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Interview with Alex Seith

Date: 19 December 2008

Location: UIC Historian's Office, 815 W. Van Buren St., Chicago, IL.
Present: Alex Seith and Jason Marcus Waak

Jason Marcus Waak: Today is nineteen December. It's a Friday in 2008. And we're here with Alex Seith. So Alex, if you would maybe give a brief introduction, then your early life, and then we'll get into the questions.

Alex Seith: Okay. I was born in Aurora, Illinois to working-class parents. Both of them worked. My father never went beyond the eighth grade. He worked in a rather grimy job for the gas company, repairing the meters when they were brought back. And I still have a picture where I was standing at his workbench. And it was either that day, or a day like it, where he said to me, "Kid, you're going to do better than this. You're going to grow up and go to college." Well, after I got into West Aurora High School, I became the president of the student council, president of the debate team, and governor of Illinois Boys State.

JMW: Oh okay, you're a Boys Stater too.

AS: You were?

JMW: Yes.

AS: You know how great it is.

JMW: Yes.

AS: I played football and track for three years, and even up to the fourth year, because I was invited to give a speech at the new Hinsdale Central High School for a gathering of student council representatives. I gave a 45-minute speech without notes. I had all kinds

of these principals and others coming up to me and saying, "We're going to invite you to our school. You're saying things that we would like to say to the kids. They won't listen to us, but you're a seventeen-year-old like them. They'll listen." So I went around. If I made good money, I got about fifty dollars a speech. When you consider that I was working summers at the time doing construction as a laborer for about two-and-a-quarter an hour—. So fifty dollars for a speech was good money.

I applied to Yale and Harvard. And I got an acceptance from Harvard for what they called a national scholarship, which guaranteed four years of undergraduate and three years of graduate school for law school, or whatever it may be. That was publicized in the Aurora paper without my consent. Shortly after that, I got an offer from Yale for a four-year scholarship and I accepted it. And people said, "You're nuts. You've got a guarantee of seven years at Harvard." I said, "Well, I've never been to either one of these schools, but I've been convinced that at Yale, you get more connection with the big faculty than at Harvard—or dealing with graduate students. You rarely ever see them."

So I was reading a pamphlet about Yale. The deal was that the scholarship paid half of your tuition. And the numbers are so small compared to today. It was two thousand dollars tuition—room, board, and the whole thing. But that was big money at the time. So the tuition was a thousand dollars. You were supposed to earn five hundred dollars at what they called a bursary job while you were at school, and another five hundred dollars in the summer.

I realized that bursary jobs were things like checking out books at the library, or punching people's tickets at the food line. But there were some student businesses—The best one was at the student laundry. So when I got to the campus, I competed to be in the student laundry with about eighty competitors. We had to go out for two weeks and sell contracts for the student laundry service. Then they whittled it down from eighty to just five. Then you competed all year. At the end of the year, they'd pick the winner. The winner became the sophomore manager—then junior manager and senior manager—and made serious money.

I didn't realize until the end of the year that I was in good shape, because I had sold on a campus of two thousand people, half of which were scholarship students who couldn't afford the student laundry because it was pick-up and delivery. I sold something

like 525 contracts. The next closest was 110. And then during the school year, one of the tasks was to go and collect from people once a month. I figured that if I got one hundred percent collections, no one could beat that. They could tie it, but they couldn't beat it. One guy in particular was a holdout because he was drunk all of the time, so I got up at three-thirty one morning and went over and sat in his room. He came stumbling in at about four. I said, "You owe me for student laundry (laughs)." So that paid my way through school.

During my junior year, the guy who was going to be the senior manager died that summer, so I became the defacto senior manager for two years—They called it chairman. The guy that I was working with came up with a good idea, which was, "Let's put in laundromats to serve all of the students who can't afford this pick-up and delivery." So I worked that out with the administration and we did it. The results were record profits the next year. My take was enough to pay for all three years of law school.

JMW: That was justifying the decision to go to Yale and not to Harvard?

AS: Well then, I still had to get admitted to Harvard. I was magna cum laude. I was the president of the Debate Association. I was the president of the Torch Honor Society. I was class Orator, which meant I was a speaker at graduation. I got a scholarship for a year to study in Germany. I got married on September 1st of 1956. I went to Germany with my wife. We made a deal that once we went to Germany we would only talk in German—even when we were alone—so my German got to be pretty good. I applied to Harvard. In November of that year, I got early admission.

JMW: So that was in September of 1956?

AS: No, November. So I started there in the fall of 1957. This is irrelevant, but one of my classmates was Nino Scalia, now on the U.S. Supreme Court. Another one was Paul Sarbanes, long-time U.S. senator from Maryland. We worked together in the volunteer defenders. Paul was, and is, a great guy. Mike Dukakis, the Democratic nominee for president in 1988, was also in our class. We were in the Harvard Law Democratic Club.

He was as much of a jerk as he is today. But anyway, I came back here and I got hired by a nice law firm. Then in 1963, I switched to a bigger law firm, Lord, Bissell & Brook. Over time, I became a partner there. I left there in 1992, and I went to a smaller firm. Now I'm at a firm with just myself and another person.

In any case, I did two things in 1961—I joined the Cook County Young Democrats. I also joined the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations—It's now called the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. In joining the Young Democrats, I had a very clear goal, which was to work my way into Democratic politics here. I looked around and I said, "I don't have a father who's been a ward committeeman or an alderman. I don't have an inside track. I'm not Irish. I've got none of the obvious credentials, so the only way I can at least get a foothold is that I've got to become the chairman of the Young Democrats."

That worked out—I got elected in March of 1965. One of the early things was to go and visit Mayor Daley because he was the head of the party. The Young Democrats had done well that year, so I was able to meet him for the first time and gave him a check for five hundred dollars, repaying money he loaned to the Young Democrats. He thought that it was a donation, but I said, "I'm treating this as a loan." So we got off to a good start.

In that fall, we had a state convention at the old Edgewater Beach Hotel, and we had a Saturday night dinner. There was a huge crowd—It was literally a wall-to-wall, stand-up only. The featured speaker was Seymour Simon, who was the then president of the Cook County Board. I had developed a method of introductions, which I would limit to about a minute or two. It would be exclusively about that person. It always bothered me when an introducer would talk about the topic that the speaker was going to talk about—Well, that's what he's there for, just tell us who he is. So that's what I focused on. I had this all in my head—the person's biography. And I had a story line. I always had a story line. The story line was that this guy—Seymour Simon—had the qualities of John F. Kennedy. You're talking November of 1965—It was only two years after Kennedy's assassination. Afterwards his wife said, "My goodness! That's the greatest introduction he's ever gotten." About a month later, he called me and said, "I want to put you on the zoning board."

JMW: Okay. So that was in 1966?

AS: No. That was November of 1965.

JMW: You went to the zoning board. Okay.

AS: I said, "Look, I've got to check with my law firm." He said, "Fine," so I did. But I was also going to check with Mayor Daley. I got an appointment to see him—He saw me at City Hall. I told him that Simon had offered me this spot, and I said, "If you want me to take it, I will. If you want me to turn it down, I'll do that. Whatever you say." He paused for a while. Sometimes he wouldn't answer right away—He was thinking. I repeated it. He was the only guy to call me Al—He said, "Al, go ahead and take it." I said, "You're sure?" He said, "Yes. You go ahead."

Well, it got up to the next spring. I had a one-year term, and Daley had this pattern for slate making. There was a week from a Monday to a Monday—It's still that way—where you can file petitions. He would wait until the Thursday before the last Monday to make a slate. The law has since been changed. You had to get signatures—not just a total number of signatures, say for Cook County, but a given number in each of thirty wards out of the fifty, and each of twenty out of the thirty townships. So if somebody isn't slated, there was no way they were going to be able to get those petitions in three days, by Monday. Only the organization could do that.

So I woke up on Friday morning after the slate making and read in the papers that Seymour Simon had been dumped. In his place, they slated Harry Semrow. So I immediately called Mary Mullins, who was the Mayor's political assistant. I said, "Look, our convention is tomorrow. The Mayor accepted. We invited Seymour Simon and he accepted. So please find out from the Mayor what he wants to do—He can stay away, we can disinvite Simon, or he can come and just go ahead with it." She called back shortly after that and said, "You go ahead. He'll be there. So will Simon." As it turned out, there was a picture in the Chicago Tribune, I think it was. It was on the front page, me standing

between the two of them grinning at each other (laughs). And of course, beyond the back, you're wondering where the dagger is.

