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## **Interview with Mayor Richard M. Daley**

Date: 11 March 2009

Location: Office of the Mayor, City Hall, Chicago, IL.

Present: Mayor Richard M. Daley, Dr. Robert V. Remini Ph.D., Dr. Tim Lacy Ph. D., and Dr. David W. Veenstra Ph.D.

Dr. Robert V. Remini: Hello Mr. Mayor.

Mayor Richard M. Daley: How are you?

RVR: It's a pleasure to see you again.

RMD: Thank you.

RVR: These are my colleagues.

Dr. Tim Lacy: I'm Tim.

RMD: Hi Tim. How are you?

TL: I'm good.

Dr. David W. Veenstra: I'm David Veenstra.

RVR: Here's a little business from the university (RVR hands RM the release forms).  
They require this.

RMD: The signature, oh yes (signs the paperwork).

RVR: Well, thank you very much for giving us the time.

RMD: Sure.

RVR: We want to talk about your father. We want to get a better-rounded picture of what this man was like, in every aspect that needs to be known: a father, a husband, as well as a politician. So, would you comment generally on what he was like?

RMD: Right. Well, my dad, of course when he came home, he was really not the mayor. He never conducted business at home. He never had politicians or the media in his home. His home was his sanctuary. He was a father. He was a husband. He was a grandfather. He realized that those in the public eye – it doesn't matter if it was the public or private sector – you need your sanctuary. You need an opportunity for yourself and your family to be protected – more so from the media, and from constant public scrutiny. And that's what he did. First of all, he was a wonderful husband. He and my mother had a wonderful relationship. And we were fortunate to have our grandparents living with us -- that was really helpful. And at the same time....

TL: Big Mike, right?

RMD: Yes, Big Mike. He was a sheet-metal worker. I always described him: he knew more about math and science than anyone else. That's because as a sheet metal worker, you had to know about math and science (RVR laughs). [He knew about] nature as well. But it's really interesting, before you get into the background, my father had the home as a sanctuary – not only as a husband, but also as a father – in regards to my mother and him, how they looked after us and about our schooling.

In our schooling, values were important. And in regards to our own faith – he always thought that faith was personal. You didn't wear it on your clothes or anything. People of different faith and beliefs, he respected. He really realized that. And his religion was personal. It was never public. He never told people that he went to church, went to communion, things like that. That wasn't his role. His role...between him and God, that was personal. He always believed that. And he always believed that people had moral values. And maybe they had different religious beliefs. He said that people were

basically good. At the same time, as a father, he always had time for each and every one of us, at different times. Of course, we always went to the ballgame with him. So he always took time out, sitting next to us, talking about school, talking about life, and other issues. At the same time, he had time enough to play catch. He had time enough to do things in the back yard, just to throw a ball, or throw a football. He'd take us to a football game.

So all of those things were important. Later on he would take us to wakes. And in the car, he would talk to us about schooling. At the same time, he was an avid reader. He always loved to read. People don't realize that. He was a very smart man, in regards to finance and accounting. At the same time, he was very disciplined. His life was very disciplined.

RVR: His reading, was that wide? Or mostly history and biography?

RMD: Yes, history and biography. He would always allow us to talk about what we'd been reading. My mother was a great reader, too. It was very interesting.

RVR: Was she?

RMD: She loved to read. Yes she did.... So it was always about the family. Sunday dinners were important, what we were doing. And he allowed us to participate in sports. But he didn't have to be one of these avid parents sitting there for twenty-four hours watching, "Why aren't you doing better?" He always thought that you participated in sports – because everyone would have a different level – as long as you enjoyed it. Everyone is not going to be a star, everybody is not going to be on a scholarship. So it was really different. He thought that sports were not for the parents, but for the children. And today it's different (laughs).

RVR: At the dinner table, what did you talk about?

RMD: We talked about some of the issues coming on in the world and things like that.

RVR: Such as?

RMD: He talked about the Second World War. He talked about the Depression. He talked about what was happening in regards to human rights, and civil rights of the 1960s, or Vietnam, issues like that. And it was always a good discussion. It was a discussion. Today you can't have discussions. People shout at one another. That's the way discussions are today. So really, it's changed. America has changed considerably. But really, as a father and a husband, he knew the 1950s, the 1960s, and the 1970s were changing. He knew more than anyone else, politics and political organizations were changing rapidly. And he knew that was coming on, more than anyone else.

RVR: He has a reputation of being a financial whiz.

RMD: Yes he was. Very smart in finance, and very smart in regard to accounting. He knew budgets. He knew the federal, state, and local budgets, country budgets more than anyone else. And he would work with good people. He always took confidence in regards to who he talked to. He wasn't one of these, "This is my advisor. This is my advisor." He said, "Politicians don't have advisors once the public knows about it." So he always kept confidence in regards to who was advising him.

I remember a great story when President Nixon was slowly going to be impeached – he was leaving, and he came to Chicago, maybe a couple of weeks before. Of course, my dad and President Nixon went back to 1960, issues like that, and how they did a lot of things to hurt my dad's reputation. But he was the only public official to meet the president. That said a lot about him. It was not about the president, the individual, it was about the office, respect for the office. And I always wondered what they talked about from the ride in at O'Hare field to the Hilton Hotel.

