

Interview with Suzanne Deuchler

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DePue: Today is Friday, June 3, 2011. My name is Mark DePue, the Director of Oral History with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. Today I'm in Aurora, Illinois, with Suzanne Deuchler. Good afternoon.

Deuchler: Good afternoon to you.

DePue: We are talking to you today because you've got a pretty long and significant career in the Illinois State Legislature. I know you have some specific comments about the Equal Rights Amendment fight, but there's much more than that, isn't there?

Deuchler: Yes, a lot of history was enacted in the eighteen years that I spent in Springfield.

DePue: The eighteen years starting from 1981 through 1999?

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: Okay. Nine terms.

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: Let's start, though, with a little bit of an explanation of where you came from. So the date of birth, I'll put you on the spot—I'm apologizing for that—and where you were born.

Deuchler: July 21, 1929, I was born in Chicago, Illinois, and my father was an internist, general practitioner in Chicago, and I was born at Lying-In Hospital.

DePue: At what hospital?

Deuchler: Lying-In

DePue: Oh, okay.

Deuchler: Chicago, Illinois.

DePue: Your father's name?

Deuchler: Elvin Clark.

DePue: Did he stay in the Chicago area after his internship?

Deuchler: No, he was an intern at Cook County Hospital and then he practiced downtown in the Stevens Building. His father had been a chiropractor, but he was a general physician. Then in 1936 my parents moved to Shelbyville, Illinois when I was in third grade.

DePue: Had he been from that area to begin with?

Deuchler: No. He had grown up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

DePue: Oh, I know where Cedar Rapids is. Okay. What took them to Shelbyville then, just a job opportunity?

Deuchler: Yes. They saw that Chicago was not a real healthy place to raise a family and that downstate presented some opportunities. There was a medical practice for sale and I think it was four thousand dollars. So they purchased the practice and moved.

DePue: Did your parents ever blame you for the Great Depression since you were born right before it began?

Deuchler: No, they never mentioned that. I know some people have, but no.

DePue: I would assume, though, his being a physician, times were tough, but at least to a certain extent you were sheltered from some of the worst aspects of the depression?

Deuchler: I suppose. I really—at that age one is pretty oblivious to cost of things and what your parents might be worrying about, but I'm sure they were worried and my parents were very glad that they received a loan from my grandparents in northern Michigan so that they could relocate.

DePue: Uh huh. Tell us a little bit about your mother. What was her name?

Deuchler: My mother's name was Margaret Hinkley Clark and she came from a long line of English ancestors from England and Scottish, as well; McAllister was the Scottish name. And she was a very bright woman. She was a French and Latin teacher and went to Oberlin College in Ohio and then graduated from the University of Chicago where she met my father.

DePue: Did you have any siblings?

Deuchler: Yes, I have one sister, Nancy, Nancy Clark, and she was seven years younger than I.

DePue: Okay. Born about the time you guys moved, then, it sounds like.

Deuchler: Yes, she was quite young when we moved.

DePue: Okay. Do you remember much about growing up in Shelbyville?

Deuchler: Yes, I do. It was a small town. It was rural. It was a town of four thousand and it was a farming community and rather back in time in terms of local habits and attitudes; even pronunciations were very different from the Chicago area. For example, local people would say feesh instead of fish.

DePue: Well, that would suggest there Lake Shelbyville was already there. No?

Deuchler: No Lake Shelbyville, but there was a terminal moraine there which the glacier had deposited and that's quite famous. Of course, it presented the terrain that Lake Shelbyville could feed into.

DePue: When was Lake Shelbyville actually constructed?

Deuchler: Well, it was a depression project, along with the Civilian Conservation Corps, which was located in Shelbyville, as well. I would say probably 1940, '45. I'm not sure.

DePue: Was the family still living in Shelbyville at that time?

Deuchler: Oh, yes. They lived there until my father retired and they moved to Florida.

DePue: Okay. So you attended all your grade school, junior high and high school years in Shelbyville schools?

Deuchler: Yes, I did.

DePue: Public or private?

Deuchler: Public school.

DePue: Okay. Anything that you want to mention about those years growing up just to kind of make it a public record?

Deuchler: Well, not really. I always felt different because we were from Chicago and the local students were local; I always felt different and kind of targeted as an unusual type, I guess you might say. And in class I would frequently take exception, particularly with my history teacher and add little asides or ask questions or, so in my adult life, I continued that even in the legislature (chuckles).

DePue: Well, see, that was all training to be a legislator later on in life.

Deuchler: True.

DePue: What kind of subjects came up in history class that would cause you to take exception? Do you recall?

Deuchler: You know, really, I don't. I just remember doing it quite often.

DePue: Was the family religious?

Deuchler: My parents were Unitarians, and in Chicago, as well, at Preston Bradley's church in downtown Chicago. But in Shelbyville we had a very small church that was left over from the early days when the transcendentalists were busy in the East Coast. Jasper Dolphit, the founder of the Shelbyville church, had built several churches, one rural and one in town, and that was still left, but no minister was residing in the town. So Meadville Theological School sent visiting ministers to Shelbyville to practice in the church on Sunday.

DePue: Meadville. Where was Meadville Theological?

Deuchler: It's at the University of Chicago.

DePue: Okay. Well, I would suspect that would be yet another thing that might set you apart from a lot of the kids that you knew there.

Deuchler: I guess, yes.

DePue: Well, tell us about high school, then, and what you were interested in, what drew your interest in high school when you got there?

Deuchler: Well, current events, Latin. I had a wonderful Latin teacher. There was really a very dedicated group of teachers that had just stayed with the high school and were outstanding. They nurtured the students as best they could. They knew, of course, that I was going to college and so gave me extra assignments and probably some extra attention, as well.

DePue: This would be a few years before you got to high school, but do you recall Pearl Harbor?

- Deuchler: Oh, yes. That was terrible. My parents called to me to come in the house. My aunt lived in Honolulu and my first cousins were there. It was terrible, thinking and knowing what they probably had seen and they could see; as they looked out into the airfield, they could see the Japanese pilots coming right in to strafe and bomb at Pearl Harbor.
- DePue: Your family might have been one of the few who knew exactly where Pearl Harbor was when they heard the news, then.
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: You have already said that you were interested in current affairs—I guess is how you put it—when you were in high school.
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: A lot of that, then, would have been about what was going on in the war. Was that something you paid attention to?
- Deuchler: Oh, yes. We received national newspapers as well as *Time Magazine* and the war front in Europe was shown, very vividly. I remember some of Churchill's speeches, particularly the one at Fulton, Missouri, which is one of his most outstanding speeches saying that we will man the beaches, we will stand at the beaches, we will never give up. And they never did.
- DePue: You probably would have about twelve or thirteen at the time, so you were paying pretty close attention.
- Deuchler: Well, my whole family did.
- DePue: What was the mood of the country, the people that you knew—what was the mood that they had about the war?
- Deuchler: You know I never heard them talk about it at all. I imagine that they certainly knew about rationing. And I knew about how my father couldn't get white shirts and my mother had to use her meat coupons and other coupons that she had and how she had to make them last. But I never heard the other students or much the teachers, although the history teachers would have talked about it, of course.
- DePue: Do you remember anything like aluminum or rubber drives or things like that?
- Deuchler: Yes, to some extent the aluminum. I know my aunt collected it up in northern Michigan and had a big ball of foil that was saved. That was one of the things.
- DePue: Your father being a physician, did it make it easier for him to get gas and tires and things like that?

