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Interview with Robert Christensen

8 September 2003

Location: UIC Historian's Office, 815 W. Van Buren St. # 202., Chicago, IL.
Present: Robert Christensen, Dr. Robert V. Remini, Ph. D., and Dr. Fred W. Beuttler

(the interview has already begun)

Dr. Robert V. Remini: That's great. That's wonderful. I hope there will be many more.

Robert Christensen: I've met with several of them. Some have been interviewed. I gave him names when I met with him, some that came to mind that he might consider. Our biggest, or my biggest apprehension was that his style of management and administration didn't lend itself to having papers (RVR laughs). And I wanted him to know that the emperor had no clothes.

RVR: There's always somebody that will do it quietly.

RC: Well, they may do their diaries and stuff like this. But there wasn't an organized process where he received things in writing in advance and he took his time to respond. He has had a style of having a firm recollection of things that proceeded, events and decisions that had impacted in getting to this point. And he was prepared to make a decision if he was given some course of action that was advocated. And that was the kind of thing he did. If he gave approval, you knew that he'd remember that he said it. And you knew to get it done before he changed his mind.

Dr. Fred W. Beuttler: So, he was not one to trade papers, memos, and anything like that?

RC: No. We didn't trade memos back and forth. If I had an agenda to carry out, I would bring an outline of a meeting of what was going to happen and see that all of the topics were ones that he was familiar with, he knew where we were going with them, and what we were expecting to do. And if he took exception to that, we'd revise the agenda. But if there were nothing left, we'd go have a meeting. The minutes of the meeting were drawn

and published. I don't know if all of the minutes of the meetings of the Public Building Commission are somewhere. I assume they are. I don't know who would have them. They are part of what would be a collection.

The Municipal Reference Library, in my day, would be expected to have a lot of the recorded actions of commissions and things like that. We wrote a very elaborate set of minutes for the Public Building Commission. They weren't tape recorded. They were prepared minutes. That would be the kind of thing that could be essential if they were not otherwise kept somewhere. Those kinds of things would be more typical. When I was in his office for a number of years, there weren't a lot of papers going back and forth. I didn't see any. I certainly didn't keep any if I had any. The materials to do something about them would be in the office files.

FWB: Well, maybe we should get started while Dr. Remini is taking that call.

RC: Sure.

FWB: Why don't you give us your background, and up to starting to work for the city?

RC: I don't know if you have a copy of it. But there was a magazine that was published, either by the city or some allied venture called *Chicago Magazine*. They did a piece on a number of us, about our backgrounds and how we got into city government. And I would think that it would be a starting place for me and a number of the other people in his administration. I know that it had John Duba. It had me. It had Milt Pikarski. Of course, some of these guys are dead. Jim Fitzpatrick might have been in there. It might have said some of that. I took the liberty to give you a copy of a resume I had (handing resume to FWB).

FWB: Oh, okay. That'd be great.

RC: It would be someplace to have for reference if things get disjointed. You can have that.

FWB: Okay. Do you know when the Chicago Magazine piece was?

RC: I have that magazine at home. I can bring that at some point in time, if you don't have it.

FWB: Or you can give us a call, or something like that. I can have my assistant track it down.

RC: Yes. It would have been done probably somewhere around 1965, I think. I was, at that point in time, his administrative officer. And I think it would have been done after that appointment. So it was in that range, 1965 to 1967.

FWB: Okay. If you have a copy, or next time....

RC: Yes. I didn't try to bring a file of stuff I know I have. I kept a box full of publications, not a scrapbook per say, but it was published stuff that we had. There were bond issues, annual statements, annual reports of the Public Building Commission, things like those.

RVR: I'm going to Washington on Wednesday. And I'm going with the speaker to the Pentagon to commemorate 9/11. And they're calling me. The speaker is now in Europe, in Paris. I said, "I should have gone with him." I'm writing the history of the House of Representatives.

RC: That speaker (RC and RVR laugh).

RVR: So excuse me. I hope you continued.

FWB: Sure.

RVR: And if I ask about anything you've already discussed, please forgive me.

RC: We were just about to start on how I got involved in the process here. I gave Fred a copy of my resume, when I last redid it. I was born in Omaha, Nebraska. I traveled around with my father for a while, while I was growing up. I think I went to 9 or so grade schools and 1 high school. I finally had the opportunity to go to college and I chose Northwestern.

RVR: That was a good choice.

RC: It was because they had a co-op program. I thought that that was both good for its concept, in getting some work experience, and also financially, it was going to help me get through school. As an aside, Northwestern was the weakest school in the Big 10 and I wanted to wrestle. My coach said, "You'll have a better chance of getting on the team there early than you would at some of the other schools who are stronger (RVR laughs). He had been in Iowa. Along with that, they were very good, so he knew what he was talking about. And so, I did go there. I got a five year education there.

There were a couple of guys, during the end of my five years there, that came up to lecture from the City of Chicago. One was Fredrick T. Aschman, who had been the director of the Chicago Plan Commission, before there was a department of planning. The other was John Duba, who had just become involved in the city. He had been previously a professor at Illinois Institute of Technology. It gave me a little bit of breadth beyond civil engineering. I decided that I was not going to try and become a design engineer of some kind. I'd rather go to something broader than that. So I stayed for another year.

We had a very good professor, and chairman of the Civil Engineering Department, John Logan. He had done a lot of work in underdeveloped countries. He was a doctor of science, both in medicine and a professor of civil engineering. Anyway, it led to some additional studies. When I finished my graduate work, I got a master's. It was called environmental control. It was somewhat before its time. But anyway, I went to work for Ted Aschman for about a year because he had been doing some teaching up at

Northwestern. He had left the city and was a consultant for the Central Area Committee, among the other consultant engagements that he had. This was before he joined George Barton. The firm was Barton, Aschman Associates.

George had a big staff and Ted was somebody who could broaden their consultant practice. Before this, I was his only employee and provided a little bit of office support for him. It's hard to describe any good work product out of it, but I was there. And at that time, he was helping James C. Downs Jr., who was one of the mayor's principal consultants and was developing an ordinance to establish the Department of Planning. When that was adopted, this was early on, probably in 1956 or 1957, I was going to get married. So, I thought I'd better get a real job. So Ted arranged for me to have an interview with Ira Bach, who was the first commissioner of planning.

And John Duba, who I had also run into, was also doing some recruiting for the city at the mayor's behest, said, "We need new people and points of contact, for the departmental bureaucracies that are here." John had contacts for a variety of ways. So I met with John. And he had me interviewed by Bill Marston, the then deputy city traffic engineer under Leslie Sorensen. But Bill was also assigned to help in the planning department. He was the head of the section that was doing the capital programming. But I got interviewed by Bill. And lo and behold, I got hired for Ira's department by Bill as a traffic engineer (RVR laughs). I was assigned to the planning department. The normal process of getting a political sponsor, you haven't heard me get into yet. And so, having no contact politically anywhere, I said, "What are we going to do about this?" He said, "Well, I'll take care of that." He had an understanding with the mayor that if he had anybody that didn't have any sponsorship, the Mayor would sponsor them. So I was, in fact, sponsored by Richard J. Daley.

RVR: You needed a sponsor then?

RC: Well, there were pretty good rumors that there were sponsors. There were always sponsors. Everybody didn't come from nowhere. They came from somewhere. Somebody had an identity.

RVR: You know that book by Radcliff?

RC: Yes (laughs). I never read it. But I....

RVR: You know what he said.

RC: It was very logical. There was always a patronage office that someone got related to, so that someone got credit for whoever was employed, more or less.