JWM: Exactly, yes. There's the grinning teeth.

AS: Not long after that, Mary said to me, "That was the smartest thing that you could have done. If you had not gotten the Mayor's permission, he would have figured that you were a 'Simon guy,' and you'd be going down with him." One of the things about Mayor Daley was that he valued loyalty above everything. And mind you, to get to be chairman of the Young Democrats you had to get Daley's approval. Eddie Rosewell and Stan Elrod went in to see the Mayor, and they said, "Look, on paper, this guy has got none of the things that you want—He lives in Hinsdale, Harvard and Yale. But he's a great guy, and he'll work with you."

And he accepted me—Sight unseen, he accepted me on that basis. So in getting his approval to be on the zoning board, I was able to demonstrate my loyal lesson here—my loyalty to him. Then, the next year, I got elected to be the first vice president of the National Young Democrats. I know from other people back then that he was very pleased by that—Proof that I could make my way on my own.

The next year, in June of 1968, I got elected as president (now called the chairman) on the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (It is now the Chicago Council on Global Affairs)—the youngest ever at age 33. Lester Crown is the current chairman. They've had all kinds of distinguished people after me, all of them older. Well anyway, from time to time there would be speakers whom I thought would be of interest to the Mayor, so I would call his scheduler and invite the Mayor. One speaker had been chairman of the Continental Bank, and was then the secretary of the Treasury. So I called and said, "He's going to be speaking on such-and-such a date. If the Mayor would like to come, we'd be pleased to have him. To save him time, at 12:55 I always get up—even if they're still eating—and do the basic introductions. And at one o'clock sharp, I introduce the speaker. So if he wants to wait until 12:55 so he doesn't have to sit through the lunch, that's fine." Well, he came at exactly 12:55, and my mind started racing. Somehow, I thought of some pretty funny stuff to say on the occasion. And I've got a great picture of

him, just leaning back and roaring with laughter. He came to a number of those. We had the secretary general of the U.N.—The Mayor came to that. I don't remember all of them. But my object was, and I think it had, that impact. He said, "Wow, this guy has contacts, and he's heading up this outstanding organization—It's got nothing to do with Democratic politics." Well, then there were two things—He had Neil Hartigan run an organization called Chicago 67, which helped his re-election. The object was to bring in voters for Mayor Daley that the regular organization couldn't get. So he talked to me—I think in the spring of 1968—and he said, "I want you to do something similar for the suburbs," so we called it Suburban 68. I got a very distinguished group of people to be on the board—there was the head of Carson, Pirie, Scott, the head of Marshall Field, the head of the Burlington Railroad, and so on. It was not through my great powers—I just said, "Mayor Daley asked me to organize this. Would you be on the board?" "Okay."

JMW: This was the Democratic re-election…?

AS: Yes, it was all Democratic. But we explained in our pamphlets that volunteers could volunteer for anybody on the state ticket, as long as it was a Democrat—But they didn't have to support them all. And that's how they tried to pick up people for the organization. I'll tell you a little sidebar—This will tell you something about Mayor Daley. We had planned that, in due course, we would produce a pamphlet endorsing a person running for office. At that time, the governor was Sam Shapiro, who had been lieutenant governor. He had moved up when Otto Kerner went on the U.S. Court of Appeals. At the Democratic National Convention in 1968, there was dead time on the floor, so I went over to Mayor Daley. I showed him a mockup of the pamphlet that we were going to do, supporting Shapiro. He said, "Don't print that." I was kind of surprised. The next day, after the convention was ended, there was all of this mess in the street. The Hilton Hotel stunk—You couldn't go in there because they went in there and put stink bombs in there. It cost the Hilton Hotel a huge amount of money, replacing all of the carpets and whatnot.

Well, in this chaos, the very first thing in the morning, he called me, and he said, "Don't print that pamphlet." I was thinking, "This is important to him—Don't print this pamphlet." So of course, I did not do it. I've speculated ever since that he had a plan to

make Ogilvie the governor. My circumstantial evidence is this—Number one, in 1962 when Ogilvie ran for sheriff, Daley ran a guy—whose name I don't remember—who was an absolute mope. I remember going to an event that was sponsored by one of the township committeemen—This guy literally sat in the corner and didn't talk to anybody. I thought, "Wow! This guy is no politician."

JMW: So you think that Daley was giving him a pass?

AS: That's what it looked like to me.

JMW: Because…?

AS: Well, I don't know for sure. I think, long-term, it was because he wanted George Dunne to become Cook County Board President. And all kinds of people said, "Well, that's who Daley was—He was thinking three, four, and five steps ahead." (And you've probably heard that from other people. This is only my hypothesis.) Then, in 1966, he dumped Seymour Simon and replaced him with Harry Semrow. Paul Wigoda—long-time alderman of the forty-ninth ward—told me that during that campaign, Daley used to refer to Harry Semrow as, "our village idiot."

JMW: Okay (laughs).

AS: Ogilvie beat him handily. Then in 1968, Ogilvie was elected governor. He had to resign as the Cook County Board President with two years left, and the Cook County Board chose George Dunne to be the Cook County Board President.

JMW: So this wasn't any love for Ogilvie. This was to clear the way for George Dunne.

AS: Well, I also think you need to consider that neither of the two Mayor Daleys has ever supported a Democrat for governor really, except for Otto Kerner. And here's an analogy—I once did a program on Channel 11. On the show, I had Hubert Humphrey and

Lester Pearson, who was the most recent prime minister of Canada—He was a liberal. As we were waiting for the show to start, he told me, "You know, I got along best with the conservative leaders of various provinces." I said, "Why?" He said, "It's because the members of my own party expect everything. But if I give a few crumbs to the conservatives, they think I'm a great guy." And I thought, "You know, Daley was operating on the same premise—work with a Republican governor, give that governor support that he doesn't expect, and get things for Chicago."

JMW: Okay. It's like reverse psychology.

AS: That's the way I read it. So we got up to election night, and I came back down to the headquarters. I sat with Mayor Daley. My wife was there, too—along with some other big shots—as the returns were coming in. Daley was on the phone raging at one guy—I think it was this committeeman from Cicero. It was 3:45 in the morning and he didn't have his vote count yet. And Daley said, "Don't bullshit me! I've been bullshitted by better bullshitters than you! Now give me the numbers (AS and JMW laugh)!"

Shortly after that, Ogilvie dumped me from the zoning board. But I got help from Dan Lyden, who was the leader of the plumber's union at the time—He had worked with me on Suburban 68. He told me that he told Daley that Ogilvie was out to get me—Ogilvie had been a partner in Lord, Bissell & Brook before I got there—and he was calling partners at the firm and saying, "Fire this guy. Tank him."

As a matter of fact, when they held their election for partner that year, I didn't get elected—and neither did anybody else. I remembered what Johnson said in 1964—that he would not slate any member of his cabinet for vice president. Bobby Kennedy said, "I'm sorry that I took all of those other good guys down with me," and I thought, "Wow (laughs). I took all of these other guys down with me." But I stood my ground. I mean, I got blasted by the press—. Oh, I'm sorry, I left out a key element—Mayor Daley called me in with Earl Bush. He said, "Here, we want you to run this pamphlet." It was an attack on Ogilvie—It was all factual, but it was a tough attack.

The gist of it was that he had hired as his first deputy a guy who had conspicuous mob connections. And the thrust of the argument was, "We're not saying that Ogilvie is a

mobster or tolerates the mob, but why would he have somebody that close to him who has those connections? It's a case of bad judgement." That's what infuriated him.

JMW: So that's why he was trying to axe you?

AS: Yes.

JMW: He had it in for you.

AS: It was from the law firm and so on.

JMW: Right.

AS: I could have gone to the press or my law firm and said, "Mayor Daley put me up to this." But I didn't say that—I just kept my mouth shut and took the heat. And it didn't take him long to figure out that that's what I was doing—So now, here's a real act of loyalty. Then, that spring—I think it was June—

JMW: So this was June of…

AS and JMW: 1969.