- Deuchler: Yes. He had two coupons. He had the A coupon which was for our personal driving, which was very limited, and I believe he had a C, I think; as a medical doctor, he had to be able to make house calls, and he did, even in the middle of the night.
- DePue: Boy, those are the olden days, aren't they? (Deuchler laughs) Was there ever any talk or thought that he had about possibly going into the military?
- Deuchler: Yes, he worried about that quite a bit. He really didn't want to go because he was just starting this new practice and it would have been difficult. He had an injury from high school football in his knee and that exempted him.
- DePue: Well, since this is going to be part of your life later on, do you recall what the family politics were at the time?
- Deuchler: Oh, my parents were very ardent Democrats, starting with Roosevelt (Franklin D.) and very strong Democrats.
- DePue: Okay. How about your own career aspirations at the time? We're into high school, so this might be beyond the timeframe of the Second World War a little bit, but what career aspirations would you have had at that time?
- Deuchler: Well, I knew I was going to go to college and I knew that I needed some sort of a credential so that I could support myself in my adult life and that it would probably be a teaching certificate. So I was very interested in Spanish and speech; my major was in Spanish and my minor was in speech. I practice taught in Urbana-Champaign area so that I could teach, but I was married in my senior year, my last semester, and we moved when my husband was relocated to Dayton, Ohio. In the Air Force we moved to Ohio, so I was never able to teach in Illinois with my teaching certificate.
- DePue: Well, you got a little bit ahead of me but that's fine. You mentioned that you knew you were going to college. Well, that wasn't necessarily what happened to all young ladies growing up in Shelbyville. How did you happen to know you were going to college?
- Deuchler: Well, it was a given. My parents had both gone to college. My mother to an excellent Ohio school, Oberlin, and that was just a given. That's what you did.
- DePue: Uh huh. Well, Oberlin is one of the most renowned liberal arts schools of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, so those are impressive credentials right there.
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: Okay. How about extracurricular activities in high school?

- Deuchler: Oh, yes. I, you know, belonged to clubs and was active in a number of different groups. I can't really remember the names of them, but I did participate.
- DePue: Did you have any jobs?
- Deuchler: Occasionally I would help my father down at his medical office with some record keeping. Sometimes when he didn't have a receptionist, I would sit in the outer office and keep track of the patients that came in.
- DePue: You mentioned already that you went to the University of Illinois. Graduated from high school in what year?
- Deuchler: 1947.
- DePue: And why the University of Illinois?
- Deuchler: Well, it was very close by and it's an excellent school. It just seemed a logical choice for me.
- DePue: And you already also mentioned Spanish as a major.
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: Which doesn't leave you too many other options than the education route that you did take. Had you given any thought to any other major, or is Spanish and language always one of your first loves?
- Deuchler: Well, now, I wish I had majored in political science or art history or even just art, but in those days my interests were not quite as broad as they later became, so that was the direction that I took.
- DePue: What was it like going to college? You started in 1947, so going to college with lots of young men who are there because of the G.I. Bill.
- Deuchler: Yes. Well, they were there, but we really didn't see very much of them. I belonged to an independent house in my freshman year and then I pledged to sorority.
- DePue: An independent house. What does that mean?
- Deuchler: It means it's not affiliated with a national sorority.
- DePue: Okay
- Deuchler: But it's a place where you can live with other young women of your age group or slightly older, too, in a house with a house mother and supervised and a kitchen and all of those niceties.

- DePue: Which sorority did you join?
- Deucher: I joined Alpha Phi.
- DePue: What's the?
- Deucher: Greek letters? A with a circle a line through it.
- DePue: Alpha?
- Deucher: Phi. It's pronounced fee because, instead of fi, because you said alpha.
- DePue: What's Alpha Phi known for? That's what I was searching for.
- Deuchler: Oh, I really think any of the sororities, of course, stress social life, but they also had philanthropic aspects and they hoped that when you are graduated that you keep your national sorority in your thoughts and in your bequests, I guess, because of their philanthropy issues.
- DePue: Did you stay with Spanish your entire time then in college?
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: And did you earn a teaching certificate as well?
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: From the university?
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: Okay. To stay on track then, I assume you would have graduated in 1951?
- Deuchler: Correct.
- DePue: But there are some other things going: you mentioned your social life because you're in the sorority, but there's other things in your social life, too, I would suspect.
- Deuchler: Yes. I was pretty active in the local paper, or the student newspaper and I, there's *Mortar Board* down in Champaign-Urbana, I think it's a national honors activities director, or group, and I was listed on *Shorter Board* which is next to *Mortar Board*, but it also shows. I was nominated by my sorority for activities, largely the paper, the *Daily Illini*.
- DePue: When did you meet Walter, then?
- Deuchler: Well, I met him in my sophomore year.

DePue: He was a student there, as well?

Deuchler: Yes. He was an engineering student.

DePue: Okay. What was it about Walter that you found attractive and interesting?

Deuchler: Oh, just that he was a fellow student, I guess, and that he was smart. He lived a couple blocks away from my sorority house, geographic proximity.

DePue: You graduated in 1951 and you were married in 1951. Correct?

Deuchler: Yes. Yes.

DePue: When, exactly did you get married?

Deuchler: We were married February 4th of 1951 and moved to Dayton, Ohio, right after graduation when my husband Wally was in the Air Force.

DePue: Okay. In 1951 Air Force. Was he drafted, did he enlist?

Deuchler: He was able to join ROTC while in college and receive a Second Lieutenant Commission.

DePue: And of course, that's right in the middle of the Korean War at the time.

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: Was there some concern the two of you had about his being sent to Korea?

Deuchler: Oh, sure. Yes, many of his friends were. But he was fortunate that he could, with his engineering background, go to Dayton, Ohio. There was a large, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base there, so he was able to work there and designed an air transportable refueling system, I believe.

DePue: Well, that sounds like an excellent job for an engineer, a young engineer.

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: How long was he in the service?

Deuchler: Close to two years.

DePue: What were you doing at the time in Dayton?

Deuchler: I went to art school at the Dayton Art Institute and also had a Girl Scout Troop.

DePue: Did you have any thought about finding a teaching position?

- Deuchler: Well, my certificate didn't apply to Ohio.
- DePue: So that closed that door, then?
- Deuchler: I believe so.
- DePue: Okay. Tell us then what happens after his time in the service ends.
- Deuchler: Well, Wally was a fortunate young man in that his father had an engineering business here in Aurora, Illinois, in civil engineering, doing many civil engineering projects for cities in this immediate area. So he was able to come right back to Aurora and work in the engineering firm, which was called Walter Deuchler Associates.
- DePue: His father's name was Walter, as well then?
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: Okay. Was it much of an adjustment? Well, maybe Aurora in that time wasn't all that much different than Shelbyville. Was it?
- Deuchler: Aurora was a town of forty thousand at that time. Now it is a town of close to two hundred thousand. At that time, some Hispanic workers were here, but they lived in box cars out on the east side of Aurora; they were brought here to pick vegetables for canning. They were not in evidence other than knowing that they were in the box cars.
- DePue: Was there much of an adjustment you had to make then to live in a town like Aurora?
- Deuchler: Not really, because I joined the University Club, AAUW,¹ and that was a very nice way to meet other college graduates. I also belonged to League of Women Voters and we joined the Unitarian Church in Geneva.
- DePue: How close is Geneva?
- Deuchler: Oh, Geneva is about maybe fifteen miles.
- DePue: Okay. I assume you also found a job in town?
- Deuchler: No, it wasn't thought necessary. My husband had a good job with the engineering company and he wanted me to enjoy these groups that I affiliated with and no, I never worked.
- DePue: Okay. Well, you phrase that an interesting way, as I guess I'll put you on the spot here a bit, but it wasn't thought necessary. So, was that kind of a mutual agreement that the two of you had or had you thought about having a career?

¹ AAUW: American Association of University Women

Deuchler: It was never discussed, really. I guess briefly I thought about going to law school because we did have a nearby campus for law where I could have commuted.

DePue: Uh huh. Well, it's reflective of society at that time, though, isn't it?

Deuchler: Yes. Yes.

DePue: The classic model would have been that the husband works, the wife is at home raising children and things like that. Did you have some children?

Deuchler: Yes. Our family was born about seven years after we moved back to Aurora, or after we were married, I would say.

DePue: Okay. Okay. Two children?

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: Okay. Let's spend quite a bit of the time, then, talking about all of the other activities that you got involved in, because I think it's a pretty lengthy list, and, obviously, was preparation for a political career, as well. How would you like to start?

