In other words, did they sit down and say, "I want you to know this about your grandfather. He was elected mayor," that kind of instruction.

CT: No, not so formally. I think that they were more concerned with knowing him as our grandfather, because he passed away when we were little. So, as a husband to my grandmother, as a father to my mother, I learned of that side of the man. And sadly, I've read most of the books. There is not a book out there that I would think would be appropriate. I mean, I read "The Boss" book and I thought that it was a little goofy. What was that new one?

RVR: It was "American Pharaoh."

CT: Yes, "American Pharaoh."

RVR: It was by Elizabeth Taylor and somebody else.

CT: Yes. I read that. Truthfully, that got into such detail. There was something in the Sanitation Department in 1956. I'm not going to read seventy-five pages on it (CT and RVR laugh). So it sort of lost me. I didn't think it was so interesting or complete.

RVR: I don't think that they really had the flavor of the man.

CT: No, they missed it altogether.

RVR: None of them interviewed the people that knew him best, his family, as far as I know.

CT: I don't think so.

RVR: And you're the only ones who have come forward now to put on the record so that the scholars will know for the future what kind of man he was. He was an extraordinary father and grandfather.

CT: He was terrific. We are all readers in our family. We're always trading books. "Have you read this?" My grandmother is a great reader. It's a little hard for her because she has to read the large print now. There's biographies, which are just my favorite. So, we're always talking about something or other. I'll bet she read some of the John Quincy Adams book. So he was a great reader. My mother said he read all of the great classics to them. He would read Dickens, when they were little children. So I think that probably had....

RVR: Did he read to you?

CT: I don't remember. I'll bet he did. But I don't remember. My mother and father certainly did. I really remember that. I remember when we would go to Michigan in the summers. We really were there Memorial Day to Labor Day and back to spend some time

with my dad. But she would take us to the superstore, Kroch's and Brentano's. I guess it's on Wabash.

RVR: Yes it was.

CT: We would buy all of our books for the summer. I loved to read. So even at age six or seven, that was the biggest treat. You'd get your little basket and put in as many books as you wanted to put in. My mother would take us for that. We'd have all of our books for the summer. So we always had them. Reading was really important.

RVR: He must have really loved that, to know that his grandchildren carried that on. Do you have any recollection of him as far as education goes, or reading?

CT: Yes. I remember being over at their house doing homework. He would always be interested. He'd say, "What are you learning, your ABC's?" I don't know, penmanship, whatever (laughs).

RVR: I understand that your grandmother was big on penmanship.

CT: She was very big on penmanship. She's very disappointed in a lot of our penmanship's now (laughs)! Let me tell you what!

RVR: Well, when I went to school, that was something that we took in class, in grade school. I don't think they have that anymore.

CT: She has beautiful writing, my grandmother. My mother also has beautiful penmanship.

RVR: Right. Do you recall him ever talking to you about your education? Did he ask "What kind of career?" Or, "What are you going to do?"

CT: No, I was young. I was in the fourth grade. I remember doing homework. I remember him asking me, “What are you studying,” and that sort of thing.

RVR: Did he help you with your homework, at times?

CT: I’ll bet he did. I don’t really remember. My Aunt Ellie, being a schoolteacher, she was always involved when we were doing homework. She always wanted to know.

RVR: But not your grandmother as much?

CT: Oh, she’d always get involved.

RVR: They were all interested.

CT: Yes. She would make sure we did our homework (laughs). My grandmother did, that’s for sure (CT and RVR laugh).

RVR: Everybody says that. Even now, she’s in charge of that family.

CT: Oh yes.

RVR: And everybody knows it. But it’s done with such....

CT: Grace.

RVR: It’s a sleight of hand almost.

CT: I know. She just has a way. I wish I had that way. She doesn’t have to say so much or do so much to get things done. It’s just great skill.

RVR: It’s amazing where it came from. She had a checkered life, too.

CT: She lost her parents young. She had siblings for whom she worked to pay to educate. She had to end her own education much sooner than she ever would chosen to do.

RVR: It's my impression that your grandfather and your grandmother were very fortunate to have met and married. They were really meant for one another. It seems very romantic, I know.

CT: They were really partners.

RVR: They were.

CT: Yes. They were very much partners, partners in the way that you don't see so often.

RVR: Do you think that they were partners in city hall business much?

CT: I don't know. My grandmother, as you know, is a terrific woman. I mean, I ask her opinion on lots of things. "What do you think about this, that, or the other?" So I wouldn't be surprised if my grandpa did that, because that's what you do when you have a good partnership. But I can't imagine that she....

RVR: Did you find her to be a very wise woman when you asked her?

CT: Yes.