RVR: So, Richard J. Daley was your sponsor?

RC: Well, that's a pretty good sponsor. As time went on, it was priceless. But I'm sure that he sponsored others that came in, in a similar kind of way.

RVR: Is that when you met him?

RC: No. I'd never met him, not at that time.

RVR: Even when he sponsored you?

RC: No. That had nothing to do with it. It was something to put in a piece of paper so it could go through the process of being enrolled in the city. And I'm sure that I was a temporary employee. I was not civil service, by exam or otherwise. So I started to work for the city, in this planning department that was newly formed. It had some of the staff from the old Chicago Planning Commission, an ad hoc agency in the city at the time. I was first involved, although I had no training as a traffic engineer. Civil engineers were okay. But traffic engineers thought that there was more mystique to it than I did.

The Chicago Skyway was being built. The Dan Ryan Expressway was not in place. There were a couple of ramps leading from Indiana and Michigan Avenues. They were going to dump traffic into the streets there with this predicted huge amount of traffic that was going to come from it. So, I received an assignment to figure out a one way

street system that would bring that traffic from about 63rd Street, or wherever it was down there, down to the loop, where obviously everyone wanted to go.

We worked out some lanes that could go this way and worked with some people at the timing of the traffic lights that could allow this flow to work better than not, and distribute it into 14th Street and 16th Street. That's because you couldn't go through the IC railroad stations down there. And there was no way that you could get past the IC railroad stations. So anyway, I was involved with that. And I was involved a little bit with the question of, "How are we going to get people out to O'Hare Field," since Midway was being phased out and we had this airport out there. But it was beyond civilization and there was no Kennedy Expressway.

So, I did a few surveys of what streets might carry traffic east and west. We had to put some airport signs on them, so somebody had any idea of how to get there. And there were a little bit of things like that. At the same time, we started in the planning department to work on the development plan for the central area of Chicago. That's what we called it at the time. But it was a central area plan. And we were working with the Central Area Committee, some consultants, and things like this. I became an administrative assistant to the Chicago Plan Commission.

RVR: What was that plan supposed to do?

RC: Well, the thing that we were trying to find out early in Daley's first administration, during his first term, were solutions for a number of pressing problems. We had to find a way to have a new courthouse. We were hopelessly overcrowded in the one we had. We needed more courtrooms. We needed to have a place for a federal center, because the federal government was trying to do the same thing. And we were trying to help them. Where would it make sense, from a planning standpoint, to go? We wanted to find a location for the University of Illinois. There was a proposal to build it out in the west suburbs someplace. Certainly, Daley didn't think that was a very good idea, that it ought to be in a Chicago location. There was this whole mess of 6 railroad stations in Chicago that didn't coordinate with each other. That didn't make a lot of sense in all of the railroad trackage in the downtown location. There was the absence of housing close to downtown.

What could we do to possibly bring people back to downtown, so that downtown didn't die? There were those kinds of things. And all of these we tried to address, and to put them into a kind of a framework that would make sense. The streets were involved in the same kind of thing. Wacker Drive, at that time, wasn't even completed. There were a lot of things like that. So, this was an ongoing thing. Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill were involved as a consultant to the city. Real Estate Research Corp. was doing some economic forecasts. We had Solomon and Cardwell doing some of the housing planning, because they had been doing apartment development. And I'm not sure where the rest of it came from for the University of Illinois.

RVR: Was that to be public housing for...?

RC: No. We were trying to find market rate housing that would be attractive for people to live downtown. And at the time, no one was building any downtown housing, none, zip. If you got up to Lake Shore Drive, they were building up there. But no one wanted to do any of this other development. So, there were a lot of proposals about this. And these were put together. There was a little scale model, a wooden model that depicted the area from south of 22nd Street to beyond North Avenue in the north, and probably to Ashland Avenue on the west from the lakefront, that had these things in a 3 dimensional form that people could understand.

It got to a point where one night that Ruth Moore, a *Sun-Times* reporter was going to write a story the next day about what she knew we were going to do (RVR laughs). So, we did an overnighter and published this development plan. Ruth has covered this pamphlet called the Development Plan for the Central Area of Chicago. Clearly, before that, there had been the Fort Dearborn plan that was a proposal mostly to take and move offices, courthouses, and things like that, north of the river. People north of the river thought that was a great idea. The rest of the people thought that it made more sense to build on and to encourage development of offices in the area where they had been, and not disrupt the whole arrangement of the city.

So, in doing that whole thing, I had exposure to the mayor. I was an administrative assistant to the Planning Commission. In other words, I was working for

Ira Bach, more directly than having any other technical assignment. And the mayor was also a member of the planning commission.

RVR: Right. Well, let me interrupt you and ask you about Ira Bach. What was he like? What was it like to work for him?

RC: Ira was a fine guy to work with. He was smart. He wasn't a person that told you how to do something. He was a person that welcomed you to provide solutions, to make suggestions, and to contribute. He had, as his deputy, Cliff Campbell. Cliff was a black guy. He came from the Board of Education, appointed by the mayor. With the mayor, one of his techniques was to always have more than one guy that he appointed into any department, independently related to him and that identified with him, that would have access, if he deemed it necessary. And Ira never took exception to this. Cliff and Ira worked well as a team. I probably worked, in the years that I was in the planning department, closer to Cliff Campbell than I did to Ira. Ira was involved in zoning.

That was always an important task that could not be assigned and relegated beneath the commissioner. He was the one that was going to do it. And if he was get any instruction or get overruled in what he thought he was going to do, he was the one who was not send an aide down to the department that was going to be told. So, Ira was a very interesting guy. I used to walk after work when I was there. He used to really walk. You know, he wrote books about on foot in Chicago and things like this. But he walked and he did this.

He used to walk with Marshall Holleb, who is his good friend. They used to walk north to where he lived on Junior Terrace. And I'd go up to Division Street or North Avenue and catch the "L" to where I lived at that time. We used to go in to work on Saturday mornings, because the mayor was in on Saturday mornings. If the mayor was in. God knows, every department head would want to be in there, because he wouldn't want to be cut up because he wasn't around (RVR laughs).

I remember that Ira and Cliff were going to go down and see the mayor. And it was a subject I was involved with, to some degree. So, when they got down there and Francis Foster, the mayor's secretary said, "Come on in" to them, I walked in with them,

rather precariously, I would have to say. And they got chewed out about, "What the hell are you bringing this kid in here for (laughs)?"

RVR: Really?

JC: Well, yes. And I was more circumspect to the future. The main thing that I got involved with out of the central area planning was trying to get forward with the Public Building Commission. Both Dick Pavia and I were assistants in the planning department at the same time. And he was more involved with that, up to a point, than I was. I became administrative assistant responsible for the Capital Improvement Program Division. We published annually a document, in those days, for the next five years. We expanded to include all of the other governments in Chicago. The main task was to try and get them to divulge what they felt they could divulge, how they were going to finance these things that were plans, and to let the public see them before they were started.

So I had contact with a lot of the different heads of these departments doing improvements. I would make an appointment to go in and see George DeMent, Lloyd Johnson, Bill Mortimer who was the county highway superintendent, or these various people. There was Virgil Gunlock head of the CTA. I'd say, "Give me your programs. We need these. You now, the mayor wants it." So I got to know a number of the people around. In view of that, when we started to go forward with what was the civic center project at the time, the department and the planning commission adopted a resolution designating a site.