Deuchler: Well, I had an interesting conversation at one point. I went to a League of Women Voters meeting. The county board chairman was speaking and he said, "Ladies, I really can't believe it. You seem to like to go to meetings, but I don't see you running for office." He said, "Look, the power is lying on the floor. If you want to do something elective, pick it up and run for office yourself." And I had never thought of doing that, but after he threw down the gauntlet, I began to think, "Oh, yeah, I can do that."

DePue: Do you remember, roughly, what year that would have been that you heard that talk?

Deuchler: Well, probably in the mid-'60s, perhaps.

DePue: Okay. You mentioned... well maybe it was Girl Scouts was back in Dayton, wasn't it?

Deuchler: Yes. I don't think I did that here.

DePue: Okay. Why the League of Women Voters? What drew you to that group?

Deuchler: Well, the league is very politically active in a non-partisan kind of way. They are interested in what goes on nationally and also locally, and just being a member of society, you would want to know what the issues were. The University Club did that, as well, and they had topics like global inter-dependence, which I was state chairman for during this period of time.

DePue: Global interdependence. What did that mean at that time?

Deuchler: Well, at that time they were just talking about how we in the United States were going to have to look out there and see the rest of the world and see how we fit into the bigger picture. Never realizing that the commerce and industry would also be integrated and that we would be in the global marketplace for labor as well as capital. But at that time, people were just studying the countries, such as, I remember talking about Iran and Iraq and the Kabala, the sacred stone in Baghdad, I believe it is, and how the Arab population was very tribal, at that time.

DePue: At that time, would that mean late '50s, early '60s timeframe?

Deuchler: Uh huh. Uh huh.

DePue: Okay. Well, in American history, that was a little bit more of an innocent time.

Deuchler: Yeah.

DePue: When did you first decide to run for political office, then?

Deuchler: Well, in 1975 I noticed, or I was told, actually, by a Democrat who was the County Clerk. He called me to his office in Geneva and he said, "Suzanne, did you notice that there is an open seat for the county board? Why don't you think about circulating your petitions and running for it?" He knew I was a Republican, or he probably thought I was. And I said, "Well, I never thought about it, but maybe I will." So in thinking about it and talking to my husband, Wally, I decided to go for an open seat that was vacant. There was no incumbent in that seat because the incumbent had moved a few houses out of his district, not knowing that he had done this.

DePue: Okay, there's a couple obvious questions I've got to ask you now. You said that you grew up in a pretty ardent Democratic family. What was the process of you...

Deuchler: Changing parties?

DePue:deciding that you were a Republican?

Deuchler: Well, on the time when I came home and talked to my husband Wally and said I was going to run for the county board, I said, "Well, of course, I'm going to run as a Democrat." And he said, "Well, you won't win then." I said, "Well, why not?" And he said, "Well, look at the demographics. I mean, this is all Republican territory. It's fine that you want to do this and you should, but you will have to declare as a Republican." So I did.

DePue: How would you describe your own personal political philosophy at the time?

- Deuchler: Well, probably pretty much for the Democrats.
- DePue: So, on fiscal issues, how would you describe yourself at that time?
- Deuchler: I'm just not sure.
- DePue: Okay. Socially? On social issues?
- Deuchler: With the Democrats, I believe.
- DePue: So women's rights?
- Deuchler: Uh huh.
- DePue: Abortion issues?
- Deuchler: Uh huh.
- DePue: Gun control?
- Deuchler: Uh huh.
- DePue: Those things generally with the Democrat?
- Deuchler: Uh huh.
- DePue: Not that this plays a big role since you're talking about local politics, but foreign affairs issues: where would your heart lay in that respect?
- Deuchler: Well, really, we sort of had seen Truman and his interest in the Marshall Plan and in his global interests, so that was another good approach, internationally, and I applauded that.
- DePue: This wasn't too many years, though, after the Vietnam War, either. which, of course, was pretty darned traumatic for the United States.
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: Do you recall your position, Walter's position, during the Vietnam War?
- Deuchler: Well, I was very sympathetic to the Vietnamese. A lot of them were from Chanute Airfield down in the Urbana area and they had come as exchange students to Shelbyville. My parents had hosted a lot of them and then they went back and, of course, were probably slaughtered in the war since they were on the wrong side.
- DePue: Okay. The other thing—you've already hinted at this—obviously, Kane County politics. Now, everybody has this notion of what DuPage County is. That's the heartland of conservative Republicans in the State of Illinois.

Deuchler: Yeah, of Republicans. Yes.

DePue: How would Kane County fit into the matrix?

Deuchler: Well, I remember talking to the Aurora Township chairman when I was running for the county board and he told me, "Well, Suzanne, I never saw you as a Republican, but if you say you are one, we'll support you."

DePue: What's involved, then, when you say you want to be a Kane County Board member?

Deuchler: Well, I had a campaign and I had literature and it was really quite easy. And, of course, local voters knew my father-in-law, who was alive at that time, was quite an elderly person, but he was here. He was about eighty-six or seven. And they knew my husband. They knew the Deuchler name. So they were accepting of the fact that I would want to go up to Geneva and that maybe I could make some improvements up there, which I did.

DePue: Is the Kane County board similar to a state or national level legislature, then?

Deuchler: I suppose in that resolutions are passed, small pieces of direction, but in terms of practices, for example, I found out that they had no fixed asset inventory whatsoever. The county didn't know where their lawn mowers were, where their trucks were, where their tables were; they had no fixed asset inventory. I brought that up (chuckles) and they got one, pretty quickly. They also were a little slipshod in certain other ways that were brought out. The County Board Chairman told me, "Well, Suzanne, you ask so many questions and you ask them publicly. I guess you'll probably never get on the executive committee, but if you want to go to Springfield, you might do very well there." Which I did.

DePue: Was that a subtle way of saying that we wish you'd go someplace else and stop bothering us?

Deuchler: No, he just said you're not going to get on the executive committee, but,,

DePue: How many board members were there on the Kane County Board?

Deuchler: I think there are about twenty-six.

DePue: Was this a paid position?

Deuchler: Yes. Very, very, very minimally. Later, I was able to pass legislation in Springfield in my first term where the county board salary and the per diems were paid in a lump sum so that people who would have liked to have run for the county board could be paid more. The Chairman had paid a lobbyist for years to try and get that done and I did it in my first term and he was quite astounded.

- DePue: Were you a member of both then for a while?
- Deuchler: Of both what?
- DePue: The state legislature and the county board?
- Deuchler: Oh, no.
- DePue: Okay.
- Deuchler: 1976 to '80 was the county board. And then after that I went to Springfield.
- DePue: Okay. Well, I didn't think so. I just wanted to make sure I understood that. I assume this is strictly a part-time position, as well. How often would the board meet? How much time would that take?
- Deuchler: Oh, they met once a month and you had committees, which three or four times, and then if you wanted to look into other things or see other things. We had a very good project which was restoring Nelson Lake. That was rural, it was a water recharge area, but the farmers on the board viewed it as something you should drain. Well, it was a very important water recharge area, and it also was a habitat for natural wildlife. So I and a few others got on the bandwagon and began talking about Nelson Lake marsh in which, I guess they used to grow some sort of material that they could use in peat fires. They could cut the grass and harvest peat from that marsh. But it now is a wonderful preserve and the county just treasures it tremendously for all those reasons. They have all kinds of trails out there and migrating fowl stop there and it's just well-known for a wonderful, wonderful county forest preserve.
- DePue: How much of the Kane County was defined by the City of Aurora and dominated by cities like Aurora? Or did it have its own separate identity and control over specific assets?
- Deuchler: Well, Aurora and Elgin were both two cities that were about the same size. Then you had the rural townships, which were really quite small, but I'm not sure that there was much interface between Aurora's interests and the county's boundaries, shall we say, or the unincorporated areas, because flooding and farmers' drain tiles were a big issue in the old days. That's how the farmers were able to work their fields and plant crops by their own drainage systems.
- DePue: Would it be fair to say, then, that Kane County politics, when you were involved, was primarily focused on the rural areas and the cities took care of their own concerns?
- Deuchler: Yes, I think probably. I mean, there were many roads that linked county roads and township roads. We had a transportation department for the county and the forest preserve, of course, was a separate entity, but had county board

members on it. So it's just that a lot of the county was unincorporated at that time. The boundaries have inched out dramatically since then, Sugar Grove taking a lot of the county and Aurora meeting Sugar Grove, for example, in the southern part of Kane County.