RVR: You did?

CT: Yes. She's very thoughtful with her advice. She doesn't just dish it out. Generally, you have to ask for it. She doesn't impose it.

RVR: With your grandfather, would you say that there was anything you might consider less attractive about him?

CT: He was just kind. I remember that he would make my grandmother breakfast in the summers.

RVR: Oh he would?

CT: Yes. She always said, "The oatmeal was a little runny. And the eggs weren't quite done." (RVR laughs) But he made it and he cleaned it up. And I remember being over there when the coffee wasn't so good. He wasn't good at the coffee. But he tried. He made her breakfast in the summers. I thought that was very sweet.

RVR: She didn't mention that to me. That's why I need people like you for those things.

CT: Yes. I think that they were very sweet with each other. I think that they were partners and ran a good home. They had seven children, so there was a lot of work. But they were sweet to each other. Sweet is the word that I would use. That would sum it up.

RVR: They really understood each other and each other's needs. They were there for each other.

CT: Oh yes.

RVR: And yet, that's not the Mayor Daley that everybody knows or remembers.

CT: No. But the people that really knew him or knew him with his family knew it.

RVR: Well, we're hoping, you see, that your grandmother will send out this letter inviting all of the people that were in your grandfather's administration. This is to let us know if they'd like to be interviewed or if they have papers. They can tell us their reaction to him as mayor. Whereas, we're getting from you, your mother, your brothers,

your grandmother, and your uncles the family side. It's very important because you have to have a balance of what the person was really like.

CT: Yes.

RVR: Now, you're making him out to be pretty much a saint.

CT: I mean, when you're in third grade and your grandfather can spend that much time with you....

RVR: But do you realize that he went to mass and communion every day?

CT: I know. This type of person is amazing to me. Most successful people have schedules that you wouldn't believe. And in this case, he got to mass everyday and spent time with his family. In the moment with you, whether it's a few minutes, a few hours, or whatever. It's amazing to me. .

RVR: Right. What do you think it takes in that kind of individual to be able to do that, would you say?

CT: I think probably patience and trust. He probably had a good team of people working with him at home, meaning my grandmother. At the office, he had his team. And I think he probably trusted others in helping....

CT: Do you think that maybe they were organized? Do you think your grandfather was well organized?

CT: Oh, I would think so, yes.

RVR: You know, to say, "My time, there isn't that much. I've got to be able to do all of these different things."

CT: Yes. That's what my grandmother said. He was really particular. Before he was mayor, when he was working and going to law school at night, he had to be careful about his time. He didn't have so much. They waited to get married, when he was finished with school.

RVR: You know, there's something I haven't asked anybody, and that is how your grandfather dressed.

CT: He was very snappy.

RVR: Wasn't it so?

CT: It was like, best dressed, sort of snappy.

RVR: Really?

CT: I have no idea where he bought his suits. But it was that CEO sort of look.

RVR: Do you have anyway of explaining it?

CT: He was a perfectly dressed, looking person. He was very well turned out, from the polished shoes, to the pressed shirt and suit. He always had his haircut and always had a nice complexion. He was a really well turned out looking person.

RVR: Do you know, the architect that we interviewed said that sculptor, who did the full length sculpture of your grandfather, originally did it in which there were creases shown. The architect said, "I have never in my life seen the mayor with a crease in his pants."

CT: I would believe that.

RVR: And he took it out.

CT: I believe it. He was perfectly professional, whatever you'd call that.

RVR: I think he believed that appearance made quite a difference in the way that you're treated by other people and what you can expect from others.

CT: My guess is that if my grandfather were alive today, he would not be a fan of casual Fridays (CT and RVR laugh). There would be no casual Fridays. I don't think so (CT and RVR laugh).

RVR: Couldn't you see them there working for him (CT and RVR laugh).

CT: There would be no business casual. I mean, I know that. I like suits. I wear suits myself. I know there would be no casual, business casual, and all of that (RVR laughs). I can't imagine it.

RVR: You're fortunate to have had that experience and that love from your grandparents, as well as from your immediate family, and mother and father.

CT: Yes. We're very lucky. I mean, I'm thirty-five years old and I have a grandmother who's as sharp as a tack and a delight to be with.

RVR: Right. And do you spend much time with her now, still?

CT: Yes. The summers are hard because I'm working and she's in Michigan. But I'll see her this weekend. I mean, I talk to her every week, for sure.

RVR: Do you live close by, or did you move out?

CT: I live in Old Town, at North Avenue and Wells. So it's not so far at all.

RVR: Do you drive back and forth?

CT: Yes. I actually have a couple of things I need to drop off, a couple of errands for my grandma now and again. I've got some things for her. I need to get down there. She's been asking (laughs). So I need to get down there and drop them off.