RVR: He didn't tell you?

RMD: No. He would never tell you. And he always said, "That's between the president and myself, not between the public." He would never write a book about it, or talk about things like that.

RVR: Did he ever talk to you about politics?

RMD: Well no, he never did in the sense that.... We talked about politics, but one thing, our father never steered us into our professions. He said, "I'm going to give you a great opportunity. I'm going to pay for your education, whether it's college, graduate school, whatever you want to do. You're going to decide what you're going to do in your own life. If you don't like government, if you don't like politics, and you want to do something else, that's up to you." Parents should never steer their children into a job, a course, or a profession, because they'll regret that. You have to find your own way. And he allowed us to make our own mistakes, too. That's the other thing: "Make your own mistakes and correct them." But if people steer you in, not ever making a decision, then you'll never be something in life.

RVR: Did he ever chastise you?

RMD: Oh sure.

RVR: He did.

RMD: Oh definitely. My mother was more of a disciplinarian. She was the one that ruled the roost. But yes.

RVR: Physically, did he ever hit you?

RMD: No, no. There was nothing like that.

RVR: I just wanted to be sure, because a lot of parents do unfortunately.

RMD: Yes. He thought that you knew when you were doing something wrong. He would let you know in a strong way that that conduct was unacceptable. "Not to me but to you." He always said, "Don't worry about me. Worry about yourself. You're going to make the decisions. Don't worry about my career. But it's up to you." That was very important. Some people live for their parents. You have to be able to understand and have respect for your parents. But at the same time, he would say, "It's going to be your decision."

RVR: That's very interesting.

RMD: It was about accountability and responsibility in life.

RVR: Yes. And your mother was the same way?

RMD: Yes. She was. And it's very interesting, they were not overbearing. That was important for us.

RVR: But you knew certain things were expected of you?

RMD: Yes.

RVR: How would you describe his political principles, would you say?

RMD: When you come from the Depression, I think when you come from the Roosevelt Era, one man, one party. The Democratic Party was completely different. The great changes in the Democratic Party were through Roosevelt. And so all of those people who grew up in the Depression, they really believed that Roosevelt took us out of war, and took us out of the Great Depression. So all of those leaders really believed in one man, that whole idea of Roosevelt – and the political structure was completely different. Some of it was good and some of it was bad. But he knew, in the long run, that it was changing drastically.

RVR: He did?

RMD: Oh yes. He could tell you more about the changes, the voting patterns and changes than anyone else. You could see it coming. Because the further and further people got away from the Depression and Roosevelt, the less they thought about the party structure. That was going on, even in the 1970s.

RVR: But he himself really had great control over politics.

RMD: He had great responsibility. But at the same time, he knew that you couldn't do everything. You had to rely on people. And that's what you have to do.

RVR: Did he rely on people?

RMD: Oh yes he did, many, many people. In regards to politics, nationally, state, or locally, we have to rely on people. At the same time, it was a totally different structure. But he knew it was changing. Through the 1960s and the 1970s, Vietnam had a great change. The assassination of President Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and of course, Bobby Kennedy, those changed the whole era of the Democratic Party, more than anything else.

RVR: He was very active in the election of Kennedy as president.

RMD: Yes. He went back with Joe Kennedy, back to the 1930s and the 1940s. They had a relationship. Of course, he was a great Stevenson supporter. One of his best friends was Stevenson, for 1952 and 1956. An example, just a few years ago...more than that...I had the opportunity to meet Ambassador Galbraith from Harvard. He told me a great story about how my father, in 1952 and 1956, he and Galbraith were great friends. After each election and all of that, my father drove him to the airport (RMD and RVR laugh). He



was the County Clerk then. They worked the campaigns for Stevenson. And they had a great relationship, which I never knew about. He told me about his relationship.

But Kennedy was important. He thought it was the changing of an era, the whole era of Eisenhower. And you needed a young person like John F. Kennedy. It was a tough campaign because they had to make compromises. To compromise, they put Lyndon Johnson on the ballot. They had to go and see Eleanor Roosevelt – with the opportunity to be in the L.A. convention, and going to see her and meet her of course. We came outside of the room and he had to tell her that he was supporting John F. Kennedy and not Adlai Stevenson. And it wasn't personal. He told her that. It was very important. He did not have the votes. He was not going to win this thing. I think that it was tough for him. But at the same time, he always had the utmost respect for Stevenson. It wasn't something that he was against Stevenson. This was John F. Kennedy's move. Instead of 1956, he came in 1960.

RVR: Right. Eleanor Roosevelt tried to change him.

RMD: Yes. With Eleanor Roosevelt, that was the issue. But he was very straightforward with her and all of that. It was a tough election. But it was an election that made a difference in the country. I firmly believe that.

RVR: And then Kennedy was surprised that all your father asked for was a tour of the White House with his family.

RMD: Right. My father wasn't one that would be asking for a department head or all of these other things.

RVR: And you were the only one that didn't go.