DePue: How much of what Aurora and Elgin and Kane County in general was dominated by Chicago at that time?

Deuchler: Not really at all. I never sensed that Chicago was hardly even there. (laughs)

DePue: Would you say that today?

Deuchler: Well, probably not, but, and, of course we had NIPC, which is Northern Illinois (banging noise). What was that?

DePue: That was the cane falling down.

Deuchler: Okay.

DePue: Northern Illinois?

Deuchler: P-C. It's a regional planning agency.

DePue: Okay. So NIPC?

Deuchler: Uh huh. And that was our linking organization that provided leadership to the counties.

DePue: One of the things I did read in trying to go through some of the literature you gave me was in reference to RTA, Regional Transit Authority?

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: Okay. Was that one of the issues you were dealing with at the time?

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: Tell us about the implications there.

Deuchler: Well, the RTA, which now turned into Metra, was very controversial because of the tax structure that was placed upon everyone in the county. Local people were very angry about the RTA tax. The cities were quite angry, as well. But the benefits for the commuters were major, because people could live not only in Aurora, but they now they live way to the west and RTA has reached way out, out there, which they didn't before. But it was an important linking agency that provided tremendous workforce to nearby Oakbrook as well as Chicago, particularly.

DePue: Was this tax something that was imposed by the Kane County Board or is this a state level tax that was?

Deuchler: I believe it was state. Cal Skinner from Crystal Lake was very, very, very... he led the charge to keep this from happening, to keep the tax from going on. He was unsuccessful, but he was a major person and probably, he's still in Crystal Lake talking about the RTA.

DePue: Was he a Kane County Board member?

Deuchler: No. He was a Crystal Lake, McHenry board member.

DePue: Okay. Okay. You can tell I'm not from the Chicago metro area.

Deuchler: Yeah.

DePue: I apologize for that.

Deuchler: That's okay.

DePue: Okay. How about a third airport? Was that something that was being discussed actively at that time?

Deuchler: No third airport, that I recall.

DePue: And would not have been a concern for Kane County residents?

Deuchler: No. Later we were able to do some development of the Aurora airport, but even when I was in the legislature, we didn't have an instrument landing system out there until we passed legislation getting that in place and had to quit-take some of the farmers' fields in order to do it.

DePue: You're really not that far from O'Hare, either, at this location, are you?

Deuchler: Well, it's about forty miles, I think, to the west.

DePue: Okay.

Deuchler: We're to the north and west. Yeah.

DePue: How about property tax? Was that an issue that the Kane County Board dealt with?

Deuchler: No. Because, of course, that's imposed at the local tax assessor who is in your township.

DePue: Okay. So this is something that you can be taking up once you get to the state level? The property tax issue? I know five percent cap on property taxes, I

think, I saw someplace was one of the issues being addressed. What were the other things, then, that were occupying the interest of the board?

Deuchler: Well, I would say the water, water availability and transportation, roads, interchanges. The toll road was coming in at that point, but we did not have our interchange for a long time, until I was in Springfield and was able to get half an interchange out here at Orchard Road, and then later it was expanded to a full interchange.

DePue: So you're talking about interstate toll road I-88.

Deuchler: I-88. Uh huh.

DePue: And the?

Deuchler: Orchard Road interchange.

DePue: Okay. Driving in here, I saw there's three exits for Aurora now, and there were zero at the time when they first constructed it?

Deuchler: I'm trying to think of where you could get on and off.

DePue: I got off on Orchard Road.

Deuchler: Yeah. Orchard was our last one, and that's the one I was able to get in place. But at that time, a lot of the times that we went to Chicago before I-88 went in. I-88 was not I-88. It was later named I-88 because of Orchard Road, because the state had agreed that they would make the interchange, but they couldn't make an interchange unless there was a designation of a state route, I-88. So they had to change the numbering system to allow the interchange.

DePue: Okay. Were schools at all in the jurisdiction of the Kane County Board?

Deuchler: No.

DePue: Okay. But by the time you got to the state legislature, you did have a reputation for being an advocate in school issues, as well, did you not?

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: Okay. Tell us about that.

Deuchler: Well, I felt that, you know, the future of our state and our country, really, is a good education for as many people as can get it and can stay in school without failing. And who was it, Horace Mann, that was education for all American youth or something? He espoused the terminology of universal education.

DePue: Maybe I don't know enough about the University Club and what activities were they interested in at the time?

- Deuchler: Oh, AAUW had voter information, cultural things, books, plays, as I said, global interdependence, international relations of all kinds with other countries, so that we would study different countries.
- DePue: Okay. AAUW. American Association of University Women.
- Deuchler: Of University Women, Yes.
- DePue: Okay. Let's, then talk about the important decision. You've been on the county board. You've gotten a flavor of local politics.
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: What then leads to that next big decision of running at the state level?
- Deuchler: Well, it was pretty easy. Under multi-member districts, there were two of the majority party and one of the minority party—in this area, it was two Republicans and one Democrat—who would represent a district of over three hundred thousand people, going clear to Joliet and to the rural areas, and a little bit to Naperville. So, Bill Kempiners, who was a state rep from Sherwood, resigned to run the health department in Springfield. Seeing that, I thought, Well, there's another vacancy and I'll run for the vacant seat, the open seat, which the other incumbent from Aurora didn't like, at all because he said, "I am the Aurora representative. You should be from Joliet."
- DePue: But you weren't from Joliet.
- Deuchler: Right. And so I just said, "Well, I'm not running for your seat, Mr. Schoeberlein. I am running for the open seat."
- DePue: Mr. Schoeberlein? What's his first name?
- Deuchler: Al.
- DePue: Al?
- Deuchler: S-c-h-o-e-b-e-r-l-e-i-n. He was from Aurora.
- DePue: Okay. It sounds like a good German name.
- Deuchler: Yeah.
- DePue: There's probably lots of them around this area.
- Deuchler: Oh, yeah. Very definitely.
- DePue: I think you probably need to explain to us what this multi-member district business and cumulative voting, how all of that worked. Because anybody

who's looking at this forty years down the road is going to be mystified, I think, by it.

Deuchler: (chuckles) Well, it was an interesting anomaly of the legislative process that you had the option of voting for three people in your district with one vote, or you could use your three votes and so to speak, bullet vote for the one that you liked best.

DePue: I understand you could vote for two and split it one and a half and one and a half.

Deuchler: Yes, you could. But the *Tribune* endorsed me, very strongly, and said, "She asks questions, she supports the Equal Rights Amendment, and we recommend a bullet vote for Representative Deuchler for that reason." That meant they wanted me to get three votes.

DePue: You ran in the 39th district, is that right?

Deuchler: Yes. Yes.

DePue: So there would be a senator.

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: And then there would be how many?

Deuchler: Two. Two Republican reps and one Democrat.

DePue: Or if you're in Cook County or in the City of Chicago?

Deuchler: You'd have one Republican, which was Susan Catania of Chicago, and two Democrats.

DePue: Okay. So you're guaranteed to have a minority party member in the process?

Deuchler: Yes. And that was very, very advantageous as far as the complexion of the legislature, because here you had independent legislators. You had one-third doctrinaire Republicans, one-third Democrats that were doctrinaire, and this whole middle group that swung with the issues.

DePue: Would you qualify yourself as being in that middle group that swung with the issues?

Deuchler: Sometimes.

DePue: (chuckles) Okay. Well, 1980. That's an interesting time to get involved in state level politics. Was there any particular issue, or issues, that really drove your interest in the campaign?