AS: Yes—McGovern came to town. And he was holding hearings around the country on reforming the delegates' selection process. In 1968, Illinois had 118 delegates—forty-eight were elected by Congressional districts. We had twenty-four Congressional districts at the time—There were two per district—The other seventy were hand picked on paper by the Democratic Central Committee of the state—but in fact, by Mayor Daley. And that's how I got to be a delegate. This was back in 1968.

So Daley came. It was at the old Sherman House—It's where the State of Illinois Building is now, and he had his headquarters there—the political headquarters—and he said, "We're going to go to the legislature and get the law changed that, from now on,

delegates will all be elected." Now, there were a lot of press in there waiting for the fireworks between him and McGovern. McGovern said, "That's fine, Mr. Mayor—I mean, that's wonderful. We allow caucuses in Minnesota and other places—but if you have an election, nothing could be fairer than that." But of course the irony was that, four years later, he threw out the elected delegates—or it was three years later, I should say.

Well, Daley got up to leave—It was a love fest, and the press was disappointed—He was about to turn from his chair, and McGovern said, "You know, there's one thing, Mr. Mayor—You've got this Conspiracy Seven Trial going on over there, and it's really giving Chicago a black eye. You should really put a stop to it." Daley pounded the table. His veins were popping out. He said, "We have a great city! We have great police!" And he stormed out.

About five minutes later, they took a break. McGovern came down and there were several reporters standing around asking him questions. I was standing there, and I didn't say that I was a reporter, but I said, "Senator, you just asked the mayor of Chicago to fix a federal trial." He said, "Oh, that's not what I meant." Now the press thought, "Oh, this is great. Yes, that's what you did," and they had a story (AS and JMW laugh).

Moments later, Bill Daley tapped me on the shoulder and he said, "That was great! I'm going to tell my dad." He came back and said, "My dad wants to see you." Now, I had been used to waiting an hour or two sometimes to see him. I went up there and it was just him and me, and he said to me, "Al, what do you think I ought to do? Should I go back down there?" I was thinking, "Wow! He's asking my opinion?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, what should I do?" I said, "Send somebody else." He said, "Who?" I said, "John Stroger." He said, "Mary, get John Stroger," because he could see instantly what I was thinking—"Here's a black Democrat who can speak well, and this great white liberal from South Dakota is not going to mess with him (AS and JMW laugh)." He instantly saw the logic in what I was suggesting. Then, he just got into a talking mood and talked to me for two and a half hours. I had never spent that kind of time with him, before or since. It was absolutely remarkable, and he said a number of things.

Oh, excuse me, I've got to go back a step. At the Democratic National Convention of 1968—It started on a Monday—On the previous Saturday, I was hosting a luncheon for the National Young Democrats and I invited Mayor Daley to speak, which he did.

When he was done, I walked out of the room with him and went to somewhere else in the Sherman House and had a sandwich. And he said to me, "What do you think we make Teddy a president?" I said, "Well geez, he's only thirty-six years old." He said, "Yes. But he comes from a great family." And I was thinking, "I wonder if he's serious?"

Now, when I was at Yale, my roommate for the first two years was John Tunney. He was the son of Gene Tunney, heavyweight boxing champion from the 1920s who retired as a millionaire and married a multi-millionaire—Yale made a habit in those days of making your roommate someone from the other side of the tracks. I was working at the student laundry, and he was living in this plush situation. In the fall election, he was meeting with his father and most of the future members of the Eisenhower Cabinet, and I was working at the student laundry—We were also roommates the second year, then the third year, his brotherhood who had dropped out of Yale came back, so I got other roommates.

But anyway, about an hour after this conversation—on this Saturday before the convention was going to open—I got a call, and it was from Tunney. He was a congressman at the time. He said, "Teddy wants me to come out to Chicago. Mayor Daley has been talking to him—He wants me to check it out. I've got nowhere to stay." I said, "Well, I've got a room at the Sherman House—You can stay with me." He did. We tramped around the convention for four days and went to all of the key people. And they were saying, "Jesse Unruh of California has all of the California votes in one bundle"—because of the unit rule. There was Dave Lawrence of Pennsylvania, Carmen DeSapio of New York, Mayor Daley of Chicago, and a couple of others—and that was a majority of the votes. They could make anybody the nominee they wanted to.

I remember Tunney went up to Daley and talked to him, and Daley stood there with his arms folded and starred at him. It was the picture of what they used to say about him—"the great Buddha." Tunney stepped away and said, "Jesus! He didn't say a word to me. I mean, this guy is impenetrable." Shortly after that, I said to Bill Daley, "Look, he's here as a personal friend and the emissary of Kennedy." He said, "My father only talks direct. If Kennedy has anything to say, he can say it to my father direct."

JMW: Now, who told you this? Was it Bill?

AS: Yes, it was Bill. Well, Kennedy declined. He said when his brother was killed in June, there was a flurry of media questions like, "Are you going to step in and try to get the nomination?" And in essence, he said, "No. I'm in grief from the death of my brother." Well, I found out later from Tunney that the reason Kennedy didn't accept was that Daley said, "All you have to do is say that you're available and we'll draft you," and he was afraid that they would do the switch—draft him as the vice president—and say, "Sorry, we couldn't pull it off." That's because once he said, "I'm available for the draft," how could he decline?

It turns out that he made a colossal mistake, because as vice president, he never would have had Chappaquiddick, and his whole career would have been different—and they would have won. Now, by the way, subsequently, if you're ever talking to Bill Daley again, see if you can get an answer out of him more specifically. But I've asked him twice in the last year—I told him what Tunney said—I asked, "Was your father really planning to slate him for president, or was it as vice president?" He said, "Oh yes, he wanted him for president. But you know, vice president would have been great." And I'm thinking, "Well, wait a minute…"

JMW: Right. Which is it?

AS: Then I asked him again. He said, "Oh yes, he was willing to put him in for president"—so I'm not sure. So you can see if Bill will tell you with what I call a N.I.A.B.O.M.—No Ifs, Ands, Buts, Or Maybes (AS and JMW laugh). I'm sorry that I'm backtracking here—Okay, so now we're back to June of 1969. He told me a number of things that I thought were significant. One of them was that on the Friday—the day after the convention, when he called me about the Sam Shapiro thing—he had something more important on his mind. He was talking to Humphrey, and he told me that he told Humphrey, "You have to come out against this war."

People had the mistaken impression that Daley was in favor of the war. It was just his loyalty to Johnson—"I'm not going to undercut my president." And I think his logic was pretty straightforward—"Why spend all of this money bombing another country

when you can spend it building my city, and other ones?" He never said that in those words, but that's what he figured. So he told Humphrey, "You've got to come out against the war." And Humphrey said, "I can't do that." And Daley said, “Why not?" He said, "Lyndon wouldn't like it." And Daley said, "So what? You're the nominee."

JMW: Live your own life.

AS: In 1971, I hired a guy for the Council on Foreign Relations who had been on Humphrey's staff. He and another guy that worked on Humphrey's staff both told me two things about Humphrey. One, he was afraid of intelligent staff people, which is absurd. You know, you're the vice president—What are you afraid of? One of the things about the current Mayor Daley is that he freely admits, "I surround myself with people that are smarter than I am"—and he uses them. He's really smarter than they are in all kinds of ways, but they are experts in things that he's not an expert in. And Johnson used to jerk Humphrey around on a string.

On one occasion, I was told that Humphrey had a speech scheduled in New York. The day before, Marv Watson, who was sort of the chief of staff for Johnson, called and said, "You're not making that speech." At the inaugural in 1965, Humphrey had to wait until the last day before he found out he was going to get any tickets other than his own. So Johnson spent four years jerking him around on a string—and apparently that was his psychological state when Daley was talking to him.

Well, a month later on September 30, Humphrey gave a speech in Salt Lake City that he was coming out for a bombing halt and negotiations to end the war. He started climbing in the polls, almost vertically. Pretty much everybody at the time said, "If the election had been a week later, he would have won." Daley was saying to me, in this discussion in 1969, “If he would have listened to me and done it at the end of August, he would have won."