RMD: Right. I was at Providence College taking a biology exam. I didn't do too well on it (RMD, RVR, DWV, and TL laugh). I should have went down there. But that was important because my father said, "Education is more important than that."

RVR: And he told you that you couldn't go.

RMD: "No," That's right. "You have an exam and that's your responsibility." Of course, the Dominicans would never let you out of anything (RVR laughs). That tells you how important an education is. I mean, he saw the opportunity of going down there with him and seeing the president. But he was very strict on that. "It's you. It's not me. You don't lead my life. You lead your own life."

RVR: Right. We are very concerned and interested in his relationship with UIC. Without him, there wouldn't be a university.

RMD: Right. He started, I think it was in 1930, he always believed that – one of his bills in Springfield was for the University of Illinois having a major campus – he always believed that it should be in Chicago. It was important for immigrant families at that time. It was important, he believed that education should be the highest priority of America, more than any other issue. He always thought education should be the highest priority. Nothing else should be more important. In government, it was always education. All of the other things should be here [motions to the side]. If you solved the education crisis, you solved all of the social ills. He always believed that.

So he believed it was an opportunity. It was the most difficult political decision he made, because there were a lot of people against it. You were going against your own constituents, they would say. You're going against all Democrats voting for the Democratic Party, locally, county, state, and nationally. But in the long run, he told the constituents, "I'm thinking about you children, your grandchildren, and your great grandchildren. I'm not thinking about you today. I'm thinking about the future." And that was the most difficult decision because, after that, cities around the country became anti-university, there were no expansion universities, whether public or private. "You can't expand into residential communities." At the same time, he allowed the University of Chicago to expand, that was every interesting. And he was one of the people promoting universities, public or private universities, with hospitals, and things like that. He thought

those were the anchors of communities because, as cities change economically, and communities change, if you don't have community anchors, you won't have too much left. That was a great foresight that he had. And most mayors didn't, in the 1960s and 1970s, they all became anti-university. And I think it hurt many times. It hurt cities throughout the country. But at the same time, now cities now realize how important economically universities are in the futures of their cities.

RVR: Did he feel that Urbana was dragging its feet, that it was reluctant to see a campus in Chicago?

RMD: Oh definitely. It was mostly politics. It was kind of the Democrat and Republican, politics and philosophy. And it's great: Champaign Urbana has a great university there. But at the same time, you take a place like Chicago. We can't have a campus from the University of Illinois and deny a lot of young people opportunities, not only in the city, but also in the metropolitan area. And then his foresight, it would become a university, not only for our city, our county, and our state, but nationally and internationally, both undergraduate and graduate students. That's because, at that time, they had great graduate programs as well, on the west side of the city of Chicago.

RVR: Did David Dodds Henry, the president, drag his feet?

RMD: Well, I don't know the particulars. But I think the agreement was made between him and Stratton at that time.

RVR: What was the agreement?

RMD: To expand the university. That was one thing, because the Republicans were in charge. They had a huge voice. With the Republicans, they really ran politics in Illinois, and the Tribune Company, for many, many years. So I think everybody came to an understanding that this decision would be a tough decision. But he was ready to go for it. I think it was the most difficult decision he ever made in his political life, because there

were a lot of people who were really against it. People don't like change. But for maybe their children or their grandchildren – in the long run, I had people come to me and say, "You know, your dad was really right on this." That was in the long run because their grandchildren now are going into the university today.

RVR: At one point, they wanted to put the campus out in Garfield Park. But he wanted it here in the center of the city near the loop.

RMD: Right. He always thought it should be closer into the city for the opportunity of undergraduates, maybe working, and even graduate students. And public transportation was important, that it would be closer to the city, and have a relationship with the business community. So it wouldn't be distant. It was part and parcel of this great future of the city. And he always believed in that.

RVR: With UIC, the selection of the location became a big issue.

RMD: Right. That was the issue.

RVR: And there were a lot of protests.

RMD: There were major protests, a lot of protests. I remember they threw a "dead body" out in front of, near our house.

RVR: Really?

RMD: Yes, a fake, a dummy. And they threw it out there. And my father got very upset with that, because that was attacking his family. He made it known to everybody that, "You may differ with me, but you cannot take this to extremes."

RVR: Was that when security was instituted?

RMD: Yes.

RVR: Because before then you didn't have it.

RMD: Well, we had it, but we didn't have a lot of security. But that was really a concern that he had. That was really something that he thought – no one in political life should ever have that forced upon them, their home, or their family. But that was a fight that many political leaders would never take. They would have given up, washed their hands, and walked away. But he knew it, in the long run, because education was important to him. And education was important to the immigrant community. "If you don't fight for this, what else are you going to fight for?"

RVR: Was there any violence at your house?

RMD: No, but it was something that really concerned my father. He knew that he was right, in the long run. It became controversial. A lot of people thought, "Well, you're only going to take care of the educated people." But he said, "No. We're taking care of young men and women who will have an opportunity to be educated." There was this dividing people, those who were well educated and those who were not. It gives everybody opportunities. And he thought public universities would give opportunities to more young men and women of families of immigrants and families that never had an education.

RVR: He's been criticized for the 1968 election. Can you comment on that?