Deuchler: Well, Illinois, of course, has always been facing many questions. I mean, as the Midwest has sort of sat here and we have seen commerce and industry on both coasts but we haven't seen enough here and we haven't seen prosperity enough and, of course, we also have seen Chicago getting more than the rest of us in the state. So in an effort to even the picture a little bit.

DePue: So you saw part of your goal was to assist in supporting more economic development in the state?

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: Okay. Well, I know the reason I was referred to you in the first place was on the Equal Rights Amendment, as well.

Deuchler: Yes. Yes. I was a very strong proponent of the Equal Rights Amendment as well as many other legislators who came into the legislature at that time, probably as many as fifteen new ones, I believe, on both sides of the aisle. So that we had a conference of women legislators of about thirty, I believe, down in Springfield, in that first legislative body of a hundred and eighty-eight.

DePue: In your campaign, was there a lot of involvement with other women's groups, with National Organization for Women, for example, who were really pushing ERA?

Deuchler: Yes. Yes. Yes. I was endorsed by them as well as I had a lot of support and people that worked for me with AAUW. The two, League of Women Voters and AAUW did not take public positions, because that was in their charter that they really couldn't take one party over the other, but individually people could work, and they did.

DePue: Okay. 1980 is an interesting year for Illinois politics in another respect, as well, because that's the year—and you can correct me if I get this wrong—but that's the year the cut-back amendment is on the ballot and maybe we should explain a little bit of the background of the cut-back amendment, too, huh?

Deuchler: Well, of course, the legislature was a very large body—I believe 188, I'm not sure—but very large and unwieldy. A whole huge room full of chairs in the House floor, and you could see how riotous it was at times and just unwieldy. So the League of Women Voters believed very strongly that we should cut back to 118 and they later regretted it. I was told by the president of the league, Jan Otwell, that she later sat in the balcony and looked down at the legislature and was very sad to see that both sides of the aisle, the Republican side and the Democrat sides, didn't mix very much. There was an aisle up the middle and they just didn't work with each other very well because the independent group was gone. And that is true. I saw it both ways as with the independent issues-oriented group and then the smaller House and they thought it was going to be cheaper because we would need less office help and less per diem money and less transportation money to get to Springfield. It

wasn't worth it. It would have been much better, and even today there is some talk about let's bring back the multi-member districts.

DePue: Well, you haven't mentioned a couple of the names here—and again, you can correct me if I get this wrong—but in 1978, then-Governor Jim Thompson had promised that there wouldn't be any kind of increase in legislative pay. That was part of the campaign that he ran on. He wouldn't allow that to occur. And right after the election, the legislature passed a pay increase.

Deuchler: Yes they did.

DePue: And while he was heading down—or already down in Florida, as the legend says (Deuchler laughs)—that with his autopen, he immediately signed a veto on it. [Gov. Thompson was actually in South Carolina at the time.] Now that means that the legislature had more than enough time to override his veto, which they did, and the public smelled a rat and called foul and everybody started screaming about the deal that Thompson had apparently made with the legislature so they can get their pay increase. And that's about the time that Pat Quinn entered the picture and I know he was one of the main proponents of this cutback amendment.

Deuchler: Yes he was.

DePue: That is roughly how you call it going down?

Deuchler: Yes. And I think even Pat Quinn probably has realized that the more independently-oriented legislature was a far better legislature than we now have.

DePue: You were there for the last two years of the multi-member district and then that transition.

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: Any further comments and reflections since you were kind of new?

Deuchler: There both times?

DePue: Yeah.

Deuchler: Well, we had the Equal Rights Amendment when I was in my first term, and that just made a totally supercharged atmosphere and a very dramatic time and that issue so overshadowed the cutback that really it didn't get that much attention as the ERA did.

DePue: Okay. Well, let's talk more about the ERA fight. This had been going on since 1972 when the ERA legislation [for an amendment] passed at the national level.

- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: And then it just plowed through lots of states and it looked to be an inevitable victory for ERA if you're about 1974, 1975 timeframe.
- Deuchler: Except for the southern states who would not support it, and Illinois was one of the few who didn't either.
- DePue: Okay. I know you weren't part of the picture before, but I think you mentioned to me that you wanted to say something about 1972 and Susan Catania. Did you?
- Deuchler: Well, Susan Catania was down in Springfield as a minority member from Chicago and was a major sponsor of the Equal Rights Amendment [to the U. S. Constitution] and worked selflessly the whole time that she was down there until the time had run out. She was my seatmate and a very well regarded and outstanding legislator. But the ERA was torpedoed, perhaps to some extent by Governor Ryan, George Ryan, and, of course, Schlafly.
- DePue: Then, of course he would have been Speaker of the House.
- Deuchler: He was the speaker. Uh huh. And Phyllis Schlafly who is still living.
- DePue: Well, I rarely do this, but I'd just make the comment, I had an opportunity to interview Phyllis Schlafly and Dawn Clark Netsch, on opposite sides of this issue.
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: So if somebody wants to check those out, I'd certainly encourage them to do so, as well. Why Illinois? You mentioned all the southern states, why Illinois as a place where we would be resisting the Equal Rights Amendment?
- Deuchler: Well, I asked Susan Catania about that when I talked to her recently, and she said that the passions were running so hot and the first time that the ERA came up, there was a rift, she recalled remembering, between the black caucus and the proponents of the Equal Rights Amendment. There was a rift or a lack of communication. They, for whatever reason, as a block, I am told, didn't support the ERA at one time when they could have and probably very much should have. Then when George Ryan came in, he was under the influence of the Eagle Forum [Phyllis Schlafly's group] and the women of that group and although he did have a hearing, it was a committee of the whole on the House floor, which he promised me he would do and he did do it, but we were unable to get a vote to send the ERA to the Senate.
- DePue: This would have been what year, then?
- Deuchler: Well, it would have been 1952.

DePue: 1982, you mean?

Deuchler: 1982. I'm sorry. Yes.

DePue: Do you remember the fight in 1981? Was there much of a fight in the legislature? That would have been your first year there.

Deuchler: Uh huh. It was ongoing. I mean, we had episodes. We had protest groups throwing animal blood on the floor at the governor's door for not being able to get the ERA moving forward. We had some of the Catholic nuns living on cots in the rotunda who were on a hunger strike. I believe they had water but refused food and they were in terrible shape down there, just practically expiring. Nobody paid that much attention. I would go around the House floor and say, "Do you realize that there are women down there in the rotunda that are just wanting this to be called?" People were pretty oblivious to the Catholic nuns down there, and they were proponents of the ERA. It was a very supercharged atmosphere until we adjourned.

DePue: I think everything you're talking about, referring to now, would have been the things that were going on in 1982. So you don't recall anything specific about the 1981 debates on it?

Deuchler: Well, as I said, Governor Ryan did allow a committee of the whole and we had an impersonator from the area who impersonated Susan B. Anthony, who was an early women's leader and suffragette for the women's vote. It was a very dramatic time when arguments were made on the House floor from both proponents and anti.

DePue: Uh huh. It was 1982, and again, just a little bit of background here. Originally when the legislation passed in the U. S. Congress, it had a seven year timeframe.

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: And I think 1978 or something, when it looked like they were going to go past that timeframe, they extended it to June 30 of 1982, which is why things got a little bit crazy in the spring of 1982 in Springfield.

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: Because it was this place that everybody initially thought would easily pass the ERA and yet wasn't passing ERA. So that's when the hunger strike is going on. That's when you have both NOW and Eagle Forum on opposite sides of this issue flooding into town.

Deuchler: Uh huh. And we had other groups protesting, too.

DePue: Do you remember anything else? Do you have any stories or anecdotes to tell?

Deuchler: Well there was the Chain Gang that came down there. This was a University of Illinois group and there was a very outstanding teacher who brought a number of her students—I don't know if it was political science, but probably—and they chained themselves to the rotunda balcony railing and refused to be moved because they were wanting the ERA passed and they were protesting in any way that they thought they could. They were singing, too, until late in the night, "We shall overcome."

DePue: How about the opposite side. Do you remember anything that Phyllis Schlafly's group was doing, because, I think, they were trying to garner some public attention as well.