Daley was particularly peeved because, that spring, Humphrey was giving lectures at some school up in Minnesota—in St. Paul or Minneapolis, I'm not sure which. One of them was broadcast on PBS and put on WTTW, and he was blaming Daley for his loss in 1968. Daley was infuriated with that. He told me, "Baloney! He lost it himself. He

wouldn't listen to me." There was something else that was really touching—He broke up and was at the edge of tears—He started to say that John Kennedy would have listened. It was just remarkable.

There were a couple of other things that he told me. In 1960, he called Adlai Stevenson and said, "Do you want to be the nominee again?"—He said that Stevenson couldn't make up his mind. So now, we were all the way down at the convention. Eleanor Roosevelt and some others were pushing Adlai to go for the nomination. Daley told me that on day two or three of the convention Stevenson came to him and said, "Yes, you know, come to think of it, I think I'll be the nominee." And I'm paraphrasing, but Daley basically said, "Look pal! I gave you that chance in January and you passed it up! The train is gone and you're not on it (laughs)!"

JMW: Yes, exactly. Timing is everything.

AS: (laughs) Boy, that's so true to life. He told me a lot of other things about Chicago politics. I think it just increased his confidence in me that I had tripped up McGovern. I made him look good, and then I gave him advice that he accepted. Incidentally, that fall he slated Stroger for Cook County Board.

JMW: After Stroger went downstairs and…?

AS: Right. Stroger did a lot of other things—He was a ward committeeman, he was loyal to Daley, he was a Roman Catholic. At that time, if you noticed, the blacks that Daley promoted were mostly Roman Catholics. There's Joe Bertrand—Daley made him the city treasurer—He was a Roman Catholic. Ralph Metcalfe, the third ward committeeman, was a Roman Catholic. Later, they had a falling out—Daley supported him strongly until then.

The next year, 1973, the national committee formed two new bodies—there might have been three, but there were two that I remember. They formed a charter commission to write a charter for the party and a delegate selection commission to re-write the rules. Daley called me and said, "I'm putting you on the charter commission." "Thank you.

Okay, that's fine." As time went by, I picked up the paper one day and it said they had met in Washington.

So I went to Mary Mullin and I said, "The mayor told me he wanted me to be on this commission. They've already met and I'm not on it." She said, "I'll take care of that." He called me and said, "Okay, I'll put you on the other one, the delegate selection commission." He got Jane Byrne to resign to create a spot for me—This was in early 1973. I immediately went to Al Barkin, who was the head of the AFL-CIO Political Action Committee. I started working with him because there was already a divide—The left wing liberals were attacking the labor unions—You know, "You're the old guard." I went to see Scoop Jackson—not right away—but him and some others.

JMW: You mean Senator Scoop Jackson.

AS: Yes. He was a foreign policy hawk, and I knew that he was interested in running for the president. I saw several others—There was Lloyd Benson—I can't remember who else.

JMW: Russell Long maybe?

AS: No, he would not have been a candidate. I went to see them and said, "Look, I'm on this commission—If you want some things from the delegate selection process, tell me." So I developed a good working relationship with those guys. In about June—I could be off on the date a little bit—Leonard Woodcock resigned as vice chairman of the commission. He was president of the UAW and resigned because he had major negotiations coming up with the automakers in September, and he was trying to concentrate on that. So Barkin came to me and said, "We will back you—We want to make you the vice chairman."

He went to Strauss, who was the national chairman. Strauss said, "That's fine. Get the mayor's support and the governor's okay, and it's a done deal." Well, I went to the Mayor and he was fine with it, but Walker adamantly opposed me—He called me a political hack, so on and so on. Well, at that time, Joel Weisman, another political writer

at the Chicago Sun Times, were writing a series of articles about Walker—They were focusing a lot on fundraising.

In his whole mess, they called me and said, "Hey, the record shows that you gave a thousand dollars to Walker. Is that true?" I said, "Yes." They said, "Could you come over and talk to us?" And I understand now even better than I did then—You know, I didn't run to them and say, "He's beating up on me"—They figured it out on their own. They thought, "There's a laid back guy, and we've discovered this." So they wrote an article on page three of the Chicago Sun Times on a Sunday. The headlines all of the way across the page was something like, "Walker Took Seith's $1,000 Donation." Then it started out with something like, "The Chicago lawyer that Governor Walker called a political hack contributed to his campaign."

They went on for some length. By that point, I had become disillusioned with them. One of the facts in the article was that I had gone to see Vic deGrazia, who was going to be Walker's chief of staff—Actually, Walker called him deputy governor. I said, "Look, I've got no horse in this, but I'm in a law firm that deals a lot with insurance, and the director of insurance is a very sensitive position. A bad guy can pocket a lot of money by being corrupt. So I don't have any particular candidate, I'm just advising you—pick somebody who is clean and knows insurance."

Well, about the time that the Chicago Sun Times was writing this article about me, there had been all kinds of furor in the press because Walker had proposed some guy for insurance commissioner who they were saying that had mob connections. I mean, they just tore this guy apart—"Why would this governor, who said he was going to be clean, propose somebody like this?" So I said, "Look, he didn't listen to my advice, and this is what he came up with." And I was pretty disillusioned—I said, "Furthermore, I didn't even get a return—a printed thank you letter." You know, you would think they would go through their list—A thousand dollars in those days was a fair amount of money—At least say thank you. So I said, "I'm disillusioned with this guy." Well, shortly after that, Daley called me in on a Thursday at City Hall—He had called Strauss, by the way. And I was in the room. Later, I told one of Strauss's deputies that Daley had said, "He's intelligent, he's hard working, and he's loyal." And the guy said, "No, you've got it backwards: He's loyal, hardworking and intelligent (AS and JMW laugh)."

The next week he called me in on a Thursday. He said, "Al, you know, I don't think this is really worth the fight. Why don't you drop it?" I said, “Let me think about it." I went back to my office and I called him shortly after that. He got right on the phone and I said, "Labor is going to hang tough. Are you going to hang tough?" Now, mind you, I want to emphasize this—I was never a part of his inner circle. I was a person that he had some confidence in for certain things, but that was it. And I think he was probably surprised that I would be that bold with him. And I thought that was a pretty bold stroke.

But on the other hand, I was thinking, "He saw me run the Council on Foreign Relations and do other things, and he realizes, 'This guy has a life of his own. He's not dependent on me.'" But then I was thinking, "Okay, now I've made this challenge to him. How am I going to get this job?" Well, that Saturday the Sunday edition of the Chicago Tribune came out. Neil Mailer, who was a political writer for the Chicago Tribune—or a political editor, I guess they called them—had a column with the headline, "Walker Shows the Boss Who's Boss."

Jane Byrne called me and said, "Is this true?" I said, “Yes,” and told her Walker had sent letters to all of the Democratic National Committee and all of the Democratic governors saying that I was a hack. Al Barkin had called him and said, "Look, this is a great guy, and we're asking you for a favor—just stand aside on this.” Walker said, “Ask me for another favor." Barkin said to me, "This is stupid. We could ask him for all kinds of major significance—This is a minor job on the national committee." It shows you how stubborn Walker was—and really bullheaded.

So, Strauss tried a last resort. He got Jimmy Carter to call Walker, because they had both gone to Annapolis—and he got nowhere with Walker. That was the situation with the Mayor, when I was saying, "Will you hang tough?" Well, then the Mailer column came out and Jane Byrne called me—and I don't know if she was with Mayor Daley up in Grand Haven, or just talked to him on the—but she called me back and said that he was absolutely furious—just raving furious. That was because, now, he'd been embarrassed.

And she got a hold of some people who were friends of Strauss’ on the national level. Whatever she told them, I don't know, but the next day, the Dallas Cowboys were playing a pre-season game in Dallas. Strauss was in the owner's box. Two of those guys

went in to see Strauss said, "Look, the Mayor is absolutely blowing his stack. You've got to put this guy on this commission."

Strauss said, "Well, I'm in a bind because Walker was complaining to me that Mayor Daley was getting all of these appointments, and I told him, 'Whatever the next one is—whatever it is—I'll give it to you.' So how do I back out?" They said, "Well, you'd better back out." There was a telethon that was going to happen over Labor Day Weekend—this was in August—and Mayor Daley had bent his usual rule, which was, "Nobody comes in from outside and raises money in Chicago." You've heard of that before, I take it.