RMD: Yes. Well, the 1968 election was very interesting. After John Kennedy was assassinated, my father went to Johnson in about 1966 and told him, "You have a bad hand. You'd better get out of Vietnam. It's not going to get better." That's because he knew personally – friends of ours and other people, whose sons were getting killed, very quickly. There was the war machine in the Democratic Party. Bobby Kennedy was a hawk then. It was the Democratic Party. And very few people out there realized what was

taking place. And the military machine maybe even controls Washington today, with the amount of money being spent.

So he told Johnson, "You'd better get out. You've got a bad hand." And he recommended, "You appoint a commission of five people." Ted Hesburgh will be on it. "I'll pick the three who would be against, you pick the two for it. It will go down three to two." It won't be your decision. They'll come back and say, 'We recommend getting out.'" But Johnson became very stubborn. The war machine was there with McNamara. A lot of Democrats were supporting this, the domino theory, and all of that.

Slowly but surely, the politics took over the strategy of the war. And it basically failed. He knew that was going to divide and separate families in the country more than anyone else. He kept telling Johnson, "Get out. Get out." Very few people will tell the president something that he doesn't want to hear. And that's the sad thing in political life. And to me, he tried to convince Johnson. But he knew. Bobby Kennedy was a hawk and became a dove. Once he did that, he took off in 1968. And he was going to be the candidate. Of course, before he went to California, he came to talk to my father.

My father said, "If you win in California, we're going to support you in Illinois." At that time, an individual like my father could have great impact on the delegates and all of that by supporting the candidate. Once he went out to California, there was the phone call. He talked to my mother and my father. My father said, "Tomorrow you come to Chicago. We're going to endorse you." Of course, he went out and made his famous speech. His last words were, "On to Chicago." He came out and got killed. That was the end of the Democratic Party.

There was no other candidate. Humphrey was too tied-in with Johnson and the war. He couldn't get out of under Johnson's umbrella, with the history of how Johnson was. And that changed [the Democratic Party] for good. Everybody forgets about the convention, in Miami, two people were killed. No one was killed here. And the issue here became much more emotional with the many policemen whose sons and daughters, more their sons, were killed or injured in Vietnam.

And many times, unfortunately, some of the police officers in the front line, their sons were killed, or their nephews. It became too personal. Also, there was the influence of the federal government. They had more agents in here. They had military agents and

the F.B.I. All of the rumors, "they're going to do this and this." Of course, some of the movement was trying to get the gangs of Chicago to do something during the convention as well.

I met more young men that I knew from college and law school that were involved in various federal investigative agencies here in Chicago. There were more rumors running around. Johnson was doing this and that. Once that happened, my father knew that they were not going to win. And the Democratic Party didn't win until really, Bill Clinton. It was a fluke that Jimmy Carter....President Ford did the right thing. If he did not basically deal with that issue, dealing with the president, protecting him. The Democrats would've never won from 1968 until 1992. It was a fluke that Jimmy Carter won.

RVR: That's realistic. He wasn't a very effective president.

RMD: No he wasn't. No. It was just a fluke. And you figure that because it was at that time that the Democrats did not talk about the issues confronting America. It took a long time for Nixon to get out, but he got out. Whether you liked him or not, he finally got out. The Democrats would have kept going. It was very interesting. And so, everybody then became a dove. But everybody was a hawk before that.

RVR: Mr. Mayor, as you know, we have your father's papers at UIC, which is where they belong. Without him, there wouldn't be UIC. And we have many of the papers of your brother Bill. We're hoping that you would consider donating your papers when your term ends to the university.

RMD: Sure. Let me think.

RVR: That's because, in time, UIC could be the center for research in urban studies, and especially in Chicago.

RMD: You know, it's interesting, some of the issues that my father talked about – people don't realize about public housing. In 1959, Paul Douglas and my father spoke against the Public Housing Act of 1959. There's testimony in there. He went there [Washington, D.C.], and he told the Congressmen and the Senators, more so the Senate I believe, and maybe the House too, I'm not sure. But in the Senate, and Douglas was there, he said, "You can't build high rises when people are moving from rural areas in the south or immigrants coming in. You can't put them in a high rise this way [motions upward]. Immigrants in Chicago live this way [motions side to side], in two flats, and three flats. They never live in high rises. Once you put them in high rises with big families, they can't react to urban life. You're isolating them."

And the government came along and said, "We have to do this because the cost of land is so high, we'd rather go up high." And they were doing that all throughout Europe. He knew it was going to be a failure. And at first, when people moved in, it allowed people to move in who were working. But once the federal government changed the guidelines, that you had to take the poorest of the poor, you couldn't work. So if you were just working part time, and there was a person who didn't work, they would move in there. It changed the whole fabric of public housing.

Public housing was only supposed to be temporary – that you have, like after the Korean War, the low-rises. Veterans moved into many low rises, for one, or two, or three years, and after the Second World War, they moved in. They got their jobs, moved back into the private sector, and then they moved out. But once the government said you had to take the poorest of the poor, that changed the whole complex of public housing. And the federal government said, "If you're married, you'll lose all aid whatsoever you have for your children." So they forced, don't work. They forced, no families. More so in the black community, than anyone else. That was the greatest impact on the African American community. And we regret it today.