RVR: I don't think I have any more questions that I can ask I'm trying to think of anything. Could you perhaps sum up, or say what you want to?

CT: I'll just say I was so young, too young. I would really have loved to know my grandfather as an adult. That is a shame.

RVR: It's amazing. He had only certain loves in his life, his family, his neighborhood, and Chicago. I don't think he had any more ambition to become governor, let's say, or to be a senator, even though it was mentioned at different times. But he knew what he wanted and he achieved it.

CT: That was something, yes. He was very content, I'd say. He was a very content man, content with his faith, his family, his job, his career, his home, and his life.

RVR: There's someone I haven't asked you about. I don't know if you knew him as much. That's Big Mike.

CT: I didn't, because he died long before I was born. But I'd heard a bunch of things about him because he lived with them. He was a little man. He was about the size of my Uncle Mike.

RVR: That's what your grandmother said!

CT: Oh, right in front of him?

RVR: Right (CT laughs)! She said, "He was a little man, just like Mike." He said, "Thanks mom." (CT and RVR laugh)

CT: He was a little man, so I don't know why they called him Big Mike. Maybe it was a silly thing. Or maybe it was because Michael was the baby.

RVR: Yes. He was just Mike to everybody until Little Mike came. So there had to be a Big Mike (CT laughs). I guess that's right.

CT: I would think. No, my mother said that Big Mike was a fix it. He could fix everything. He was so handy. My grandfather wasn't so handy.

RVR: No, he couldn't do it.

CT: No. My grandmother said he always kind of tried to fix something in Michigan. Oh, this is sweet. When we were in Michigan, he was a very early riser. He was really up with the birds. He would go to the bakery and get everyone donuts. At six o'clock in the morning, no one was awake. He would just leave them at your door. So when you got up, you had donuts. I mean, on his day off, he'd get up that early. I'm sure he ran to mass somewhere and then shot to the bakery.

RVR: Oh, he didn't come in and knock on the door, and tried to wake you up? He just left them at the doorstep?

CT: Yes. But he did have a bugle. He could play, what's it called? Taps?

RVR: Yes.

CT: He could play it.

RVR: He could?

CT: Sometimes, if he thought we were a little too late (RVR laughs), he'd come over and he'd play it.

RVR: Did he?

CT: Yes. And everyone would laugh and laugh and laugh. My mother would laugh.

RVR: He was musical, then?

CT: I mean, just a little bit.

RVR: Your grandmother said they used to go to the opera.

CT: He loved the opera. I know that because my mother and stepfather are both opera fans. I know that my grandparents always had season tickets to the opera because I would go along, after my grandfather died. I was too young when he was alive. I remember going, probably starting when I was in eighth grade maybe, or in high school. I'd tag along.

RVR: But I didn't know that he could play the bugle.

CT: I think he could just play that one song. That was it (RVR laughs). My mother is a beautiful piano player. My Aunt Ellie was as well.

RVR: But your grandfather couldn't play the piano?

CT: I don't think he could. You'd have to ask my grandmother.

*****END OF SIDE ONE*****

CT: I'm sure everyone has told you about that.

RVR: Oh yes. They've all mentioned it.

CT: He would take us fishing. I forgot that. In Michigan, we would go to a pond or something.

RVR: Fishing?

CT: Yes.

RVR: I just wanted to make sure we'd gotten past that. Yes, there's a big picture now in the den, with an enormous fish.

CT: And we have pictures of us with all sorts of little fish (RVR laughs). You know, I've really thought about that. He would take us without our mothers. I mean, he'd have five little people for a whole day, fishing in Michigan.

RVR: You were out on a boat?

CT: No, I don't think we'd be on a boat. I think we'd be in a kind of pond or something.

RVR: Or off of a pier?

CT: Yes. But that's something. I have a bunch of nieces and nephews. And I don't know that I could take them all at one time (laughs).

RVR: Or that you'd want to (laughs).

CT: For an entire day (laughs).

RVR: Were there any other interests or talents? He loved to read.

CT: He loved to read and he loved to fish. I think he probably found a lot of relaxation in both of those.

RVR: He loved baseball and sports.

CT: And my grandmother does, too. Have you talked to my grandmother about baseball?

RVR: No.

CT: (Laughs) She can give you the line-up today. She can tell you who the White Sox are playing and what each ball player's history was. I can't remember if it's her next favorite team. But it's the Yankees, I think. But I'm not sure.

RVR: It's not the Cubs?

CT: Oh no.

RVR: It was never the Cubs.

CT: Maybe it's the Mets. But I think it's the Yankees.