JMW: Yes.

AS: But he had called on Strauss and said, "Okay, you can have the telethon here in Chicago." And I don't know if it was on that day, or during the next ensuing days, but those key guys that knew Strauss told him, "Look, if you don't appoint this guy, Daley will turn the lights off on telethon on Labor Day (laughs)." So Strauss reluctantly agreed. I went down to Washington to meet Strauss and I brought my resume—It's similar to the one you saw.

Strauss was pleasantly surprised—"You went to Yale and Harvard? You know all of these languages? You were the president of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations?" I was writing a newspaper column on foreign policy at the time for a bunch of newspapers. He said, "Give me one," so I picked out a column. He sent my bio and the column to all of the members of the national committee and all of the governors and said, "Look at what an outstanding guy Mayor Daley sent (AS and JMW laugh)." And I knew that Strauss was thinking, "You know, Daley is so doggone smart. He doesn't send me a routine ward committeeman—This is what he sends me."

JMW: Yes. How could they refuse?

AS: Yes. I mean, I had the job at this point. Shortly after that—or about that time—Strauss formed a foreign affairs task force. The chairman was Averell Harriman, who

was a long time diplomat. It included Cyrus Vance, Zbig Brzezinski, and Harold Brown, who were all in the Carter Administration after that. Who else was there? There was Paul Warnke, who handled arms control for Carter, and there was a flock of others. I don't remember all of the names now.

Now, about that time, we had one of the meetings of our delegate selection commission on a Saturday in Washington, D.C. It was scheduled by me and Barbara Mikulski, who was the chairman. Neither of us realized that it was Yom Kippur—and by the way, that was when the Yom Kippur War started. Well, we got into a real deadlock. We were getting to point where the commission had to make a report, and somebody said, "We've got to call Strauss to get us out of this mess."

Somebody called him, he came over, and he worked things out. Shortly after that, he got a letter from Robert Tisch, owner of Loews and CBS. They were a very powerful Jewish family that had supported Strauss—contributed heavily to the Democratic Party. The gist of the letter to Strauss was, "I can't believe that you scheduled a meeting on Yom Kippur and, on this high holiday, went over there and participated."

I didn't say a word to Strauss, but I wrote a letter to Tisch—said, "Don't blame Strauss—blame me and Barbara Mikulski. We scheduled the meeting, not knowing that it was Yom Kippur." I explain the deadlock we were in and how Strauss came to solve it. I gave a copy to Strauss, and he was as happy as anyone could be. I got him off the hook. He couldn't do it himself.

Anyway, then Strauss formed this foreign affairs task force with Harriman as chairman. Strauss came to me and said, "I need a deputy chairman who can do a lot of the day-to-day stuff—the organizing and contacting—because Averell is not going to do that. And I'm going to give you that spot," which was wonderful. So, I was dealing one-on-one with all of these luminaries. At one point, my wife and I went up to Harriman's estate in upstate New York. And it was just the two of us—we had a whole evening with just him and his wife. It was marvelous. I was invited to his house in Washington, D.C. several times.

I'll tell you a little sidebar, by the way, because I'm jumping around with the time here—On the night of Carter's inaugural, Harriman invited me to his house. People asked if I was going to the inaugural ball. I said, "Are you kidding? At Harriman's house I will

see just about everybody who is anybody." More than half of the new cabinet was there—More than half of the Democratic Senate was there—and it was marvelous. But at one point, his wife, who had been married previously to Randolph Churchill, Winston Churchill's son, said to me, "Alex, come over here. I want you to meet a future president of the United States. Alex, this is Bill Clinton."

I laugh because later, in 1993, he made her ambassador to France. The press had articles in these supposed authoritative papers like the New York Times—They were saying that this was because she helped raise money for his campaign. Well, sure—But I was saying, "They went back fifteen years earlier (JMW laughs)." But anyway, it was a marvelous opportunity. There are some other stories that I could tell you about that. You asked me about the Brezhnev thing.

JMW: Yes, but before we get there, can you talk about the whole Walker, Carter, and Daley fundraiser?

AS: Oh yes. Right. Okay.

JMW: I'll let you know—We're going to need to switch tapes shortly, so go ahead, but I'll let you know when we need to switch.

AS: Yes. It was in June of 1976. I was invited to either breakfast or lunch—I don't remember which—This was at the University Club. As you saw in the book (Marathon by Jules Witcover about the 1976 Presidential campaign), the meeting was ran by Walker's allies. They didn't say anything about bringing Mayor Daley into it. I left there and walked straight over to City Hall, and I said, "Could I see him?" I went in and saw him, and I told him what had just happened. He was somewhat controlling himself, but he was fairly furious.

As I told you—and as the book says—a day or so later I saw Bob Abboud, who was the chairman of the First National Bank. I said, "Could we make a switch on this affair, and you chair it?" He said, "Daley is absolutely furious—I'm not going to go within a million miles of that thing." And he reiterated it. So Bob Lipshutz, who later

became White House counsel—I told him that Daley was very upset and I would like to talk to Carter.

I remember that I was home on a Saturday night. My daughter, who was then about fourteen, answered the phone—It was Carter. She was so excited, she said, "Oh my goodness! Jimmy Carter!" I told him what was happening, and he said, "I'm going to cancel that affair." And again, as reported in the book, I went to Daley. I said, "He's going to straighten this out." I thought, "Let Carter say what he's going to do—I don't want to trample on his best line." And he did that. That satisfied Daley. Then Carter lost three out of the last five primaries—all on the same day in June—so he didn't have enough votes to lock it up. But Daley went out the next day and endorsed him, saying, "He got here on his own," and so on. Now, you asked me in a written question, what was conversation was between him and Carter? I don't know.

JMW: Okay. But the way I thought the story was that President Jimmy Carter had asked Mayor Richard J. Daley whether he should, back out of this Walker-run fundraiser.

AS: Oh, he just told him flat out, "I'll back out."

JMW: But Daley told him, "No, go ahead"—and then Daley threw his own.

AS: No, Daley said, "We'll re-organize it." So Daley just took charge.

JMW: Okay, so they weren't two separate events—Daley just took control.

AS: Oh no, the Walker thing was just dead in the water. I mean, the guys that were trying to do it realized that they were muscled out. Mayor Daley had a stand-up reception—I think it was at the Blackstone Hotel. It was five hundred bucks a head, just for a stand-up reception. And they'd raised whatever—I don't remember the number, but it was a nice figure for Carter—and Carter was very pleased with me because I gave him a heads-up. Of course, he remembered from three years earlier when Walker was trying to block me and running into a brick wall.

JMW: Let's pause it there.

[end of video tape one]

JMW: We were finishing up. You talked about the fundraiser, and Carter remembered you.

AS: Right. Well, he remembered me from making a call to Walker. I came to realize that the word around the national committee was that Daley supported this guy in a storm—So that gave me political standing, and that led to Carter putting me on a commission that he created. It was an advisory board for ambassadors, and I could tell you a story about that—It's a little bit off the track from Daley—if you want it or not—It's up to you.

JMW: Sure.

AS: Are you ready?

JMW: Yes, it's rolling.

AS: That group met two days after the inaugural in the cabinet room. Carter said, "When I was the governor, I created a group like this to pick judges, and I want you to do the same thing." After some other conversation, he went around the room for comments. I said to him very politely, "Mr. President, there's a difference between judges and ambassadors—Judges should be independent for as long as they're on the bench, ambassadors are an extension of your foreign policy—so I don't think we should make the choice. We should give you maybe five names of people who are all qualified in different ways—and you pick the one who suits what you want—and do the other part of the job that you want—we screen out the political hacks."

I mean, there were plenty of them—We had Senators calling us, along with this person and that person. Well, there were all of these people on the commission. Well, the

next person to speak is Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., who was lieutenant governor of Massachusetts—His father was speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, and was not a bit polite—He said, "Yes! Are you going to pay any more attention to us than you did my old man?" Carter was like, "Whew!" Shortly after that, he left.

There was a guy named Frank Moore, who was Carter's Congressional liaison—He came over and asked what this was about. O'Neill said, "You made Elliot Richardson of Massachusetts the chairman of the Law and Sea Conference"—It was a treaty they were on—He said, "He may run against me for governor. You build up a political rival from the other party, and you don't even talk to my father, who is the Speaker of the House." So Frank Moore went over to see O'Neil shortly after that, and he invited him and some of the leadership to the White House. They had a nice time.

