

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Morton H. Kaplan

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Illinois Statecraft Oral History project

Interview # ISG-A-L-2008-002

Morton (Mort) Kaplan, a public relations advisor for Governor Dan Walker (1973-1977), was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Illinois Statecraft* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: January 8, 2008 Location: Kaplan residence, Chicago, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History, ALPL

Transcription by: Norma McFarland, ALPL Volunteer

Edited by: Jeanine Benanti & Rozanne Flatt, ALPL Volunteers

Total Pages: 64 pages Total Time: 3 hrs, 5 min / 3.08 hours

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The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Morton H. Kaplan, *Illinois Statecraft*, ISG-A-L-2008-002

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Morton (Mort) H. Kaplan, a public relations advisor for Governor Dan Walker, was born on November 26, 1931 in Chicago, Illinois, growing up in an ethnic Polish, and later Jewish, neighborhood in the 1930s and '40s. He was drafted into the Army in 1953, and attended counter-intelligence school in Baltimore before being posted to Chicago for the rest of his tour. After military service and college, he obtained work with Julius Klein Public Relations in Chicago, then with Arnold Maremont, a successful businessman who also chaired the Illinois Public Aid Commission in the late 1950s, where Kaplan became public relations director. It was there that Kaplan met Dan Walker, who served as a commissioner for the Public Aid Commission, where Kaplan also met Victor deGrazia who would later become Walker's chief political advisor and life-long friend.

In the early 1960s Kaplan started his own firm, Morton H. Kaplan Associates, but stayed in touch with Walker as he pursued his own career and political aspirations. When Walker decided in late 1970 to run for Governor of Illinois in 1972, Kaplan provided public relations advice. He was involved in many of Walker's crucial campaign decisions, including the decision to walk the entire state of Illinois to generate publicity. Walker beat Paul Simon, who was backed by Mayor Richard J. Daley, in the democratic primary, then Governor Richard Ogilvie (Republican) in the general election. Kaplan stayed in private practice after Walker was elected, but continued on as an important public relations advisor throughout the Walker administration. They remained friends following Walker's defeat for reelection in 1976.

Topics Covered: Jewish childhood in Chicago; playing basketball for the army; Governor Dan Walker; Victor deGrazia; David Green; William Goldberg; Norton Kay; Paul Simon; Richard Ogilvie; Jerome Reese; General Julius Klein; Abner Mikva; Mayor Richard J. Daley; Chicago machine politics; Arnold H. Maremont; Walker Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence; Jimmy Carter; Bob Dylan;

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