Deuchler: They would wear their red jackets and be yelling about being against the ERA.

DePue: Did you receive any attention from that group?

Deuchler: Not really. I'd just wear my green jacket and was obviously supportive.

DePue: Okay. Gosh, I forgot what I was going to ask after that, then. Oh, what was your thought about some of the tactics that the pro-ERA forces used?

Deuchler: Well, I really had no problem with it. I thought that they were pretty extreme and pretty obvious, but the issue was so important and also knowing about the early suffragettes and what they did in order to garner the vote for women, it didn't seem that... it wasn't nearly as extreme as they were.

DePue: The anti-ERA forces?

Deuchler: Well, the pro, the pro group.

DePue: Oh okay. Okay. But their actions weren't as extreme as what had happened in earlier times?

Deuchler: Well, yeah, in earlier times where the women's vote.

DePue: Okay. There has been some criticism that that was one of the problems that the ERA movement had at the time, that there was a public reaction against some of these things like the chaining to the rotunda and the hunger strike, etc. Do you think that was legitimate?

Deuchler: I don't think it made any difference, really. I think that the difference was that George Ryan would not call the bill out of fairness, which he should have.

- DePue: Well, I think in the Senate they had problems getting the issue called to the floor as well, didn't they? In that year?
- Deuchler: I suppose so. I didn't really follow it that much. I just was watching what was happening in the House.
- DePue: Okay. In terms of your own views on one of the points, Phyllis Schlafly made a big issue about women in the military and that was one of her main concerns. What did you think about her challenge, that if we pass the ERA then women would be in combat?
- Deuchler: Well, in the light of today's history, it's a little bit ridiculous, because here we see women serving in Iraq and Iran, not in Iran, but Afghanistan and there are women in combat. There are women in the military and another thing that she was talking about was unisex toilets. Well, in some instances there are unisex toilets, but nobody makes any objection to that. They just don't go in there or do and there are private areas and that is not really thought to be at all an issue.
- DePue: Now, after 1982, the issue kind of died away but not necessarily; there are still people who are pushing for it and I know that you were one of those. We can pick that story up later—but let me just ask while we're talking about ERA now: In retrospect, do you still think that we should have passed it and that some of the changes that have occurred even without the ERA amendment haven't already kind of made it irrelevant to a certain extent?
- Deuchler: Well, that is very likely true, because President Obama, the minute he got in office signed an executive order for pay equity, so that stands on the books. I think that some people were very concerned about legal challenges. If the ERA was passed, then there would be all of these actions, legal actions in the courts, which would clutter up the agenda of the court, the dockets, and people would be suing all over the place. But I do believe that in today's world that there is a lot of opportunity, a lot of equality of opportunity for young women and they are pretty much getting along, if they have college degrees, certainly.
- DePue: Uh huh. Well, one of the concerns also that Phyllis Schlafly would, I don't know if concern, but one of her issues was some of the more vocal members of the National Organization for Women would be saying things like, "Well, there really is no difference between men and women other than what culture and society imposes on them." What would your own view on that issue be?
- Deuchler: You'd have to explain that a little more. I'm not sure how to answer that question. She, Phyllis Schlafly, says that there's no difference, or that if the ERA was passed then there would be no difference?
- DePue: Her complaint is that members of National Organization for Women, what some would call feminists, would insist that there's no real difference between men and women other than what culture and society would impose on it.

- Deuchler: Well, if that's what she says, I would tend to say, "So what." I mean, I just don't follow the argument at all. I don't espouse to the argument.
- DePue: Any comments on Mrs. Schlafly?
- Deuchler: Well, it's interesting that someone who—How many children did she have? Seven children or something?—
- DePue: Yeah, I think so.
- Deuchler: —some of whom I'm sure were girls—would be so against progress in our society, equality of progress and this has happened anyway. So what's the issue today? As I say, Obama signed the Pay Equity Act so that seems as though that takes care of a lot of issues as well. Phyllis Schlafly just climbed to national prominence and I'm sure she enjoyed it.
- DePue: Do you think that was her motivation, then, or do you want to speculate on that?
- Deuchler: Partly, partly perhaps.
- DePue: Okay. This kind of goes back to the election of 1980. The senatorial candidate for the Thirty-ninth District for the Republican ticket was Forest Etheredge.
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: Okay. And I understand that he kind of replaced the sitting senator at the time, who would have been Bob Mitchler, right?
- Deuchler: Yes, he did.
- DePue: How did that come about?
- Deuchler: Well, it was on education, public education. Forest Etheredge was a university professor. He was president of Waubonsee Community College, which was located down here in Sugar Grove, Illinois.
- DePue: Waubonsee Community College?
- Deuchler: Waubonsee. W-a-u-b-o-n-s-e-e. It's an Indian name. They're now in downtown Aurora, as well. He was very well regarded and just a staunch supporter of education and educational opportunities. The IEA (Illinois Education Association) knew that he supported them and they knew that he was a friend of education. They supported him very, very, very strongly, even with trucks driving around Aurora with literature on them and the teachers manning the trucks and throwing off the packets in different neighborhoods and getting everything distributed to the public.

- DePue: Well, this is unusual because this would have happened in the Republican primary for that seat, correct?
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: And what was it that they were upset with Bob Mitchler about, then?
- Deuchler: Well, there was an interview of the local paper—it was a college paper—and unfortunately, the then-Senator Mitchler made a comment about the student newspaper and the students that was very detrimental to their civil rights.
- DePue: Okay.
- Deuchler: And other than that, I don't remember what else, you know, but that was the catalyst for what the community thought.
- DePue: Was your toughest part of that campaign in 1980 getting the nod in the primary, or was it the general election?
- Deuchler: Well, there were five of us running in the primary for two seats; I was the top vote getter by twelve hundred votes and the then-incumbent, Al Schoeberlein, was number two and Denny Hastert was number four.
- DePue: Well, that would mean that Denny Hastert didn't get on the ballot, then?
- Deuchler: That is correct. But later in the summer, the senior member fell and hurt his head and the doctor told him if he didn't retire he would die. Well, he did die, but not until maybe the fall, but he did retire at his family's request, and the Republican chairman put Denny on the ballot. That's how he got on the ballot.
- DePue: Which means he would have kind of leapfrogged over the third person on the ballot.
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: Okay. And that's interesting. Why did that happen, then?
- Deuchler: Well, he had the backing of a very powerful chairman of Kendall County, and he's from Kendall County.
- DePue: Hastert did?
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: Well, that makes for a very interesting district then when you first got to Springfield, doesn't it?
- Deuchler: Oh, yes.

DePue: Tell us about your relationship with Denny Hastert and what you thought of the man.

Deuchler: Well, I didn't really have an awful lot of contact with him except on the issue of collective bargaining for the teachers, and that was a big issue. I wanted to support collective bargaining. The teachers did not have it at all. And he apparently wanted to support it, also, although he didn't talk to me about it; but later he knew that I wanted to support it and he said, "Suzanne, will you stick on this? Will you stick on this vote?" And I said, "Yes." And so four or five, or maybe six of us on the Republican side did vote for collective bargaining for the teachers and it passed.

DePue: Well, let's jump to present day. What are your thoughts, then, about what just has been going on in Wisconsin with issues of collective bargaining and whether or not collective bargaining extends to their benefits and things like that. Governor Walker, I can't recall his first name. Scott, I think.

Deuchler: Well, you know, that's today and history has changed considerably and maybe, maybe many of the unions have pushed their advantage, not only teachers, but all unions have pushed their advantage to the point where it's detrimental to education as well as to competitiveness. Not being privy to all the factors involved, I don't know what I would have done today, but then, to even the balance, it seemed appropriate to vote that way and I did take flak, locally, from my business people. But when IMA (Illinois Manufacturing Association), Illinois manufacturer's community came up to Aurora and said for my sophomore, yeah, my second term, they said, "Well you're supporting Deuchler, aren't you?" And the guys said, "No. We don't like her vote on collective bargaining." And this guy said, "Well, look, we like her a lot. She's been very good for business and business interests and we will come up here and ring doorbells for her if you don't support her," whereupon they subsided. (laughter)

DePue: Who was the Democratic member from your district?