The process next would be to have the city council approve it. But the problem was, while the commission had been organized, it had never had any staff and hadn't really hired legal counsel, and didn't have the documents that it really needed to have. So I became involved in trying to clean up our act, get ready to go to the city council and get their approval. And lo and behold, we really needed to have a lawyer. But we didn't have any money. So, I became involved in all of this stuff. We figured out ways to move forward a little bit at a time. About then, I got fairly actively involved in this.

RVR: Let me backtrack a little bit.

RC: Yes.

RVR: That incident where you walked in on the mayor, was that the first time you had met him?

RC: I don't think so. I think I had met him or I'd been in his presence, when he came to Plan Commission meetings or something like that.

RVR: You don't recall any incident?

RC: I don't recall.

RVR: You weren't brought in as, "Mr. Mayor, this is Mr. Christensen."

RC: That's not indelible in my memory. It's too far and too long ago. It wasn't....

RVR: Okay. All right. But it is natural that you would be working in an environment that would bring him into it.

RC: I had been meeting many people of some stature in these things.

RVR: You were doing important work.

RC: Yes. I was immune to some of the improprieties you might be taking, trying to get something going. I became officially involved with the Public Building Commission, when we had gone far enough, that they needed someone to be its executive director. The Public Building Commission had, if my memory is correct, 11 members. 6 of them were appointed by the mayor and 5 by the other participating governments. There was the Cook County Forest Preserve, the Sanitary District, the Board of Education, and the Park District.

One of the mayor's appointees was Willis Gale, who was the chairman of Commonwealth Edison. He had recognized that we needed someone. So he had a former chief engineer of Commonwealth Edison that was he was going to make available, that he had probably pensioned out or whatever. And he offered him to the mayor at some princely salary or whatever it was. The mayor said to John Duba his administrative officer, "Why do we need some outsider (RVR laughs)?" I became a candidate for that. I was hired as the executive director and the first employee of the Public Building Commission. And the one thing that John Duba told me was, "When you meet with the mayor, it's going to be you and him. I'm not going to be there, just so you understand. Be prepared. So, from that time on, I had a direct relationship with him.

RVR: It was one on one.

RC: It was one on one. I think for 13 years, I had a one on one relationship with him.

RVR: Tell me about it.

RC: Well, it was always awesome. He had a presence, whether it was one person one to one, or whether I was just an eyewitness to a number of these interviews where some person brought in their minor child to interview the mayor. He would do that. He would call me in to be another party to this thing (RVR laughs). But he could charm anybody. He could strike the fear of God into anybody. If he was in a large room and he entered, it was a presence that he had there that just buzzed with excitement. I can't, no one else has ever....

RVR: If he walked into a room, everybody would turn around and look?

RC: Oh yes. If he was going into a luncheon speech or something, and he started coming in the back, the room became electrified. It just had that feeling. I don't know why. He always had his bodyguards with him. Of course, if you were coming in, you had to walk fast because he had a strong pace. But he would stop and shake hands with people that he

knew. He had an incredible memory for faces, names, and how he knew them. It was not just who they were, but why he'd known them and about them. He had a tremendous recall. This was the most amazing thing about the man was that he was someone that always remembered where you left the last conversation. So you didn't want to spend any time getting up to speed.

RVR: You said he could charm people. How did he do that?

RC: Well, he had a personality and a great wit.

RVR: Did he have a great wit?

RC: Oh yes. In private, he was not the kind of wooden orator that many times you saw on these news clips that people showed. You would see these in small meetings. And he had an infectious laugh where he could get everybody to laugh, too. Now, we used to have the Public Building Commission meetings in his office, before the public open meetings kind of stuff.

The reporters couldn't come. He would invite them in afterwards and tell them what we did or something like that. It was interesting in the old days. But eventually, we moved our meetings to the conference room on the second floor of the Daley Center. This was years later, after it was built. That was a secure enough place. And it small enough to where it wasn't overwhelming with a huge, empty, stadium kind of thing. So we usually met there.

RVR: Did you say that he was gracious with people?

RC: He could be both gracious or he could be very unhappy and let you know that this wasn't the way he wanted things done.

RVR: How would he do that? How would he show his disappointment, anger, or irritation?

RC: Those of us that wanted to see him, and there were many, he defied most rules of good administration by having an unlimited number of people who had access and to work through various things there. He would probably permit meetings, scheduled or impromptu, for more than 100 people, lots of people. I may be well misstating how that number is too low.

If you really needed to see him and something was urgent, you would go and see his secretary. There might have been 2 dozen green chairs in the outer room there. And there might have been 15-18 people waiting to see him. You knew that you were in trouble if everybody else went in and you were still sitting there, even though you'd been there a long time (RVR laughs).

RVR: Did he scream, holler, and turn purple?

RC: No, not to me.

RVR: Did you ever see him...?

RC: I think, in very few occasions in city council meetings or something like that, you might have seen him express his anger. But that was not the typical thing. The typical thing was going to him with something that needed a decision, a problem, or an opportunity, to suggest a course of action to him that you thought made sense. Then you'd put your neck out, and then, getting an answer right away, as to yes or no, or, "Yes but." But it was not something that, "I'll get back to you in a couple of weeks," or, "Let me think about it."

RVR: Oh yes? He made the decision, right?

RC: Yes. He made the decision. If you didn't like the decision, now it was a question of how much did you flout the authority? And I would have to say that on a few occasions that what he was directing me to do made no sense. I would procrastinate and not

comply. Well, I can't remember the exact word, but in contempt. I could see what he wanted. But I know that carrying out the letter of what he was saying would impair my ability to carry out the mission that he wanted us to carry out. So those things could occur. But most of the time, I would say that the batting average was pretty good. I didn't think I could go in and say, "Boss, I've got a problem." Of course, I'd never use that word. That's one word that no one would possibly ever say. "Mr. Mayor, I'm in the horns of a dilemma here." You wouldn't say that. "I have a problem and I think that this is the best way to approach it, if you agree." He might say, "Don't do anything," "Go in this direction," or "See so and so." But it was always better in my mind to have an idea before I'd go into see him as to what we ought to do. I always found that to be a refreshing way of doing business. It wasn't something though, that leant itself to having pieces of paper and saying, "Here's my recommendation and get back to me on it."

RVR: You said he didn't follow the rules in administration. But was he a good administrator?

RC: Oh, he was an excellent administrator. He just overworked it. He worked so hard and he put in so many hours, that part of his effectiveness was that he saw so many people. And he had a broad array of people that would have contact and be his supporter and talk to other people about how good a mayor he was. One of the esteemed gentlemen that was involved with this at one time was a civic leader named Gil Scribner. Gil Scribner was the founder of Scribner and Company. His son, Hilton Scribner, was a banker and financier. But Gil Scriber was an old real estate man in downtown Chicago. His office was in the old First National Bank. And he was the head of the mayor's land appraisal or land acquisition committee.

Before anything was purchased, the purchasers went before Gil Scribner and he would say that it was a fair price or not a fair price. And he knew all about values in down town Chicago and everywhere else. Well, he was our advisor on buying that piece of land for the Daley Center. We used to have lunch at the Midday Club, the old Midday Club. The Midday Club, in the old building, had Gil Scribner's table. He was, among other things, a director at IBM and things like that. He told me that he was asked to

succeed whoever had been in this position before. He went to a guy named Edward Eagle Brown, who was a real old, senior First National Bank chairman or something. And Brown said, "Well, you can always quit if you think it's the wrong thing or it's a fix."

Well, Gil Scribner was a rock ribbed Winnetka Republican, if there ever was one. And he was a guy that couldn't speak more highly about the mayor being honorable and fair, and he was his fan. Well, if you get guys like that, not just one, but the business community, and Daley enjoyed the support of the middle 90% of the spectrum politically in Chicago. It seemed to me he did. Maybe I'm exaggerating. But Daley was an exception for Republicans because he was conservative. He was a Democrat because he was in favor of all of the Democratic causes, whether it be trade unions or whatever the issues were.