RVR: Yes. You're living with it.

RMD: Yes.



RVR: As for your papers sir, would you give it some thought?

RMD: Oh yes, definitely. I'll give it some serious thought.

RVR: You'll give them definitely?

RMD: No. But I'll give it some serious thought. I can't say yes yet.

RVR: I know there are other opportunities that you would have, other interest. But we want to make this a very strong Daley....

RMD: Well, you know, we're having this forum coming up. It's really interesting how many responses we're getting from international mayors.

RVR: It is extraordinary.

RMD: It keeps building up.

RVR: Thanks to you.

RMD: Right. We recently had the Hispanic hemispheric mayors come in. Then we had the Middle Eastern mayors come in. It was the first time in the history of this country that they had ever been invited. And they came to the University of Illinois, at the Richard J. Daley Forum. Now think of that. They had never been invited! And so I think, that's one thing we believe in – especially in this session, we're going to see the variety of international mayors from across the world who are coming, which is really important to us. That's because I think as a global city and a university that truly represents the world, you could go down through the student body, and you could pick out large segments of the world right here at U. of I. [in Chicago] more than any other university. That makes a strong statement in regards to this university in Chicago, as a really, truly international center.

RVR: At this upcoming forum, talking about conditions in the world that are so awful at the moment, that should attract a great deal of interest.

RMD: It is. So far, we're really excited. They love the Midwest friendliness of Chicago. That's one thing. And they're really surprised about Chicago when they come here. They kind of discover, or even rediscover Chicago. Some, for the first time, discover it. Some were here years ago, and all of a sudden they realize that they're rediscovering the city.

RVR: It's a livable city.

RMD: Right. We're trying to make it more and more livable.

RVR: Well, in New York, you have to be super rich.

RMD: Right. Like anything else, our future will be in education. That is the future. The future of any city in the world is education. If you look at the world, and all of the middle class, or upper middle class, whatever it is, they move out of the city, even in Europe. They go into the suburban areas. Or they go into one area with a good school. And if you don't make quality schools across the city, then you have a city of rich and poor. And we really believe that we have a city of mixture, that the poor can get just as good quality education as anyone else. That's the biggest fight for the survival of America, in American cities, and cities throughout the world.

RVR: And that's why it's so important for UIC to keep growing and developing into a truly major institution.

RMD: Yes. That's right. They have, the foundation is there. The location is there. The graduate programs are there. The undergraduate programs are there. The dormitories are there. The quality of professors and staff are there. UIC is recognized not only nationally, but internationally, which is a credit to UIC.

RVR: We're even thinking, sir, of asking President Obama, at least I am, when he retires as president and builds his presidential library, that he would consider UIC as a public institution. He has ties to [the University of] Chicago. But we're a public institution. And I think we have the kind of people that represent the next thing that he represents.

RMD: That's a great idea.

RVR: Whereas, Chicago is much more elitist, I think.

RMD: Well it's important to....I'd send a letter immediately to him. Get it right on his radar screen. Get it right out there, and have it signed by a group of....

RVR: I'm going to, at the next meeting with the chancellor and vice chancellor.

RMD: The board could do it, pass it [a resolution], it would be wonderful. And you look at President Obama. I know these are difficult and challenging times, but you need leadership. I think he's providing that. I really believe people believe in him, and they want him to succeed.

RVR: It's extraordinary.

RMD: Yes. They want him to succeed. I think everybody does. I don't care who the president is, and it doesn't matter what political party. You want a president to succeed. Now, I think they realize that partisan politics, this personal fighting and animosity, shouting and screaming, is just a sideshow. It's become more of, not just a distraction, but more performances. It's performance for the press. And you see even some of these talk shows. It's entertainment. They don't discuss, and they don't hear different people's viewpoints. It's more entertainment. Maybe that's become part of America, the entertainment. The media is trying to make politics or government entertainment.

RVR: And if it isn't, the media is not interested.

RMD: Yes. Right. If it's not entertainment. That's changed the discussion, the discussion within families, and with people that you know. You can't discuss politics anymore. People don't anymore. So it's really, really unfortunate. Because they're so strident, shouting and screaming, "I'm 100% right. You're 100% wrong." And that's really changed the dialog in America.

RVR: With what your father accomplished, was that one of the reasons that you wanted to maybe continue in that tradition?

RMD: Well, I was practicing law, and doing well. And I just didn't feel any fulfillment. So I remember that I went to see my father, in his office. And he said, "Well, you have better opportunities than me. You've made more money than I could ever think about. Your taxes are higher than mine (RVR and DWV laugh). You go back and talk to Maggie. And you make your own decision. But you never, ever come to my office, or ever come to my home, and talk to your mother and me about [making] your decision. So you think about it. And you make your own decision." That was the key. Of course, it was frightening when he said that. I didn't know what to believe (RVR and DWV laugh).

But in the long run, it was the right decision I made. In life, you can accumulate a lot of material wealth and big wealth. In the long run, it's what you really believe, and your passion, what you want to accomplish. And I respect my profession, my legal profession. But to me, the best decision I've made, besides with Maggie and my family, was entering politics and government in a way that...I really appreciate that. That was the best decision.