RVR: I'll have to ask her.

CT: Oh, you have to. And she loves the Atlanta Braves. Or she did last year (laughs). She loves the World Series. You can't interrupt her during the World Series.

RVR: Oh, she watches it?

CT: Yes. She scores along.

RVR: She does?

CT: Yes.

RVR: She knows how to keep score?

CT: Yes (CT and RVR laugh). It's unbelievable.

RVR: I guess your grandfather was that way, too.

CT: Yes. She said that they would go on a lot of their dates, I think, to see the White Sox.

RVR: That was in the beginning.

CT: Maybe he taught her to score, although she had a bunch of brothers. She could have learned well before that.

RVR: I'll have to ask her.

CT: She is such a baseball fan, huge.

RVR: Now that's something. See? I'll have to ask. Are there any other areas that you think I could examine with her, that she knows a great deal about? I mean, other than the obvious things, like her life with him.

CT: I'd bet their courtship is sweet to hear about. And I haven't heard so much about it. I'll ask her about myself also.

RVR: Well, you know an Irish woman like isn't going to be that forthcoming about something that intimate.

CT: That's true. She said that she fell in love with him the minute she met him. I think that her brother introduced them. I think her older brother was a friend of my grandpa's. Well, you know now a little bit of what she's like.

RVR: Right.

CT: She makes a decision and she's usually right.

RVR: People that I know said, "We've heard that you've met Sis Daley." Everybody knows her as "Sis."

CT: Sure.

RVR: I said, "Yes. I went to her house and I interviewed her." Oh, they wanted to hear about her! They loved that woman the way they'd love the queen mother (CT laughs). The people did. I mean, she was a very special lady to them.

CT: Oh, she's so much fun. If my grandfather were alive, he'd be similar. She's interesting and interested, which are two different things. She knows everything about you, or as much as you want to share. She loves to meet friends. I'm having friends come to Michigan at the end of August. I have to let her know this weekend, because she'll want to have you over for a glass of wine or coffee, or however it works out during the day. She'll get to know your friends. Then she'll inquire, "How is Jane Doe?"

RVR: Do you know, when I came, she had coffee and tea there, with some Danish ready? She and your uncle were still having some coffee. She was drinking tea. I was so nervous (CT and RVR laugh). I didn't want it. I thought, "I'll spill it all over the place."

CT: She makes coffee in an old time percolator. I'm not used to it. It's good coffee. It's extra strong. So I love to go over to her house for coffee.

RVR: Well, I can't think of anything else, Miss Thompson.

CT: I can't think of anything, either. But if I do....

RVR: Please call me.

CT: Sure, I will.

RVR: Then we can get together again. I hope this hasn't been an inconvenience on you.

CT: Not at all. It's been a delight. Thank you.

RVR: Well, thank you very much. I hope you have a grand session with the other grandchildren going through, finding out, and learning about your grandfather.

CT: Yes. It will be exciting. I'm excited for it.

RVR: It is first collar. There's nothing more thrilling, you see, than to go through papers about somebody they're interested in and want to learn more, because there's their life spelled out in many ways.

CT: Right. I know that what you're doing is just a delight for all of us, because you're really getting to know him all of the way around. It's not just one person's perspective, who have had a good experience or a bad experience, or at the very least, an incomplete experience. You'd only see this one facet of the person, in whatever manner that you know them. So this is really terrific.

RVR: And I think the whole man has never really been known publicly, in print. None of the books that I've read, and I confess that I haven't read them all.

CT: There are so many.

RVR: Some of them are too terrible to....

CT: Oh, they're awful! And then there was a t.v. show.

RVR: Oh yes.

CT: That wasn't so hot, either. There's wonderful, few little interviews with my grandmother. So if you haven't seen that....

RVR: No. I'd love to get a hold of it.

CT: It was a PBS program called, "The American Experience."

RVR: That part of it was good. No I haven't. I'm going to have to get a hold of it.

CT: You might enjoy that. It's very incomplete. And it's very one-sided. It's sort of like, "The American Pharaoh."

RVR: Yes. But you see, that's what we can do here. People who come here are interested in scholarship. They're not interested in making a buck off of the name of a man who's remembered badly by some. They may have the worst recollection of him, as boss, or as the man who was involved in the 1968 Convention. They don't know the rest of the story, which is more important.

CT: And they don't care to know.

RVR: They go through the gossip, and for the....

CT: The salaciousness of it all.

RVR: Yes. With this, we're hoping we'll have such breadth, that the real man will emerge.

CT: Oh, I'm excited for it. This is a treat.

RVR: Well, thank you so much.

CT: Thank you so much, sir! It was a pleasure to know you (RVR laughs)!

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