So Daley saw a lot of people. Who he didn't see in the office, he might run into at wakes. He went to an awful lot of funerals and things like that (RVR laughs). And people could see him. Whether it was a precinct captain in some place that knew him or if he put in a job somewhere, he's say, "What's going on over here?" I could see that you just never knew where he was coming from when he would ask you some question. But you knew that he had contact with a lot of people and you'd better have the right answer. I think he could see right through me like a piece of gauze. So, I always knew that I shouldn't try and con him in anything. This was not a person, other than to be straightforward with. And that's the only way that you could get by with it.

RVR: You've been painting a very attractive picture of this man. And we've been getting that from other people as well.

RC: That's what disturbed me so much when I saw a few of these, read a few of the books, saw a few of the t.v. stories, and things like that about what they referred to as the man. And they totally didn't find the man that I knew.

RVR: That's what we keep finding out again and again. Nobody has really characterized this man as he really was. He was the boss, the political operator for so many of them.

Did he have any faults or failures, as far as you were concerned, as a human being or as the mayor?

RC: Well, I wasn't one to go in and tell stories to him and start the conversation. I had less personal life activity with him than anybody. Because I did not come from the 11th Ward, I knew his wife. But I was never in the house. John Duba was, who preceded me in some other jobs that I had. But I knew the boys of the family, not the girls. It's what he didn't do. I spent, with his approval and authority on the Public Building Commission, over $500,000,000. That's a lot of public money. And I was never instructed how to or who to, not at all.

The Public Building Commission, with the outside appointees that he had and the governmental guys who were there, acted unanimous in its activity. It was not that we didn't defer on a few occasions, whatever was there, because someone had a question about it. If there was any question, it stopped. And we'd come back and do whatever was necessary to dispel whatever concern that there might have been. Henry Crown was on that board, as was Phillip Wrigley, John Sevcik who for years was out of McCormick Place. Sam Sox, a banker, was on it for a number of years. John Weithers was on it, who had been the head of the Midwest Stock Exchange.

These were competent outside people. I had, as legal counsel, a guy by the name of William R. Dillon. His father had been an illustrious lawyer and had started the crafting of the Public Building Commission of Chicago was held to Illinois Public Building Commission Act. Eventually, the legislation was overturned because an alter ego of the city. So it had to be separate and distinct. So the act was re-crafted by the Illinois General Assembly and passed again by Dick Dillon. We appointed Concannon, Dillon, Snook, and Morton as legal counsel for the commission. Dick Dillon gave me a lot of help in what we did there, drafting, contracts that we drew, and a whole host of things. But we drew the contracts, whether it was for selling the bonds, bidding the foundations, the general work, or what have you. In later years, the Planning Department made recommendations to us on site designations for projects that we took on, or that we were asked to take on.

The change orders and the process of wording the contracts were done by me and our consultants. I drew the contracts. So I was the one who had to be sure that we were going to get enough people to bid and that they felt they were going to get fair treatment because we were a neophyte organization. No one knew whether we were a trick bag or not. This was what we had to try and do. But we did eventually sell bonds. We did get good bidders to build our buildings. And we got, I thought, good, quality products when we got done. All of the bonds that were issued, at that time, were all paid off.

RVR: I thought at one point you were going to say that if there was any fault to be found in the mayor, it was in what he didn't do, that you thought maybe he should have. Am I reading into it?

RC: No. I don't have that feeling. He had a lot of things that he was doing. There was a broad array of things. And different people do different things. I was probably the only one that I know of in that situation, even though we were one person government, so to speak, for the first part of the operation, that he didn't have a second guy in there with direct access to him. There wasn't anybody. Now, the legal counsel for the Public Building Commission worked for the board. But, in fact, he worked for me. I dealt with him every day and we did all of this enormous stuff that we had to do to do these things.

The mayor's issue with me was that I gave too much legal work to one guy and that I should fire him and give it back to the corporation counsel's office, so that they would take care of the legal stuff. The problem that we had in my mind was because the city is only one of the leases in a multi-lease activity. How can you have the city be our lawyer, the city's lawyer, and not be overturned by someone that doesn't like you if they take you to court?

We shouldn't be using the city corporation counsel's office, as the PBC lawyer. Whether they get by with it or not now, I don't care. But under my watch, we didn't do it. I was just non-compliant. So that was one area of friction that the mayor and I had. And I don't think that there was anything untoward. The fact was that I was doing a lot more than he maybe understood that we were doing and I should have had more staff. But we didn't spend that much money on legal counsel at that time. It was sort of a labor of love.

RVR: Maybe that's why he liked you. You were doing a very good job, and didn't require a money personality.

RC: We had one other one. We had one disagreement, well, not a disagreement. He wanted to build a stadium at one time.

RVR: Oh, I remember.

RC: Jerry Butler, the city architect, came in with the idea that we could build a stadium next to Soldier Field, then tear down Soldier Field. Hindsight says that that probably was faulty. But anyway, it was a proposal we had at the time. And the only thing we didn't have worked out was who was going to do this. That was because the city couldn't sell any bonds. The park district couldn't sell any bonds. So it was, "Oh yes, maybe the Public Building Commission will do it." And everything was fine. I had been involved with McCormick Place previous to this. We had built a garage for them, the Public Building Commission did, south of McCormick Place, when they ran out of money. The park district signed the lease, which was required for a tax levying government to sign the lease in order to sell the bonds.

The revenue from the garage would go to the park district. So, they would potentially cancel the tax. When we were asked to build the stadium, the Public Building Commission got into the picture as saying, "The park district is going to lease this stadium. And they'll get all of the revenues from the stadium, the tractor pulls and all of this other stuff that's going to pay for the stadium. And so, it will not be a drain on the taxpayers." Jerry Golden, out from the Sun Times, caught me on a Friday afternoon before the 4th of July or something when I was going out of town and the neighbors were out of town. He said, "There's going to be a tax for it. Won't you have to levy a tax?" I said, "We'll levy a tax. Just like we did at McCormick Place, but it will be abated by the revenue."

Well obviously, we didn't have a very good idea of what revenue was going to be. It was very preliminary but it was a concept. I read in the paper in Cedar Rapids Iowa,

"Daley Aide Says Tax (RVR laughs)." Oh Lord. I saw it when I got home. Of course, he was on the phone, "Issue a retraction. You didn't say that." He was very unhappy. So, the next day I'm trying to find out with Earl Bush, the mayor's press secretary, how I could say that I didn't say what I just said (RVR laughs). That's because it's obvious we had to do that. He, being a lawyer, knew exactly what we had to do and what we didn't have to do. But I had the unfortunate position of the one they decided to make an issue on. That was when he was going to the Democratic Convention in Miami. And the Illinois elected delegation was getting thrown out of there at the same time. It was a very stressful period.

RVR: What year was that?

RC: I think it was 1972. It was the next convention after 1968. They, and all of the delegates chosen by all of the districts, and hundreds of thousands of people, were thrown out, so that those guys chosen from a phone booth could go. It was an unfortunate period of time.

RVR: What a disaster.

RC: Yes. Right after that, Daley just said, "No. We're not going to build a stadium."

RVR: You know, there was talk that, at one point, he was going to build a stadium, between our campus on the east side, and the medical center. Do you know anything about that?

RC: No. We played around with a stadium a lot of times. I always wanted to build a stadium. I really would have liked to have done that. I did not want to renovate Soldier Field.