RVR: Neil Hartigan suggested that we speak to your wife, because she was so close to your mother, and that she could tell us a great deal.

RMD: Oh sure.

RVR: Do you think she might be willing to?

RMD: Oh sure, I think she'd be willing. And of course, my mother was an extraordinary person. She had to go to work. She never talked about things that affected her in her private life. Her father was killed, unfortunately, by a drunk driver. And of course, they knew the family. Later on in life, I remember, I found out who it was. His grandchildren, we all knew them. And my mother never told that. She said, "His children and grandchildren didn't do anything wrong. The father was drunk. He made a mistake." But she never kept that hatred. It was very interesting, she never kept that. And she knew that life was better. You look back. Even my father said, "There's no such thing as the good old days."

RVR: Oh really (laughs)?

RMD: He always said there was a better day ahead. People romanticize the Depression. The Depression was sad, depressing. There was no romantic side to the Depression. With the 1920s, the 1930s, and the 1940s, there was no happiness there because of the Depression and the war. And he said, "Don't let anyone think that those were the good old days. The days ahead are always better."

And that's why he had a vision about this city, more than anyone else. When you think about public transportation, down the Dan Ryan, the Kennedy, the Eisenhower – that alone people have never followed, even today. They try to figure it out in Washington. You build a road *and* you build public transportation. They don't get it. And so he had a lot of vision on that.

RVR: He did indeed.

RMD: He knew how important air transportation was in the 1950s. Then, when he was ready to close Midway Airport to move to O'Hare Field, that was vision. He was way ahead of everyone.

RVR: He's been accused of using highways to divide races.

RMD: No. That's all b.s.

RVR: Everyone that we've asked that question has said that.

RMD: Yes. That's b.s. Someone was just trying to say that. The highways are the key, in the sense that, at that time – the public transportation. The Dan Ryan never divided anyone. The Eisenhower never divided anyone. The Stevenson never divided anyone. And the Kennedy never divided anyone.

TL: Would you agree with Bill's sentiment that it all happened after the highway was built?

RMD: Yes. Right. And neighborhoods were changing ethnically and racially. More people were coming up from the south. The cities were changing. If you take Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia, more changes took place with African American communities, and in St. Louis. So that was after – this was all planned. The Stevenson didn't divide anyone. The Eisenhower was built and my father had to complete it. It got stalled. The Stevenson and the Dan Ryan had nothing to do with race at all. I mean, it just had nothing to do with it. It would be like saying that Ogden Avenue, or Milwaukee Avenue, or Grand Avenue, or Madison Avenue was dividing people. You could go on and on. People were making up these stories. They make up stories.

RVR: Why do you think they do that with him?

RMD: Well, I don't know. It's just like myths. They make up myths.

RVR: Yes. He's become a target for a lot of people.

RMD: Yes. I don't know why.

RVR: No one recognized what he achieved.

RMD: Right. Do you know why? I think that he respected people, but he had to make decisions. He made his own decisions. And he moved on. But look at all of the other cities that those who [criticized him], they came from. Look at their cities. He was criticized from Philadelphia, New York, and all of these others.

RVR: They were bankrupt.

RMD: They were all bankrupt. They were falling apart. And look at L.A. They were all losing population, getting smaller and smaller. And we were growing and growing. You can build foundations. Yes, you'll make some mistakes, but you're building foundations. I think it's just that those people wanted to do that. I remember someone wrote a book, and I think Billy and I said, "This has nothing to do with our father. These are made up stories." You see, people make up stories to make up stories. And then they're never corrected.

RVR: That's what we're trying to do.

RMD: Yes. They'll never correct it. With some of these books, they never corrected these things. Like anything else, they're made up stories. And then you realize, it's all for profit and making money

DWV: You've mentioned the other cities. And Chicago was positioned, amazingly by the 1970s, through the 1950s and the 1960s. Your father came in and was a building mayor. I mean, he was going to position the city for growth. What was his greatest skill in doing that, or his greatest talent?

RMD: I think that his greatest talent was making decisions. That was the key. Take responsibility and make a decision.

DWV: And stick with it, no matter what.

RMD: But at the same time, if something happened, you could always change it. But at least you made the decision. You know the city is going to go forward. Even today, say I make a decision. Well, in a couple of months, that's not the right decision. Let's go back or something. But at least you made the decision. I think that decision making is the key. If you don't make decisions, you'll never move the agenda forward. But he believed that he had to move the agenda forward. The same problems that you had with the federal government in the 1960s, you have the same problems today. They're the same identical problems almost (DWV laughs). You know, bureaucracy, red tape, non-performance. It's just a huge bureaucracy, growing and growing tremendously. The lack of understanding of how urban areas, not Chicago but the region, is important to the country. It's not rural anymore. It's the same thing, they live in a vacuum in Washington. I've always said that. Their unemployment is not high. Their housing prices are higher today than a year ago. So they live basically in isolation from the rest of the country.

TL: It sounds like you're attributing that to this political skill that your father had to be willing to make a decision, and then revise it later.

RMD: That's right.