They left and said, "You know, maybe we can get along with this guy after all." A couple of days later, the story around Washington was that they got an envelope in the mail with a return address from the White House—Inside was a bill for $11.75 for breakfast with the president (AS and JMW laugh). I mean, Carter was so inept it was unbelievable. You asked me about the worst person I was ever involved with in politics—that was Jimmy Carter. He was so inept.

I told this story to the Congressman from my district, Ed Derwinski, a Republican. He said, "Oh, I'll tell you a follow-up."—This was in 1977 when this thing happened—In 1978, the same Frank Moore came to Derwinski and said, "Look, we're working on this civil service bill, and we'd like the support of you and some key Republicans, because we know that you're heading up the Republicans on this."

As he told me, Derwinski said, "There are three things that we want," and he ticked him off. Moore said, "That's fine." Derwinski said, "No, we want to hear it from the president." So they got invited to the White House. Carter came in—Derwinski said that Carter, in his typical, over-detailed manner, said, "Yes, we'll change subsection twenty-three d—so forth, and so on." So he covered all three points, but it was in this mind-boggling detail. And then he said, "You know, I know that some of you say that I'm out of touch. Here's my private phone number. Call me anytime."—Derwinski said that they tried it later and it was a non-working phone.

Then Carter said, "I know that you're all up for re-election this fall, and if anybody would like me to come in and campaign for them, let me know." Then there was this embarrassed silence, and somebody said, "Mr. President, we're all Republicans (AS and JMW laugh)." Derwinski said that he went back to his office and he had a call from John Rhodes, who was the Republican minority leader. He said, "Ed, this guy has been the president for fourteen months and I've never been in the White House. How the hell did you get in (JMW laughs)?" Ed said, "Well, I don't know, but I think he thought that we were Democrats (AS and JMW laugh)."

JMW: Wow.

AS: So, let's see. Where else would you like to go?

JMW: I guess if you could talk about the message from Brezhnev to Carter.

AS: Okay. During the time that I was the deputy chairman of the foreign affairs task force, I planned a trip to Moscow. I believe that the first one was 1973, but it might have been in 1974. I went to the Soviet Embassy in Washington—I showed them the letterhead of the foreign affairs task force with all these prominent names the Soviets know. They had never met me but they figure, “He’s deputy chairman, he must be important.” I said, "I'm going to Moscow. I'd like to talk to people at a level that has some value."

So they set it up. They had a thing called the Institute for USA and Canada Studies—These guys knew America from one end to the other. I mean, they could tell you of the inner workings of the Iowa caucuses, the latest movies that were out, the cultural trends in America—everything. One of the senators that I was working with gave me a list that he got from the CIA showing which of these guys were with the KGB. But I quickly realized that, without the list, you could always figure it out—If a guy brought you to lunch and brought someone else, the second guy was KGB. If he took you alone, he was the KGB.

JMW: That's a good way of looking at it. Yes.

AS: So it was about March of 1976. I was with some at the law firm of Winston & Strawn—now headed by former Governor Jim Thompson. They asked, "Alex, who do you think is going to be the Democratic nominee?" I said, "I think it's going to be Jimmy Carter." And this was still to the point of, “Jimmy who?” They said, "Really? Well, why do you think that?” And I gave him whatever reasons I had. So, I got to Moscow and this guy who turns out to be KGB asked me the same question, and I gave him the same answer.

Now, at that time, I was studying some Russian. I didn't know it well, but I knew it well enough to read it somewhat. From their newspaper, Pravda, and other things, I knew they thought America was run by what they called the ‘ruling circles.’ So they were looking at this letterhead and—the people I was with—they thought, "This guy is part of the ‘ruling circle.’" And I could see the gears running—“Have the ‘ruling circles' decided they were going to pick Carter?" And by the way, I prefaced all of this by saying, "What I'm telling you is my personal opinion. Nobody else told me to say this—I'm just giving you my personal estimate." The more I said that, the more they believed I was speaking for the ‘ruling circles.’

We got down to June—to the day after Daley endorsed Carter—The Soviets knew about my connection with Daley. I got a cable from Moscow—“Please come over right away. We want to see you." I cabled them back and said, "Look, I'm not going to do it. I've got other things. But I'll come after the election." They cabled back, "All right, come after the election." So I made arrangements. I stopped first in Frankfurt to change to go to Berlin, so I called people in the West German foreign ministry in Bonn. I told them in German my position on the task force—that I would be back in Bonn on whatever date it was and wanted to meet some people.

I got to East Berlin. I'd been to their embassy in Washington, D.C.—I'd made arrangements already—I think it was three days, if I remember right, in East Berlin. I met with these guys, and they were like the guys I'd already met in Moscow. I met them more than once in this institute. They knew America really well, but they were working in the communist system where, if they went and told their boss, "This is what the Americans

think," the response—“You god damn idiot! You're fired,” maybe worse. But if they can go and say, “I talked to this American, who is significant in American politics, and he says…,” then they're not putting their own opinion at risk.

JMW: Right. They have a source.

AS: Right. So they took me back to the airport. And when you went through the last gate, they took away your visa, so you couldn't go back. We waited and waited in this pen—I found out that the plane was delayed because there was fog in Moscow. In fact, we were there—the whole day had gone by. That night, they put us up in hotels. I wound up sleeping in a bed with a West German businessman. The bed was about four-and-a-half to five feet wide. The two of us had never met each other.

We went back to the airport the next day and there were more delays. I asked this West German fellow, "How long can this go on?" He said, "Oh, the last time that I was in this mess, it was three days." So I got a phone and I called my East German hosts. I said, "Get me out of here. Take me to the Soviet Embassy. I'll get a different visa and go to Moscow by train."

I was waiting and waiting at the embassy—They had a reception area. There were some women behind a sliding glass. After a long wait I went up to the sliding glass window and I asked, "How long is it going to take to get my Visa?" Just then, the door opened—It was the Soviet Ambassador. It blows my papers across. I leaned over to get them—I hit the glass and shattered the glass. It was all over the place. Nobody said a word. I thought, "I'm getting pretty good treatment here." In any case, when this mess was done, I said, "Look, I really need to get to the airport." They said, "We'll have it done as soon as we can."

Minutes later, one of my East German hosts came in and said, "There's one Aeroflot (the Soviet airline) flight that's going to go to Moscow. It's leaving in twenty minutes." I said, “How long does it take to get to the airport?" They said, "Thirty minutes." So I went back up and told this woman—my Russian limited, but I got my point across, which was, "This plane is leaving in twenty minutes—I need to get on it.”

She called the airport—I heard her saying, "This is the Soviet Embassy. Hold the plane, we have somebody from the embassy to come and get on it."

I got out there. I got to this checkpoint where there was this East German guard. Now, the whole airport was empty because the planes weren't flying much. The guard said, "What are you here for?" Again, this was all in German. I said, "I just came from the Soviet Embassy." They said, "Oh, you're the one? Okay." I handed him my passport. He said, "You're an American! You're an American! They're holding this plane for an American?" So I got into this holding area—They said, "What do you want?" I said, "I'm supposed to be on this plane." They said, "Well, it's full." I said, "The embassy called." They said, "Hold on."—They went and pulled somebody off of the plane.

So I got to Moscow to the airport at two in the morning—and I'm about a day-and-a-half or two days late. I was used to all kinds of controls. There was nobody there controlling anything. My bags were just sitting there. I had to pick them up. There was no security—nothing—and there was nobody to meet me. And there were no taxi cabs. I wandered around and I saw a guy sitting in a bus—It was sort of like a school bus. I pounded on the door and he said, "What do you want?" I thought of a name of a hotel and asked him to take me there.

Now, normally in those days, you had to have a voucher for a specific hotel. I didn't have a voucher, so I just named a hotel that popped into my mind. He said, "Well, you know, I'm not a taxi." So I flashed some Rubles and he said, "Oh okay, fine. We'll go there." I got to the hotel at about three in the morning. I always exercise, so I started doing some exercise. The phone rang—It was the two Russians who were supposed to meet me two days earlier. They were in the lobby.