RVR: It's too bad you didn't.

RC: Well, I left government because there were 2 projects that I personally didn't think were appropriate. One was to put any more money into Soldier Field. I thought it ought to come down. It was crumbling. It was poorly founded. It was functionally obsolete. There was nothing good about it. You could build a new stadium like Buffalo had done for $25 million at the time. Foxboro built one for $6 million. You could build a good one for $50 million, which is what Jerry Butler was talking about. But it would have been obsolete today too, because it wouldn't have had the sky boxes and the stadium seats. Whatever we would have built in those days would have been torn down today.

But anyway, there was that and Navy Pier. I've reviewed Navy Pier in its condition there, but could not give enough credit for its historical significance. I've not been sensitive enough to all of that stuff. It was wood pilings that ought to come down. If you didn't have it there in the first place, there is no way that you would violate having commercial activity on the lake by having it there. And I didn't want to be pumping more money into something that was a rotten hulk. I eventually didn't want to get involved in it because I didn't think there was any way we could find the amount of money required for it. As a money machine, who was going to sign the lease for it? So what happened later in my life was that I got involved with the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority. In fact, it received $150 million from the state and went out and put that amusement park out there.

RVR: Do you have any recollection of the mayor at the UIC Campus, what he did or didn't do, or what he wanted to do?

RC: Well, Lewis Hill, I think, pointed out that we had an urban renewal project underway, close to downtown. I wasn't close to those activities at that time. But it made sense that the renewal activity was already there. You could get the university project up and running as a site to develop quicker than if you were going to start someplace else where you've got even more requirements for relocation and disruption of people.

If you were to pick commercial land, where are you going to find that amount that hasn't got something real significant in it? We tried to do the railroads and the railroads took too long. The Railroad Consolidation Act was not a useful vehicle at that time.

There were just too many fractionated ownerships of the railroads. So we couldn't do the railroad, although that was one of the hopes that we had had. So, it became that this would be an opportunity for a Chicago campus that would be identified with downtown Chicago.

It was a hard sell, I'm sure, to not just the residents out there, but the political leadership that was in that area, because they knew that it was not something they were going to get an "atta boy" for. John D'Arco, the local alderman, was dead set against it all the way. But I think that it was one of the great things and courageous moves that the mayor did, facing up to it. "We need to do this. Of the alternatives, this is the best one." That was sort of the kind of thing the mayor did. When tough issues were there, he had someone there making a competent recommendation. He wasn't afraid of that.

RVR: Did he ever talk to you about it?

RC: You mean about the Circle Campus? No. I was never involved in it. The only thing I tried to do was when we were starting to develop things, or do something for the Public Building Commission, I took note of the Illinois Building Authority, which had been involved at that time. Yes. The guy that was running it, Chuck Havens, was a very able guy. I did meet with him a number of times to talk about problems that they had, bidding and construction, and what have you. That's quite a leap, though. But I was not involved with the Circle Campus, the University of Illinois.

FWB: Were you involved in the bond issue in 1958 and in 1960? I'm sure it was public works.

RC: We had some proposals that we came up with. I'm not sure what they were. All of us that were in the administration leadership spots, out on the speaking trail, we would meet with people. We'd try to explain what were the components were to try and get their support for that. I remember, I guess it was 1968, or 1967. There was a bond issue and a tax rate hike for the Board of Education and it was going to on the ballot. And the common belief was that, if they were both on there, they'd get beat. So, a committee of

civic organizations asked us to get into the school building business, the Public Building Commission to do that. The Central Area Committee, the Civic Federation, the Real Estate Board and what have you, there were about 6 of them.

So, we agreed that we would do $250 million worth of school. We didn't think it was $250 million. They thought it was going to be about $5 million worth. As soon as they found out how much this was, they went to Springfield to lobby. They introduced a bill to, in effect, repeal the Public Building Commission. In fact, they proposed that any project to be undertaken by a Public Building Commission be approved by a countywide general election. So that meant that if we were going to build a school to eliminate overcrowding, we'd have to wait first 2 years, then submit it to a countywide vote, even though the taxes would only be levied on the people of Chicago. That was because the lessee would be the Board of Education. It was a phony kind of thing.

I remember Henry Hyde, whom I do not have great admiration for since that time, was leading the way saying that that's what ought to be done. So everyone had their right to vote and we shouldn't be doing these things. We were very irritated. I was very fortunate enough that I got a chance to see Governor Ogilvie at the time. He was in Springfield. He had served on that Public Building Commission. I asked him for support he could give us, because he knew that we were a legit operation. Somehow, the speaker and the majority leader's proxy didn't show up at the meeting or whatever and the bill died (RVR laughs).

Well, we took on building some schools. Well, where were the schools going to be built? They were going to be built in all of the areas of overcrowding, mostly in the black areas of Chicago. And, unlike the Board of Education, we were going to take sites around major streets, so that people could take buses to get to them. We were going to pay more money than the Board of Education would. We were going to buy bigger sites, although not competitive with the suburban kind of campuses. But they'd be big enough sites, so that they looked like schools instead of high rise buildings, per se.

FWB: Hold on a second (FWB changes the tape on the camera).

(end of video tape one)

RC: The mayor was involved with this up to his teeth, even though the Board of Education should be the one taking the heat. But here we were. We were going to buy sites, displace people, and relocate them. So we did. The thing that I could see, and I don't think it's happened since, was that we should not be the permanent solution to other governments' inadequacies in selling their programs. In essence, when we finished that program, I left. That was because I thought I was too capable of being able to do all of these projects and maybe there would be a less of a facility if we were diminished, downgraded, or whatever. I think mostly, what probably happened is that they became just a financing vehicle, as opposed to some degree, a policy vehicle on siting and the type of facility to be built. We insisted that the Board of Education have a program prepared and approved in the communities as to what the school was going to be, like what kinds of schools they were, how much space they needed for different kinds of functions, and what was the nature of the programs that they were going to offer. Well, I didn't detect that that kind of stuff had been done very effectively before. And we were building a lot of these at one point in time. But we did get 20 schools up in a 4 year period.

RVR: In 4 years, you put up 20 schools? That's quite an accomplishment.

RC: There was condemning the land, relocating the people, and getting the designs. We fast tracked them. So we didn't have some of the niceties that you'd like to have in development projects. You know, there's an expense to having a public building commission do it. We would get a design from the architects, concurrent with taking bids on it. We'd give it to the Board of Education to critique it. We'd make what changes we could while we were under way. And we'd pay the change orders. It was not the most efficient way of making corrections. You'd like to do it before bid. But the fact that all of these schools should have been done years before, I pleaded the case that with the inflationary times we were in, it wasn't going to cost us any more than it would if we had delayed the project by another year, to make sure that everything was exactly right at the

time. That's because if those projects are going to change, they're going to be susceptible to being adjusted because the communities are not going to stay the same all of the time. The needs are not going to stay the same. At least, that was how we had felt. The way we had designed the Daley Center was, to some degree, what we tried to do with schools. We built them as space that could be capable of being used in alternative ways. We took out a whole bunch of offices out of the Daley Center. And subsequently, we put courtrooms in them. We designed the space to be column free, 12 feet high. So we could build a court room virtually anywhere with different arrangements of them than we had on the upper floors when we built them. When we put that building out for bids in 1963, a new judicial article was enacted. It was not yet in place, the consolidation of all the courts. We built it when we had a municipal court, a circuit court, a superior court, a county court, a probate court, an appellate, and a supreme court. When we got underway, we had just a circuit court, an appellate court, and a supreme court. And the new Chief Judge of the Circuit Court John Boyle became a person I could deal with as to, "Now, what do you want? Now that we've got it underway and under contract (RC and RVR laugh), what arrangement do you want to make that I could live with?" So we had a lot of that. It was the same with the schools. They were designed to be space that could be modified. Then you could use them. When the need for that school was gone, you could sell them and rework them to be an office building.