Deuchler: Laz Murphy.

DePue: Lawrence Murphy?

Deuchler: Yeah. Lawrence Murphy.

DePue: Laz Murphy. Tell us about him.

Deuchler: Well, he was just a very good guy. He was a labor man. He talked to me one time and he said, "Look, Suzanne, if you see a bill that's going to help the guys in the shop and gonna kind of help and it's not controversial, would you please give them a vote?" And I said, "Well, sure, Laz. I'll take a look at that. I'll try and, you know, be fair and be supportive of the workers, as well."

- DePue: Again, so much of what was happening your first couple of years there was focused on the ERA, but I did want to ask you this. Would you say that those first couple of years it seemed that you were, that it was more of a collegial atmosphere than it was afterwards?
- Deuchler: Oh, sure. Absolutely. Because we had a third of the House independent, by nature, not by party label, but by nature.
- DePue: Did it make it more fun then for you?
- Deuchler: I suppose, but it was so controversial because of the ERA. It was just a controversial two years, a very wild two years, but because of the women's conference and because the women on both sides of the aisle met quite frequently on issues, we always had friendships on both sides of the aisle, anyway.
- DePue: Is there any particular story or incident that sticks in your mind about when you first got to the legislature, your first impressions of the place?
- Deuchler: (chuckles) Well, it just seemed quite wild and quite noisy (DePue chuckles) and quite crowded, with 188 members.
- DePue: A different atmosphere than what you were hearing from the senatorial side of the chamber?
- Deuchler: Well, I knew that the senate was quite decorous and I knew that Pate Philip was over there and I knew that he ruled the roost, but other than having no contact over there to speak of....
- DePue: Well, Pate would be just up the road here in DuPage County
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: You mentioned him. What can you tell me about Pate Philip and the relationship you would have had with him? I would think not very much.
- Deuchler: Well, one time he said, "Well, Suzanne, I kind of like some of the things you are saying, but you still are a woman and for the ERA..." and kind of trailed off. Left it at that.
- DePue: At that particular point in Illinois history, the Republicans had control of the House and you've mentioned this name before several times. That means that George Ryan was the Speaker of the House and a fellow Republican at the time.
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: Your relationship with him?

Deuchler: Well, George was a downstate guy from Kankakee. He was a pharmacist. And he, unfortunately, had a lot of people pulling his chains and pulling his attention and many of them were sharp lawyers from Chicago. He probably listened to them more than he should have. What their interests were, I don't know, but clearly his were pretty, pretty good. He was a good person.

DePue: So you had a good personal rapport with him?

Deuchler: Yes. One time I had to meet with him—it was shortly before he ran for governor—and he said, “You know, I thought I'd never have a chance to do this, but now I'm going to run for governor.” He was just kind of amazed that he could do that, and really thrilled.

DePue: I have also heard that he had a reputation to be gruff, had a little bit of a temper?

Deuchler: I never saw it. He probably did, but I never saw it.

DePue: How much discipline did he have over the Republican caucus?

Deuchler: Well, since he was the Speaker, you know, he did set some agendas, but very many of the votes that are made in Springfield are not controversial. I would say, I don't know if it's as high as ninety-five percent, but certainly ninety percent of the time, these are non-controversial housekeeping and clean-up bills, and good government bills. They are not Republican and Democrat drawing-the-line bills.

DePue: Some of them, though, are drawing the lines, and oftentimes—we'll get into some of those specific issues in a little bit—but one of the criticisms of the Illinois legislature until just maybe this year, in particular, has been that it's dominated by the four senior leaders: Speaker of the House and the minority leader and then you've got on the senate side, President of the Senate and the minority leader. Oftentimes, again, this is the criticism—I want to get your reflections on this—that this group would meet together, they would make decisions and then come to their respective caucuses and say okay, here's how you need to vote.

Deuchler: Well, probably, at the end of session and when things are being decided, such as recently, that probably does happen. But in terms of day-to-day when there's nothing that big out there, I don't see that there's a lot of wheeling and dealing then, but at the end of session, and you've got the budget and other controversial questions from time-to-time, that there would be some discussion and it would probably be dominated by one party because they have the votes.

DePue: So my comment may be a little bit overstated and maybe a creation, to a certain extent, of the media?

Deuchler: I don't know. Really.

DePue: Okay.

Deuchler: If you have the votes, you have the votes.

DePue: Okay. Well, there's one other very prominent member of the Illinois House that I haven't mentioned here, so your opinion of Mike Madigan?

Deuchler: Well, I always found Mike Madigan to be a very fair-minded and decent person. In my freshman year, he very much did not want the state-wide grand jury, and it was going to be passed. He didn't want it. And so I agreed that I wouldn't support it, either. But I had a bill that I was very interested in, which was the combined per diem for the county board, having just come from the county board. And so I was very pleased to vote against that statewide grand jury and pretty soon my bill was called. I didn't talk to him about cutting a deal, so to speak, but I did get my bill called and it passed. So. And that was about the only time. But people said, well, you know the speaker does not like that bill and if you want to continue doing well in the legislature and if you don't like it either, you'd probably be well-advised not to support that statewide grand jury; it later was passed, I believe, but not by me.

Then later, when I was retiring in 1998, I went to Speaker Madigan and said, "Could I preside? I've never presided in the House. Would you mind if I did? I'd like to do it and sit in the speaker's chair." And he said, "Well, did you talk to your leader about this," meaning Lee Daniels. And I said, "No, I didn't. And I won't." And he said, (laughter) "That will be no problem." So the next day he got on the PA system and said, "Speaker Deuchler in the chair," and there I was, (both chuckle) presiding in the House. Everybody was quite surprised, and I was kind of surprised, too, but I did it.

DePue: Well, much of your time while you were in the House, then the minority leader, because most of that time Mike Madigan was the Speaker.

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: Minority leader would have been Lee Daniels, so your relationship with him?

Deuchler: Well, it was good, I would say. You know, he knew that I would or wouldn't vote always as perhaps he would have wished, but I always prided myself as being independent as possible.

DePue: Is that why you made the comment to Madigan when he asked, well, have you spoken to....?

Deuchler: Your leader?

- DePue: Yeah. Because that suggests there was some tension there between the two of you.
- Deuchler: Well, I just didn't see any reason to do it. I mean, it would have been out of character for me to have done it, like asking permission. There was not really any tension, particularly, but just, you know, he and his leadership group went out and did their leadership thing. I was never going to be a member of that because just as on the county board, I asked questions publicly and I didn't always fit a mold.
- DePue: To think that before we did this, you describe yourself as a moderate Republican.
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: Do you think that's the best label if we were to put a label on it?
- Deuchler: And somewhat unconventional, too.
- DePue: Okay. In what issues, then, did you oftentimes take issue with the more conservative Republicans?
- Deuchler: Well, as I say, only about five or ten percent of the votes are controversial issues and we were in the minority. So we were in the majority so infrequently, there was not much of an opportunity for the Republican side to move issues forward that I didn't like. Where I took issue with the Republican side, well certainly, the teachers' collective bargaining bill was a big one. The line item transferability. I wouldn't support that and they did.
- DePue: Okay. Well, I think what I'd like to do, then, is to ask a couple of general questions about your time as a legislator and then we will go through some of these specific issues and let you address some of those. I know that transferability is one of them that we do want to mention a little bit. When you got to Springfield, were you lobbying for any particular committee assignments?
- Deuchler: No.
- DePue: Okay. Which committees did you get assigned to?
- Deuchler: You know I'd have to look up the exact ones, but education, human services. I think I was on transportation my freshman year.
- DePue: Yes. I looked at the *Blue Book* and the ones I found were higher education and transportation.
- Deuchler: Uh huh. Uh huh. Which was a little odd, but I had requested that, thinking that my area had a lot of roads and that maybe I could be helpful.