JMW: Oh, okay. You were actually at the right hotel.

AS: No, I was in the wrong hotel, but obviously that bus driver called somebody and said, "I just took an American to this hotel. Check it out," and boy, they tracked it down. They said, "Listen, we're going to take you to this hotel, which is right near Red Square." I said, "No, just let me sleep here tonight." They said, "No, we're putting you at this hotel." They insisted. The next morning, I met this guy Bagdanov—the same one that I

met in the spring. He's now convinced I'm part of the ruling circles. (JMW laughs). It all came out.

He asked me, "What is Carter going to do on arms control?" Breshnev had signed, or initialed, in a handshake deal, and with Ford arms control. I said, "As I told you in the spring, I'm only talking for myself and nobody else—this is not coming from Carter, it's only coming from me—but I think he's likely to do a, b, and c." The next morning they woke me up very early and said, "You've got to come over here."

Shortly after our conversation with the time differential, Carter held a press conference in Plains, Georgia and said a, b, and c (JMW laughs). So now, in spite of all of my protestations, they're convinced that I'm the inside mouthpiece. The more I denied it, the more they didn't believe it. About a day later, Bogdonov said, "We need you to stay until Saturday." I said, "I can't do that—I have to leave on Thursday. And by the way, my reservations are screwed up. Get me on a flight to Bonn on Thursday." So he came back to me later and said, "Where are you going after Bonn?" I said, "Paris, then London. I'm seeing people in the foreign ministries in all of these places." He said, "Can I meet you in Paris?" I said, "Okay, fine." So I went to Bonn and had some great meetings there.

I got to Paris, and I'm wondering where the hell he is. I was just about to go to bed at midnight and my phone rang—He was down in the lobby of this hotel. He said, "Let's get together for lunch tomorrow." I said, "Okay, fine." We went out to lunch at what they called the Bois de Boulogne. It's a very beautiful forest, and it's part of Paris—I guess we'd call it a big forest preserve or a big park. He read to me from his notes this message. At different points, he would stop and say, "And this sentence is personally dictated by the highest source."—He would never say Breshnev. So when he was done, I said, "Could I have those notes?" He said, "No." I said, "All right then, I want to repeat what you told me, and I want to jot it down—I want to make sure that I've got it exactly right." I did that. He said, "Yes, fine, you've got it right."

I'm sorry, I have to go back. In the spring, when I was talking to him—and I don't know how this topic came up, but—the Cuban Missile Crisis came up. I said, "Here's my view—Kennedy bungled the Bay of Pigs Invasion, then he met Khrushchev in Vienna in June 1961. Khrushchev just screamed and yelled at him. Kennedy was taken aback. He thought it was going to be chitchat—sort of like a sophomore bullshit session—and this

guy was just hammering him. Two months later, the Soviets put up the wire that turned into the Berlin Wall. Then, the following fall, they started installing missiles in Cuba." I said my reading of it is that Khrushchev thought Kennedy was a pushover and decided to push Kennedy around. With their typical indirectness they said, "We do not disagree with your interpretation of history (AS and JMW laugh)."

JMW: That's good.

AS: That was in the spring of 1976. Now it was November, and I got this message from Bodanov. The opening line was, "We will not test or push the new president." It was clearly an echo of our Kennedy conversation, and clearly, he had reported to Breshnev what I'd said about Kennedy—That's because he said, "This opening line is dictated by the highest source." He wouldn't say Brezhnev. When I go back, called Bob Lipschutz. He contacted Carter. I didn't hear from Carter directly—I got a call from Warren Christopher, who was going to be deputy secretary of state. He said, "Cy (Cyrus Vance, secretary of state-designate) didn't have time to call you. The president would like to out you his advisory board on ambassadors." Bagdanov invited me back to Europe three times.

JMW: Okay. What kind of linkage would you say that Mayor Daley had with the Cook County Zoning Board? How much?

AS: Well, it was indirect. He became Cook County Chairman in 1954, and became mayor in 1955. In 1956, he hadn't amassed all of the power. The other guys on the central committee put up a slate that mostly lost. I can't remember if anybody won on the Democratic ticket statewide. They lost for governor, I know. There was a scandal—The guy that they slated for governor was involved in a scandal. They had to dump him from the ticket afterwards—Oh darn, I'm forgetting that name, too, but you can look it up.

JMW: This would have been against Stratton, right?

AS: Right, Stratton won. And an unknown guy was put up for governor—His son was in Lord, Bissell & Brook with me. He said his father was convinced that Daley did not want him elected. That would track with my theory of Daley working with Republican governors. But in any case, after Daley said, "You guys bungled it—I'm taking over slate making," and they deferred. Daley had a rule that, "If I put you on the slate, secretary of state, or whatever it is—clerk of the circuit court—I control all of the patronage." So over time, he assembled all of the patronage.

They had card files in the office of political office that Mary Mullins ran—There was background on all sorts of people. I was there from time to time—She would be looking up someone and say, "This guy wants a job. Well, he didn't vote in the last two primaries."—He was dead meat. Daley had the control in the sense that all of the patronage was his. So that was part of my context in going to see him about Seymour Simon's offer to put me on the county zoning board. When Ogilvie dumped me, Daley personally called George Dunne and said, "Give him the next vacancy on the zoning board."

It just happened that the next vacancy was the chairman. And I know what he thought—he Bob Marks. In the 1960s in the Illinois House there was an anti-Daley trio of Bob Marks, Abner Mikva and Tony Scariano. They called themselves the Kosher Nostra (JMW laughs). They were rebels, like the typical aldermen from the fifth ward. I'm sure Marks thought, "George Dunne is retaliating for my being a rebel in the state legislature." I don't know what Dunne had in his mind, but Mayor Daley said, "Appoint the guy," so he appointed me.

JMW: How would you say that Mayor Daley's direction for the city fit with plans for Cook County, as mayor, but yet controlling in many ways?

AS: Oh, he was great. There were public opinion polls all of the time that the people in the suburbs—even Republicans—overwhelmingly supported him. Part of their thinking was, "He's running a great city, so we don't have city problems spilling out over here."

JMW: That's a good point.

AS: He was popular statewide for the same reason. Many people thought he would run for governor. I doubt it. You would have to ask one of his sons if he ever thought of it. He never gave any hint that he would, or that he wanted to—at least publicly.

JMW: Just kind of wrapping up, what was the political scene like within the Democratic Party after Mayor Daley's death? What shifts did you see?

AS: Well, temporarily it held together. The city council was going to have to elect another mayor, so Tom Donovan (Mayor Daley's last chief of staff) got on the phone. He called all of the committeemen—or excuse me, it was aldermen—He said, "Make it Bilandic." He had an encyclopedic knowledge of every one of these people. They were used to Tom Donovan calling on behalf of the mayor—They were not stopping to say to themselves, "He doesn't have any power anymore." And also, some of the leaders had gone to George Dunne and said, "If you want to be the mayor, we'll give it to you." They told me that Dunne just didn't respond. I was like, "George, you've got to at least lift a finger," and he didn't.

So they went along with Bilandic. Temporarily, that held things together. I'll give you one example of Bilandic following Daley's line, and that was opposing public employee unions. In 1972, Daley made me the chairman of the labor committee for drafting the Democratic state platform. On that committee was Bill Lee, who was then president of the Chicago Federation of Labor and head of the Chicago Park District by Daley's appointment. He was a lot older than I was, and I figured that he was close to Daley.

He said, "Put in there that we're going to support public employee unions." Daley's view was if we put it in the platform, we will sincerely use our influence in the legislature to get it passed, so he considered a platform to be a commitment to really try and get things done—which fit in, by the way, when he told McGovern, "We'll make it all elected." The draft came back from City Hall, and the plank about public employee unions was not in there. I called Ray Simon, who was on the Corporation Council—I

said, "This was taken out." He said, "Yes, the Mayor took it out." I said, "Well, Bill Daley wanted it." He said, "The Mayor will take care of Bill Lee. It's not going in there."