RVR: Were you involved in the building of the expressways?

RC: Not really. But I was only a sidewalk superintendent, I suppose, more than anything else. I tried to get involved. But I was obviously way too late in getting a better flow from the north suburbs to O'Hare. This was before it was constructed. But it was too difficult to face up to. And unfortunately, it was never changed. But with the pumping stations that are there and the railroads that are there, it was wildly difficult, even if we thought we could do something. But it's still a shame that that functioned so badly up there.

One time, when the crosstown was being proposed, that was going to cause major changes in how that whole intersection up there, the Kennedy and the Edens, happened. It would have been difficult to do it. We would probably would had to have some flyovers

or something of some significant height with all of those things there. I'm not sure that the community around it would have liked to have it there (RVR laughs). I was only peripherally involved in the crosstown when it was being planned, not directly. I got involved in the gambit that we tried of building an airport in the lake. And I regret that we didn't accomplish that at the time.

That was still the best concept for additional capacity. If you had it out on the lake, planes would never cause anybody any problems. The lake is big enough to where it shouldn't affect shipping or something like that. We could have designed it in a way where drift of sediments and things would spin around and could have connected it to Indiana, so that it could have been a bi-state facility. You know, there are a lot of things that could have been done and could have come in where the obsolete U.S. Steel South Works was. The opposition was more successful than we were. Some pilots felt it was dangerous. They didn't want to come in over water. I think the basic thing was that the pilots wanted to live northwest instead of somewhere where they had to go through the city to get to, to their suburban homes.

FWB: So that was being planned while you were on the Public Building Commission? I know there was a proposal when they were talking about Peotone.

RC: Well, I think that happened when I was in the mayor's office, in 1965 to 1967. Harza Engineers, who were noted hydraulic engineers in dams and things like that, suggested that you could build a levee 5 miles in diameter or something like that, and have this in the lake. It was technically feasible to just de-water that area inside that and to have glide slopes and everything would work out there. You could have a number of your airport related facilities on land. You could have a tunnel that would come under the lake bed and go out. So you wouldn't have to have a structure in the lake. There were a lot of features that made sense. We had land and ground. We analyzed air traffic and how it would impact Meigs, Midway, or O'Hare, and the whole structure. It was very feasible. But we didn't get it accomplished.

RVR: Are there any other projects that you feel that you would have like to have seen completed, but couldn't?

RC: Well, as I say, I would have liked to have seen an easier solution for our stadium than what we ended up with at that time. None of them were redone. And now we've redone a couple. And they didn't get any joint activity.

RVR: I told the present mayor that he should just tear it down and build another one over it. And he burst out laughing.

RC: Here's a little anecdote on one of the things that happened. I was on my way to a golf game somewhere. I don't know how I did this. I had heard that there was collapse over at Soldier Field. So I stopped by over there. What had been happening was that there was a section of the grandstands that was somewhat suspect. And so, the park district had loaded the grandstand up with bags of sand. And when they put them on there, the collapsed under the weight of sand. So the mayor had gone out there and asked the workmen that were out there, "Why did you do that? That's only the city code. Any fool will know that it'll fall down" (RC and RVR laugh).

I called him after I'd gone out and looked at it. And with what we knew about the stadium, it seemed that the best thing to do was to tear it down, long term. It had very little remaining life. We load tested it, the stadium then, with steel beams placed there with huge cranes and outriggers to do this. We had load measuring devices embedded in the concrete to see what kind of strains we were getting. We sort of proof tested that the stadium could be tested to maybe 60% of code or something like that. And the rationale was that the extra 40% was for long term requirements. And this was for a short term. Can we get by with it for a few years and that sort of thing?

Well, in a few years he built the sky boxes above it. Then you go to the bottom of the bad spots and put some money into the thing. I'm not saying that you don't spend money. But you still end up with a functioning obsolete stadium. And if you went to stadiums like Kansas City, at the time, which had sky boxes and close to the field, it didn't have a track bringing the fans so far away, you could see with the future what you

wanted to get towards. And yet, you had the historic problem of Soldier Field as a monument facing this. And that was not an easy task. This mayor, or the other mayor, were not willing to sacrifice that.

I thought that we were going to build a library at one time. The library eventually got built by others. But the Public Building Commission took on the renovation of the library at that time, too. We did a good bit of work over there. We did a lot of interesting kinds of things. I was involved in McCormick Place early on also, after the fire. I was in his office. He had been fishing. And I was going skiing that day. And I heard that the place had burned down. Of course, I couldn't believe that a concrete building could be burned down. As time went on, C.F. Murphy Associates was hired. Gene Summers designed that building that eventually was approved by the Planning Commission after hearings and fights continued whether to locate on the lakefront or not, again, as it had been. It was first located there.

I got thrown into this only because Ed Lee, the general manager of McCormick Place, after everything was all contracted, approved, more or less, as a see through kind of building out there, an architectural building. He said that he was going to enclose the entire inside with steel, so that you could have the theatrical setting inside and the shows wouldn't be disturbed by the daylight, the skyline, and all of this other stuff that Chicago had. Jack Reilly was on the McCormick Place Board at that time. The architects played to the Chicago Sun Times. Ed Lee played to the Chicago Tribune. So this raging controversy was going on. The mayor, somehow, to Reilly 's great disdain, said that I was supposed to get into this thing and make some recommendations as to what should be done. I sided with the architectural design as promised.

I was never on good terms with Reilly before the Picasso (RC and RVR laugh). But I certainly became a persona non grata in any city function that was ever going to be scheduled (RC and RVR laugh) by Reilly. But in any event, the building stayed there. I don't know how badly the shows are disrupted by the sunshine. The later buildings that we built were not immune to sunshine, either.

FWB: We you involved at all in the first siting, the first building, and the first McCormick Place?

RC: Only because Ted Aschman had a lot of these clippings in his files was I aware of the controversy that was happening before I went to work for him. But that was underway. I was not involved in that. Later, John Evers was to suggest to Willis Gale On the PBC Board that we hire outside change order consultants, so that we didn't get gobbled up by the cost of change orders. And they had a firm out of New York that he had recommended. They were pretty much their own people out there. Ed Lee ran his own thing.

FWB: That was out of McCormick Place.

RC: Yes. It was out of McCormick Place.

FWB: One of the things that's in your resume is that 2 to 3 year period that you went to the mayor's office as an executive assistant or....

RC: I was the mayor's administrative officer.

FWB: You were his administrative officer. Okay. Explain that. Why were you brought into the mayor's office? What were your duties?

RC: In 1965, we opened the courthouse. The Board of Health was in there. All of the tenants were in it.

FWB: You mean the civic center?

RC: Yes. That was the civic center. So here I was. I had a secretary. I had an office over there. And we had no other project. And yet, you needed to keep somebody to pay off the bonds, see that the annual reports are issued, and maintain the facility. The current Administrative Officer Ray Simon was going to replace John Melaniphy as Corporation Counsel. Ray had replaced John Duba as administrative officer. John was the first. The

position evolved out of the Leverett Lyon analysis. I don't know if you're familiar with those. Leverett Lyon wrote a book about governmental consolidation and issues facing Chicago. It was a pretty good treatise.