TL: And you're saying that maybe nationally we haven't had that courage.

RMD: No. I don't think people have it. It's hard for people to, I guess, admit to something that's not working, pull back, and correct it. And if you don't do that, you're not going to stay in politics at all, or government. You're not going to stay there long.

RVR: He had very good relations with business, even though most of them were Republicans.



RMD: Right. He understood that when it came to Chicago, "okay, what's the agenda for Chicago?" When it came to anybody running for governor or president, that was up to them. That was great advice, because you're not going to force anybody to support somebody. I don't care who it is. It's not going to happen. And he knew that if they wanted to support so and so, fine. He didn't interfere. Other mayors took a political agenda: "You're my enemy. I'm a Democrat. You're a Republican." That was not in the best interest of your city. It was in the best interest of a politician. And that really hurt cities across the country. Mike Bloomberg understands that. Like in New York, he understands how important business is. And he's strong labor at the same time, he's strong labor. But he understood that you need businesses. Businesses that build buildings don't come because you have a great labor work force to build the buildings.

RVR: And he knew so much about business.

RMD: He did. He really worked business leaders. If you look at the great changes, and the great contributions that the business leaders have made to Chicago, it is something that is really unique of any American city, or any city in the world. It's really unique. It isn't a charity over here or a charity there. It's, "What's good for Chicago?" They still have that today, it's still very, very strong.

RVR: The bond issues.

RMD: Bond issue after bond issue. You take all of those bond issues. Winning is really important, building the infrastructure, and things like that. That was the key, of all of the things.

RVR: It was really quite remarkable. He was also the chairman of the Democratic Party.

RMD: Right, and I don't know how he put the two hats on. But he was very disciplined about that. At that time, one man, one party, it was all Roosevelt.

RVR: But prior to his administration, when the chairman was elected mayor, he usually resigned because of the two big jobs.

RMD: Right. But my father was very disciplined about it. The party thing was completely different, because of Roosevelt. He talked about one man, one party, and the whole Democratic Party. And that era believed in that. They made great changes in America, whether you liked it or not. Those were great changes. And individuals made great changes.

RVR: It gave him greater strength.

RMD: It gave him great strength, both in Springfield and in Washington, D.C. It gave him more strength. You didn't have to worry about tangents, about people going on tangents. "What was good for Chicago?" He always believed that, and Cook County.

RVR: And he never wished for higher office.

RMD: No. I think you have to be happy with what you do in life. Everybody is striving, especially today. Everybody is trying to go someplace else without an appreciation and understanding of what they're doing. And there's nothing wrong with improving yourself. But at the same time, you can do things that are very powerful, in regards to people's lives. You can be a great teacher, if you really enjoy teaching. You increase your skills and all of that. There's great personal satisfaction in that. You can lead a good life, but at the same time, I think people have to understand that local government is the key. This is where people really understand who they are and what they want to be.

RVR: As Tip O'Neil said....

RMD: All politics is local. But now, they're trying to make everything nationally. The Democrat Party, nationally. Everything has to be nationally. If you notice, they're trying to get everything with the federal government. Everything has to be national, up there.

RVR: It's nationalization. That's the new word.

RMD: Right. And that would be the worst thing for America. Because we have to have our own character, every city should have its own character and identity. Everybody can't be the same. We can't be like the federal government. We can't be the same. Everything is the same in the federal government. And if we do that in America, we become, I guess what Russia is, unfortunately.

RVR: And we know what happened there.

RMD: There's a huge bureaucracy with no creativity.

RVR: Do you have any questions?

DWV: One quick one. Your father said once that UIC may have been his greatest contribution to the city. As mayor, what do you think his greatest contribution to the city was?

RMD: Well, his greatest contribution was UIC. It was something he dreamed of as a young man, in the state senate, and as a state representative. He believed that we deserved a good, quality education because he knew that education made a difference in his life. He could see the difference among the young men and women that he grew up with. He had the opportunity of getting an education, and they didn't, and what he accomplished. That didn't mean they didn't accomplish a lot of things in their lives.

But still, it was the idea of what you could give to yourself and what you give to your children immediately. Education was important to him. Night school and things like that were important to him. He knew that. And I think his greatest contribution to the city was UIC. That was the toughest political decision. But it was the best thing. And today, we talk about it today. And most political leaders, local leaders, they don't talk about it.

TL: You were in your mid-twenties when all of that happened basically. How did you feel about that at the time?

RMD: I was more worried about my schooling, I'll be very frank (RMD, RVR, DWV, and TL laugh), whether or not I was going to pass this course.

TL: You were at DePaul, right?

RMD: It could have been at DePaul. I was more worried about schooling (laughs). Everybody gets caught up that some way, that I was sitting down here with my brothers – we were not down here. We went to school. We went to high school. We went to college. We went to law school. We weren't involved. My dad didn't get us involved in his life. He said, "No. You don't get involved in my job. This is not your office. This is not someplace that you hang out." So he made that clear. On Saturdays, of course, my father would always work on Saturdays. So I became a lawyer and worked on Saturdays. You worked on Saturdays. You were supposed to work on Saturdays.

RVR: In his office did he work, or at home?