Later, when Bilandic was the mayor, I remember the top labor guys coming in from Washington, D.C.—They were some of the same guys that I worked with. They were pushing Bilandic on public employee unions and Bilandic said, "No way." By the way, this is just to kind of put a bow on it—When Richard M. Daley first got elected mayor in 1989, he talked about privatizing many city functions. At the time I was doing commentaries at Channel 7. The news director, who was not from Chicago, said, "I don't understand this—His father built this big political machine, why is doing this?" I said, "Two things have happened. One, we now have public employee unions—He can't control the city work force as his father. And Number two is the Shackman decision, which barred patronage hiring. It changed the whole landscape. By 1978, the machine just wasn't what it was before. For example, when I was seeking the nomination for U.S. Senate, I sought endorsements from members of the State Central Committee. Several they endorsed me before anybody it was okay. In Daley's day, that would not have ever happened—It was just impossible. In 1984 the State Central Committee endorsed Phil Rock for the Senate in a four-way primary seat. Rock was the state central chairman.

December 1983 a reporter from the Washington Post came to see me—He said, "I've just been to see Phil Rock. He says you, Simon, and Burris ought to step out because he's got the endorsement." I said, "Doesn't he understand? Mayor Daley is dead. The game is changed." So, the change was already then.

JMW: All right. Are there any other thoughts on Richard J. Daley that you want to share before we wrap this up?

AS: Oh, I just thought that the guy was brilliant. After he died, I was at an upscale party somewhere in the Gold Coast. Now he was gone, there was no reason to genuflect to the deceased king. These were people you would not expert this from, just telling one story after another praising him. One of them was the dean of Northwestern Law School—He said, "We were about to open a new wing in the law school. We had a Supreme Court justice coming to speak, and late on Friday afternoon before the Saturday ceremony, the

city building inspectors came and told us that there were shortcomings and we couldn't open. I was frantic. I thought, 'Wait a minute, I've got to track down Mayor Daley.'"

So he called the eleventh ward headquarters around eight o'clock at night. Daley called him back. He told him the problem and Daley said, "All right, you get your workers in there and work all through the night. I'll have my inspectors there. If they tell me that you've got these problems straightened out, you go ahead with your opening." The Dean loved Daley ever since. It never got in the newspapers.

I'll tell you one other little story, to give you an example. On the zoning board now is Morgan Murphy, who was a congressman. His father had been chairman of Commonwealth Edison. He told me recently that a bill came up involving banking—He knew that the bankers wanted to pass. He turned to Andy Young who later became the mayor of Atlanta—He turned to Andy and said, "Hey, just for the fun of it, let's vote no and see what happens," so they both did.

Murphy said, "I went back to my office shortly after that floor vote. They said, 'The Mayor wants you to call right away!' I got on the line and the Mayor was on a conference phone. He said, 'Morgan, I have the following people here who are good friends of your father's—they're bankers. Now Morgan, you just voted no on this thing! And the bankers wanted a yes vote. Morgan, you know, these fellows could help you with a mortgage (AS and JMW laugh). And they're good friends of your father's.'" Morgan said, "Oh Mr. Mayor, excuse me, I must have misunderstood—I thought they wanted a no vote. I'll go back and change my vote (laughs)." What an example of being on top of things. It was just remarkable (laughs). He was something else. That was great.

You asked me about the greatest person I was involved with. There were many great people I was involved with, but Mayor is at the top of my list. I heard from all kinds of executives who were impressed how he knew budgets backwards and forwards—how he always saw the big picture and important details, but didn't micromanage. You asked me about this national committee thing—He never told me what to do.

I kind of heard this from others—His way of operating was that he'd give you a position. If he gave it to you, it was because he assumed that you knew what you were supposed to do. If you goofed up, you didn't get another assignment. So he didn't micromanage, but on the other hand, he knew what was going on.

JMW: Right. Carter could have taken a page.

AS: Oh my goodness, yes. He was—did things like scheduling times on the White House tennis court. You've heard this story about him, right?

JMW: The only Carter story that sticks out to me is that before seven in the morning, he had read some pages of national security documents. I mean, I know he's a control freak—a micro manager.

AS: Well, yes. I'll give you one example. During my campaign, he came in here, during my campaign. He spoke at Daley's big dinner—It was a hundred-dollar-a-plate dinner, which was big money in those days. No excuse me, Daley was gone by then—George Dunne was chairing, and I had been invited to Springfield on Air Force One, so I was on the plane. Dick Durbin was there—and Adlai Stevenson. There may have been somebody else, but those are the ones that I remember. We were sitting in this luxurious compartment—We were on the tarmac in Chicago for a while, so we were in the plane for almost two hours total. Part way through the flight, Carter came into our area. Dick Durbin saw him first—My back was towards him. He said, "Oh, good morning, Mr. President." Carter had this shit-eating grin that he always has—he smiled, didn't say and word, and left. I was thinking, "If this were Lyndon Johnson, he'd be sitting down and thinking, 'Here's an incumbent senator—a guy running for lieutenant governor—a guy running for senator.' He'd be picking our brains about, 'What's the political landscape here? What can I find out about Illinois that I don't know?'" Johnson would have done that. Wow.

JMW: Yes. It was night and day.

AS: It was night and day. Jody Powell was on that flight—this was before anybody had faxes—and he said, "Did you see the New York Times today?" I said, "No, I got up at five-thirty to get out here because I had get out to the airport by six-thirty." He said,

"Okay." So he called the White House, and in a minute, they faxed it to him on the airplane. It was way ahead of the technology of the day. He told me this story that on the campaign somewhere, he'd gone out, got drunk, and fell asleep on a bench in a train station—He missed the train. And he said, "Now I've got all of this luxury."

Well, I saw Jody about a year or two ago at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs. I said, "You know, during my campaign, Rosalynn Carter came out for part of a day and campaigned for me. Somebody loaned us a stretch limousine and we took her out to the airport. Dick Durbin was there and he was kind of tongue tied. I said, 'Mrs. Carter, what's the biggest difference between what you expected the White House to be when you were campaigning and what it really is?' This gentle lady said, 'The way the press lies!'" You can talk to most people that had that position or high positions, and they'll tell you the same thing.

There's one other final one. Lillian Carter came out to campaign for me—the mother. I was having a hard time at that time getting any attention in Chicago. Well, all of the television cameras were there—they had everybody in the media. She got up—she was standing there, I was standing there next to her—she was about five foot one. She gave this wonderful spiel saying, "This man has marvelous qualifications. He'd be a great senator. Jimmy wants him in the Senate. That's why I want you to vote for Mr. Keith." I leaned over to her and said, "No, it's Seith." She said, "Oh, Seith. I mean Seith. It rhymes with Jimmy's teeth!" Well, it was wonderful. It was on the six- and ten-o'clock news. I got my name there (laughs). Yes, she was something else. She went over to the Board of Trade that day. She met with the oldest floor trader—he was ninety-two or ninety-three years old—She said to him, "Do you still fool around (AS and JMW laugh)?" We're taking her back to the airport in a stretch limo—There's this foldout bar in the back. I said, "Do you want a drink?" She said, "Yes." So I mixed a drink for her. I said, "You know, Miss Lillian, I think that at the age of sixty-eight you went to India as a peace volunteer—You stayed in a village with no running water and no flush toilet—Now you have all these luxuries—What did you think about it?" She said, "It's very easy to get used to. Now, pour me another drink (As and JMW laugh)." There are so many great things that happen when you get a chance like that. Anyway, thank you. It's been a pleasure to talk to you.

Just one more thing—On the first Friday in December 1976, Daley called to his office. When I got there I could hear over the loudspeaker that he was chairing the City Council meeting. Tom Donavan called him—He handed the gavel to someone else and promptly came to his office. Having been used to waiting to see him, I was astonished that he would leave the meeting to see me. He got right to the point. He said wanted me to be U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Illinois—that he had made all the arrangements and that I should make a courtesy call on Senator Adlai Stevenson. I reported back to him that Stevenson was definitely not enthusiastic. He said, "Don't worry, Adlai will be fine," then ten days later he died. I did not get the appointment. I have often thought about how my career path would have been different had he lived. I would have served four years as U.S. attorney—not run for the U.S. Senate in 1978. Instead, I would have run in 1984 with the advantage of having established a reputation as a crime fighter. But politics, like life, is full of 'what ifs.'

JMW: Thanks, Alex. I appreciate it.

********End of Interview********