One of the things it pointed out was the absence of a continuing administration in other departments that had their bureaucracies. There wasn't any staff. So, they had recommended that there be a post of administrative officer. And it was enacted into the city council language by Daley. It was proposed, then it was adopted. It had as a function, very broadly, that the officer serve at the pleasure of the mayor. And if he got fired, he could appear before the city council to state his case, or something like this. But it clearly didn't say what the duties and the authority of the office were.

Well, in fact, there was no authority. The duties were only as to who was there or what the mayor might use that person for. And on occasion, that person might represent the mayor at some functions that the mayor otherwise was unwilling, unable, or not interested in attending. So, those duties included greeting somebody at some convention that was here. And think of the disappointment of some guy who can't talk goes out there and addresses them warmly on behalf of the city and that sort of thing.

John Duba had used the office as a coordinating device for carrying out and making public projects work better, or getting them expedited. Ray Simon didn't fulfill that function as well, but ably represented the mayor in major diverse activities. My activity there was, to some degree, in major public projects to referee differences between Phil Downs, who was the Aviation Commissioner and maybe Phil Pikarsky, who was the Public Works Commissioner, and John Duba, who was the Planning Commissioner, as to who could keep these guys talking to each other and cooperating.

So I did some of that sort of stuff. I sat in on a lot of meetings. But the problem was, without it being defined, and if you see things that need to be done. The mayor had such a grasp of what was going on that, if you jumped into something like that, you would find yourself, if not invited, don’t go beyond where you are. One time there was going to be a railroad strike, on a coming Monday morning, or something like that. The mayor was probably in Grand Beach or someplace. I propitiously called together some of the guys that I thought ought to prepare for this. "If that strike goes ahead, I just want to

know if we were all on board." We weren't meeting for more than 10 or 15 minutes and one of them, got a call saying, "There is no meeting. Get out of there" (RVR laughs).

Well, I think the mayor was aware of what negotiations were going on. Someone was keeping him briefed on this. He knew there wasn't going to be a strike and it was going to be done. And there was no sense in getting everybody riled up and money spent for something that wasn't going to happen. I didn't have any idea that I should or shouldn't have done something. But I became more circumspect, I suppose, jumping into something where he thought there was a need. And certainly, I didn't have any hire/fire responsibility over any department head or anybody. There was no authority there.

Dave Stahl operated it somewhat differently. Ken Sain had his approach to things. We tried to help coordinate some activities, but mostly as the mayor assigned them. So the terminology almost looks like the chief of staff. And if I was trying to divulge my position to people that didn't know me, didn't know the city, and certainly didn't know the mayor, you could say that in later years as you see West Wing or something like that. But that wasn't the kind of job that it was.

As it ended up, the mayor thought that Dave Stahl could be more effective in some of the building department program of elimination of bad buildings and other stuff than I seemed to do. Lou Hill was appointed to replace John Duba. John had left government. So he sent me up to be one of the deputy commissioners, or first deputy, I don't know what it was, to Lou Hill. That was fine, except that Lou wasn't going to surrender any of the real authority up there, either. I was in the office and we were friends. And we are today.

But authority was not something that was given, especially at the Public Building Commission. I knew what authority was. Authority was the whole thing. I didn't have a finance department or anybody else that was there. I was the new chief, cook, and bottle washer. So I did what assignments there were. But I wasn't unhappy to leave the mayor's office because I didn't see that as a very fulfilling role. I think some of the people that were there learned how he operates and then, from that, better serve him when they get appointed to some other position of authority.

FWB: You took that position because there was, in some ways, a lull in the duties of the Public Building Commissioner. You were serving both at the same time.

RC: Yes. The one didn't command a full time presence. It was something that the things that went on, you could attend to and still have your meetings. It wasn't long after that that we decided, the Public Building Commission or the mayor decided, that we could take over the county building and own both city hall and the county building and renovate both of them. Unfortunately, it didn't work out. Seymour Simon thwarted George Dunne, after we had approved all of the documents and were ready to sell the bonds. The county went its own way to keep its maintenance staff, which was part of the sheriff's office.

The city went ahead then and financed the upgrading of the offices at city hall, not enormously. The county did a better, more quality job, I think, that was down on the side of the Public Building Commission. But there was talk at times that we could tear down the whole city county building because it was relatively obsolete. If the First National Bank Building could come down, why couldn't this come down? We could build a new facility. We toyed around with buying the block of 37 and putting a building there. We didn't have enough support at the time.

I think I was quoted badly by some author named Miller as to why it couldn't be done. But there were a lot of convoluted trusts in all of that property. It was a very complex ownership. In addition, you had a Commonwealth Edison facility which, even though we said we could encapsulate the project if it was big enough, if it could not handle it. It never quite worked out. The county was spending money. It wasn't going to get, at that time, as involved in it, notwithstanding the closeness of the county government to the city government.

FWB: Did you have any involvement with public housing? Was that involved at all with the Public Building Commission?

RC: No. It was a separate body politic, the Chicago Housing Authority. The mayor appointed people to it and that sort of thing. But I wasn't there.

FWB: I'm just seeing how some of the various commissions function because it seemed like other municipalities concentrated much more closely. And here, it was much more confused because the Public Building Commission was set up for a specific function. But it was used sometimes....

RC: Well, it was not easy to expand in that area. After we did the Daley Center, and after we got involved with city hall, when we were asked to do schools, immediately there was a lawsuit thrown at us. We did some amendments to the act down there and got those passed. Eventually, we got out of court. The defining issue was whether we could do any project that was appropriate for the lessee to have done themselves. And our main advantage was that we could have multiple lessees for a given project, so that what they couldn't otherwise do themselves. And the civic center was the best example of that, because we had the city and county both in there.

Their proportion of rent was based on the functions of the center, even though the city kept paying for the municipal court portion that became the circuit court, which is the county's position. So the county's responsibility became larger. And of course, the board of health is now out of there. It's virtually all a county facility, although the title, I think, is still with the Public Building Commission. I wanted very hard not to give the title back on that. But it had an equity, so that in future projects, it could have a base of sustenance of assets. They wanted to sell that like the State of Illinois is going to sell the Thompson Building. But conceivably, there is a great asset there. It's totally paid off. And all that they have is the cost of operating it. They're doing a good job now, I think. It looks good when I see it.

But other projects, like when we got into schools and the city hall, our intent was to revert the title back to the lessees when the bonds were paid off, which made a lot of sense. We shouldn't be the largest landowner in our corporate jurisdiction. That's when we got busy. The court did decide that we could do these. And among the things that we were doing was this garage at McCormick Place and the Audy Home project. With the garage at McCormick Place, we were pretty time constrained.

The contractor was going to have to build it and would get paid if and when we got out of the Supreme Court. It happened that the contractor that won the contract was the one that was building McCormick Place, of course. There was really, I think, a benefit. Although I don't know whose benefit it was. We took bids on some relative sketchy designs. And that was built in record time. I think we built it from August to January.

RVR: In all of this building, you had to issue bonds. Right?

RC: Yes. But we also had another gimmick that started out early on. We went to the legislature in 1961, I guess it was. And we got some very small fine tuning to the act that allowed us to get interim financing. We had no financing. And so, if we wanted to hire architects, we had no money. If they wanted to employ Bob Christensen, they had no money. And the only way you could get money was to issue bonds. To issue bonds, you had to have a lease. The lease had to have the premises to describe. And that meant you had to have designed plans. And you can't do that without designing. To design, you had to have money. It was kind of a strange thing. So, what we did there was to get support from a consortium of the banks. Willis Gale said, "Just call the bank and ask them to come to a meeting. We'll talk about interim financing."