RMD: Here. He worked here. He came here, almost every Saturday. So when I went to law school, of course I worked on Saturdays. You had to work on Saturdays. And people would look at you like, "Why are you working on Saturdays?" Well, you're supposed to work on Saturdays, especially if you're in a law firm or something. Earlier than that, we used to belong to the Lake Shore Club. So my father would come here. And there was a camp for boys and girls. We'd go to the camp there, and learn swimming, play handball, and things like that. And we'd have a little lunch. Then my father would come to go swimming and take us to steam. And then, we'd go bowling after that (RVR laughs). Yes. He was a good bowler. He would go bowling with us. They had little bowling lanes down there. And again, my father took time out.

TL: He must have been quite good at all of his hobbies, because Mary mentioned that he really loved fishing, too.

RMD: Oh, he loved to fish. Sure. Of course, it was through my grandfather, because he used to go up to northern Wisconsin for a month or two months. After he retired, he used to go up there.

TL: It was the muskies, that's what Mary said.

RMD: Right. And my father loved to fish. Again, it was time out with you. If you went fishing with him, he would sit there and talk to you. And he'd give you some advice, what you wanted to do in life, and maybe some of the issues that maybe were confronting you. Maybe you were not doing well in this course, that course, or what you were doing. Maybe you were not paying enough attention to the professor. Maybe you needed tutoring. He was never afraid to say, "You need a tutor." That's one thing. He was always willing to do that.

TL: Just to be clear, then. When all of the stuff was happening with UIC in the 1960s, you were saying that you were pretty focused on your own business, at that point.

RMD: Oh yes. And people think that that was my father. All of a sudden, you don't jump in to a lot of it. A lot of people think, "Oh, these sons and daughters of these political leaders. Oh my God, they must have been sitting on the edges." I was more worried about passing the course (laughs), going out on a Friday night, meeting up with your friends, and things like that.

TL: Finding your mate or whatever.

RMD: Right.

RVR: Is there any one characteristic that you'd like to imitate of your father's, that you'd like to be like him?

RMD: Well, I don't think I could be like him. No. I don't think anybody could. No one could be like them. What you do is that you always think of your parents in all situations. You always think of them. I think this idea that in some way you have to follow your mother's or father's footsteps, or be like them, the world is not like that. It will never be like that. You think back, and you think, "What would he do in this situation?" Maybe. But you can't follow. That's the worst mistake that people make. With a job, you can't follow a former CEO, or you can't follow this. It's not going to happen. You just say, "If they were put in this situation, what would they do?"

RVR: He was very unique.

RMD: Yes he was. And also, he kept confidence in all of his relationships that he had with people. He never, ever decided to talk about them. That's one thing. He was like that. He was very strong like that. People had human frailties all of the time. I mean, he knew that, more than anyone else. He'd say, "It's people's private lives and their personal lives." I remember one person who was really in trouble. I remember I was questioning about his even talking to him. He said, "It's amazing. I'm meeting, not him, but I'm meeting his wife with five kids. Here's a man who's an alcoholic. Here's a man who gambles. Here's a man who's running around with women. He did something wrong at a certain age. And now, you're going to condemn his wife and children. Fine. So, since you're God, get out of my office." So it took me about two months to come back. He said, "How's God doing? Are you judging any more people?" (RMD and RVR laugh) "Don't you think that wife and his children deserve help, not him?" It was a very strong message. But today, it's not like that. You condemn, not only the individual, but all of their family, and condemn everybody for one person's conduct unfortunately.

RVR: That's why some people don't go into politics, because they know their children's lives will be affected.

RMD: Yes. It's changed a lot. That's because a lot of the politicians have opened their doors and opened their homes. That's the biggest mistake. That's a mistake they make. Once they do that, then they're game for everybody. So, you really have to allow your children to do things in their own lives. And they're not part of your public entrée.

RVR: It was only at the end that the intrusion in your....

RMD: Yes. Even today, you see that. But I have to say, Obama is doing a good job. I think President Bush did a wonderful job with his children. And I think Bill Clinton, he and Hillary did a wonderful job with their daughter, a young lady now. I just saw her recently. I saw her at the swearing in of Obama, the inauguration. It was really wonderful to see her. She's a young lady, and campaigned for her mother as well. You see Obama's children being protected as well at school. And it's hard. He's the president. But it's very important, I think, for those who understand their family values.

RVR: Security in the Capitol has increased.

RMD: Right. We were in Springfield. And they were talking about doing a concealed weapons bill. I always said, "If we have a concealed weapons bill here in Illinois, why can't you carry one into the Capital? Why can't you go and see you Senator or Representative with a concealed weapon?" Now, I'm not talking about Obama and the politicians. But it's really interesting how they say everything else, like automatic weapons, should be bought in the United States. But you can't carry one in Washington, D.C. I said, "Why not? If it's okay to walk with them throughout the country, why can't you walk around with them in Washington, D.C.?" So, it's really interesting. These are issues.

RVR: Well, thank you.

DWV: We appreciate it.

RMD: If there's any more, I'll be glad to think about them, any other times....Are you going to see Jack Parker? There's one guy you should see. You should see him.

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