RVR: That would be loans from the bank.

RC: Yes. So I called them. And, lo and behold, they showed up. Gale was the director of the Continental Bank at the time. So, what they said they would do, with property drawn documents, was that they would make us loans for buying the property that we needed to have for the project. All we would give them was a negative pledge that we wouldn't mortgage or subordinate those properties to anybody else. And that was a line of credit of about $10 million to buy all of the site.

There was another $100,000 that they agreed they would lend us for administrative purposes. And we also had something for architectural services. We got a grant from the federal government for part of the design. I can't quite remember the

details of what it was. So we had the architects working and we had the money to buy the land. And we had this line of credit to buy all of this. We also borrowed money for knocking the buildings down, lessening the security to a degree when they finally caved in on that. And we had this site empty. So we had to somehow get started, even though the design wasn't done.

So, we had a foundation contract to dig these massive foundations under the building. The caissons under the columns had to be pretty good size. So we were digging through rock to 13 foot hand dug caissons down there. Paschen Contractors were the low bidders for that. They were going to get paid as fast as when we sold the eventual financing. That was about a half a million dollars. Then we bid structural steel, because we had to get the steel ordered and all of that. And that was about 13 or 14 million dollars. The main cost there was just to get the shop drawings done. So we got that under way.

Then we bid the general work. Paschen, who had the foundation work, didn't get the main contract. That was Gust Newberg Construction Company. We then sold the bonds and retired interim financing. When we did the schools, this was one of the really good things that we had. And that was we re-instituted this line of credit, so that we wouldn't have to sell bonds and get into bad markets. We could buy land. And as long as the project had gotten to where it had been requested by one of the governments, and the site had been designated and approved by the city council, they were willing to take the risk. The project would go ahead, knowing the political climate and the solidarity that was behind each project.

We weren't taking on any controversial things. I think that got up to a 90 to 100 million dollar line of credit by the time we got done. We would sell bonds from time to time, in $50 million increments. And they were backed because we put some other things in there. We had the County Audy Home in there. We had Sterns Quarry in there. We had some fire stations, some police stations, and some schools. By the time we got done, these were backed by the leases. They were revenue bonds. But the leases were full faith and credit leases, ad valorem tax leases. So they were pretty good.

So, as we proceeded with the financing of the general obligation, some alderman thought that we were paying excessively for going outside of general obligation bonds.

The interest rate on the Daley Center bonds, for the $87 million that we issued, was 3.3313%, a municipal revenue bond. It was 6 years later maybe, the first of the school projects we were going to go ahead with. There was a school up at Cabrini Greens, the Schiller School and [inaudible]. It was about $6 million, or something like that. It wasn't a big one. But we were trying to get started.

The bond rates were going sky high. We knew that there was some duration that we could sell bonds under the 6% limit. But we weren't sure how long it was. So we bid them on the basis of the length of duration that they would want, consistent with not having it go over the 6%. So we got those bonds sold. They were a little different duration. But the later ones, we had the ads changed and I think we got up to 7%. We sold all of those within the revised rate. But you couldn't be sure what you needed on many of those until you had awarded the contracts and bought the land.

The one admonition Willis Gale had given me early on, when I had met with him, was that he had been involved with public projects before. I don't know if he was on the Skyway, if he was on O'Hare, or if he was on the U. of I. But they all had overruns. And they had to come back with supplemental bond issues. He said, "I don't want to have us run out of money. We will not do that." Well, the only way you can avoid that is to wait to finance, until you have all of your costs locked up. So that meant that we really had to use the interim financing. So we knew exactly what we were going to do.

And we had to make sure that we controlled the cost pretty effectively. We did all of those things. And those were done detail by detail, meeting by meeting, with an agenda that I'd give the mayor, and that we would approve, and try to defend and explore at the meetings, if the people had questions about what we were doing. That worked, I thought, exceptionally well, with what limited staff we had.

RVR: Is there anything that you can think of that you can tell us about the mayor, or about his administration, or of the man himself, that you can discuss as part of the record, of your knowledge, with his administration?

RC: I think that most people would underestimate his talents, his decision making ability, his recall of where and what had occurred, and his ability to make decisions competently

and very quickly. I had a different kind of experience. I worked for Dick Duchossois, owner of the Arlington Race Course, for a while. He had had his track burned down. He was in the process of getting a design for a new grandstand and having a contractor build it for him, while the racing season was going on. So, it was a matter of he needed someone to help give direction to James McHugh his contractor, and Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, who was his designer.

Before I met him, I thought I could work with him as I had the mayor, but I didn't know him. Someone said that he was difficult to deal with. But we had lunch. And while he wasn't sure what I was going to do, at this point in my life, I wasn't all that apprehensive. The worst he could do was fire me. I couldn't be as afraid of him as I could have been to Richard J. Daley if I got into trouble. We met, and he agreed that I would work. But he wasn't sure what I was going to do. I said, "Well, I'll represent you." Well, he was on the other side of the spectrum. He didn't want to make decisions.

He wanted, as we found out later, after about 4 months or so, a project he was fast tracking, he was building before all of the design was done. He wanted to make every decision. He wanted a list of all the decisions that he was going to make on this project. And he wanted to have everything to him in writing 2 weeks before he had to make the decision. And then, he would render a decision. Then, of course, he would change his mind (RVR laughs), and then conveniently forget what he had said. He didn't realize how different he was. He was a very successful billionaire, or almost billionaire, whatever he was. He was a very rich guy. He wanted to do it his way.

We took bids for structural steel. I wanted him to know that we had the bids and that they were within budget. So I found him between the fifth and sixth races in the temporary grandstand. I asked him if it was all right to proceed with the low bidder. Well, I found out in the next day or two that I'm really getting bad mouthed, because first, I shouldn't be pressing him for anything. And second, he may have had some guys that were helpful when he was either building railroad cars or when he'd rebuilt the track. And he wanted to make sure that the steel came from those guys. It was a different world.

When the racing season was over, he agreed that it would be better if he ran it personally. So, he then sued the architects because he felt they had given a poor design. He had to make a lot of changes and it wasn't timely. They had engaged Kirkland and

Ellis as counsel. I became their witness. But another guy was very similar, in some ways, to Mayor Daley. It was my relationship with Governor Ogilvie when we worked together at McCormick Place. He wanted to know what was going on. He would allow me to make whatever briefings to the interim board that was there. He absolutely didn't want us to run out of money. But while we were continuing the construction, everybody was making a claim.

There were 20 different contractors out there. And they all thought this was the way to get a pot of gold. He didn't tell me how, when, or how much for any settlement. He'd let me have counsel that would write up all of the justification to make that we needed to have to bring it to the board and have decent documentation that would stand up to anybody that would argue. I found him very similar to Mayor Daley. He would always know where we were. No, I wasn't involved in the rest of running McCormick Place. But on the construction part of it, I was the guy. And there wasn't anybody else that was second guessing me on that kind of thing.

The rest of the people that I worked for, probably, they're hard to describe. The differences between their management styles and working for Daley, for example, maybe I was too far down the chain in many of these kinds of things. But I was involved with Hilton Hotels Corporation when they were going to build a project at State and Wacker. And they had already been designated to receive almost 2 blocks of land at something like $50 a foot. I recommended, and they agreed to have Skidmore do this project. I thought that they were the best ones in Chicago. And I thought they ought to have a good Chicago designer architect on it. So, I was dealing with Baron Hilton at the time, although several layers of management away. The project didn't get built.

RVR: Well, thank you very much for your time. We've enjoyed talking to you today.

RC: Well, thanks for having me. It's been my pleasure.

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