- DePue: Okay. What was it like living in Springfield during the session? And what timeframes are we talking about here? How many months of the year would you be down here versus upstate?
- Deuchler: Well, we would go down in probably mid-January a little bit, and a little more in February. I had an apartment my freshman year and we had a lot of meetings there concerning the Equal Rights Amendment. I can even remember David Axelrod—who was out in Washington with Obama—being a young guy. I think he was a University of Chicago graduate that Susan Catania knew and he came to some of those meetings that we were planning for the Equal Rights Amendment passage. You know, I had the apartment, but I gave that up after two years. It was in Lincoln Towers. And then I...
- DePue: Which is close to downtown.
- Deuchler: Yes. Then I went to Mansion View; I used to have a hotel room down there. Then later I roomed with friends. I just rented a room for the time that I was there.
- DePue: Did you head back to Aurora every weekend?
- Deuchler: Oh sure, because we'd be through by Thursday night and I could come home for those days: Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday.
- DePue: When you first came down to Springfield, how old were your children?
- Deuchler: Well I guess they were in college.
- DePue: Okay. What did Walter think about this? Spending your time between Aurora and Springfield, then?
- Deuchler: Oh, he thought it was fun. He came down there, too, at the beginning, but he got sort of bored with legislation (DePue chuckles). After a period of time, he decided, oh, heck, you know, this is kind of boring.
- DePue: Was he still working in his father's firm?
- Deuchler: Yeah. He was a stockholder, too. He retired pretty soon.
- DePue: Okay. While you were still in the legislature?
- Deuchler: Oh, yes. Definitely.
- DePue: Okay. Well, anything else you want to mention before we get into some of the particular issues here? Just general comments about being a legislator in the State of Illinois?

Deuchler: Oh, it was fun. It was, you know, collegial. There were a couple of opportunities to go to Washington. I went to a couple of conferences. It just was fun.

DePue: Did you ever have aspirations to run for the Illinois Senate or for U. S. Congress?

Deuchler: No. I really didn't. I talked to my husband briefly about Congress and he said, "I really don't think so. It's going to be too tough and too, I just don't think you should do that." And there wasn't a clear opportunity like there was when I went for the county board and also to Springfield. I just kind of enjoyed what I was doing down in Springfield until my eyesight got bad and then I had to retire, two years too soon.

DePue: Two years too soon?

Deuchler: Well, I would have stayed in twenty years, but that's okay, too.

DePue: It would have been nice to get to that twenty year anniversary?

Deuchler: Well, I had twenty-two years in government, anyway, because I merged all my years together.

DePue: Mind if I ask what was going on with your eyesight?

Deuchler: Macular. Yeah.

DePue: Macular degeneration?

Deuchler: Uh huh.

DePue: Okay.

Deuchler: Bleeding in the retina.

DePue: Okay. During the time you're in the legislature, pretty much there were only two governors you dealt with, so let's talk briefly about each one of those governors. Jim Thompson. He was there for several years before you got to the legislature and then he stepped down in 1991, so roughly ten years of your time in the legislature, he was governor.

Deuchler: Uh huh. I didn't see an awful lot of him. He had some awfully nice, I guess parties, you would call it, at the mansion. He'd always invite the legislators over there. He had a wonderful piano player who was an African American guy from Springfield and he was just a very congenial host and served good food and (chuckles) just a pleasant guy. He had his agendas, of course, too, but as a rank and file member, I don't really think we heard much about them except through the leaders.

- DePue: He did have the reputation for actually occasionally showing up on the legislative floor and doing a little kibitzing right there on the floor.
- Deuchler: Yes. He did. Uh huh.
- DePue: Did you see any of that, or personally experience that?
- Deuchler: Yes. I think he did come around and talk to people, but I don't remember on what issues.
- DePue: Okay. Was he generally well-respected by the legislators?
- Deuchler: Oh, yes.
- DePue: Okay. Jim Edgar.
- Deuchler: A very nice man. And, goodness, I think he's the one who kind of put the state back together in terms of there was a bit of overspending and the budget wasn't too good when he came in, but he was known as Governor No. Saying No to this and No to that and not appropriately so. When he left office, things were in pretty good shipshape. But a very, very nice person and very congenial. He had issues, of course, too. He had his education plan, which I did vote for. I said, to his staff, "If you ever can help these two individuals,"—now it is not contingent on my vote, because I'd already made the vote—"but if you can help these two individuals I certainly would appreciate it." One was the Mayor of Aurora and one was a gentleman from DeKalb. One a Republican, one was a Democrat. His staff said, "Well, we'll look at it." They did help them with jobs, but my vote was not contingent upon that.
- DePue: You mentioned when I asked you about Governor Thompson that he hosted good parties over at the mansion, that was one of his distinguishing characteristics. Would you say that for Jim Edgar?
- Deuchler: Never. (both laugh) Never. He was trying to be frugal and careful of the budget and any funds, like campaign funds, I suppose, were used by Jim Thompson. Jim Edgar was pretty much a down-to-business guy and very ethical and very well respected, I believe.
- DePue: Was Edgar a person that would come down to the floor of the legislature?
- Deuchler: I don't remember him doing that. He had his people that did it.
- DePue: Okay. Maybe this is a question more towards the end, but I'm here now, so how would you assess the effectiveness of the two men?
- Deuchler: Well, I surely liked the fact that Jim Edgar put the exchequer back into play and that he held the line on expenditures and he left with the state in pretty good shape.

- DePue: Does that mean that you'd give him higher marks than Jim Thompson?
- Deuchler: Probably, for that reason, because it's very important if you're trying to keep your stability with expenditures, don't spend money that you don't have.
- DePue: Okay. Let's get into some specific issues and I'm probably going to be asking some things that you weren't that much involved with, and maybe there are some things you want to mention that I won't be asking about. But let's start with taxes and the budget. In general, one of the things that was addressed through most of your timeframe was the issue of property taxes and tax caps on property taxes.
- Deuchler: Which we enacted.
- DePue: Okay. In what year would that have been? Early '90s, was that?
- Deuchler: Probably.
- DePue: Okay. You were in favor of the caps?
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: Why?
- Deuchler: Well, there again, we can't spend money that we don't have and if the entities, the school districts, are going to spend money that isn't there, then tax caps are the only way to stop it.
- DePue: Well, the property tax issue, especially, at least from my understanding, is very much a City of Chicago versus the suburbs, and maybe to a lesser extent, some of the rural districts, as well. But the suburbs are always concerned about property taxes rising much more quickly and always complaining about money going to Chicago.
- Deuchler: Yes, they do. That is well known.
- DePue: And you would agree with what I just said.
- Deuchler: Yes, because the belief, in Springfield, was that Chicago is taxed at a much lesser rate by the assessors there than we are.
- DePue: Okay. You mentioned before, line item transferability. Tell us exactly what that means and your position in that.
- Deuchler: Well, when I first went to Springfield, budgets were presented for the different agencies individually and passed individually. With line item transferability, you would pass a budget as they now do with the entire budget collapsed into one total. Once that budget is on the record, individual agencies would be

listed and even their sequestered funds would be listed, or shown. But line item transferability allows the governor, such as Blagojevich probably did, to transfer money from one agency, or one sequestered fund to another agency. That is probably what has caused so much of the problems today that we see, because the budgets are not kept in separate line items.

DePue: Does that mean, then, that you're opposed to line item transferability?

Deuchler: Absolutely.

DePue: And always have been opposed?

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: Was that an issue then, in the legislature early on in the '80s or the '90s under either Thompson or Edgar?

Deuchler: Yes it was. I can remember my state senator, not Forest Etheredge, coming over and just yelling at me because I wouldn't vote for that. But I wouldn't because I didn't believe in it. I thought that the agencies should have their appropriations that they stood up for and argued and presented as separate entities and they should not be able to have a grab from the executive branch to take their money.

DePue: Was there some concern you had that people like Thompson or Edgar would abuse that right if they had it?

Deuchler: No, I don't see them as doing it, but currently we've seen it happen.

DePue: You're just afraid of establishing the precedent?

Deuchler: The precedent is bad.

DePue: Did it later pass though? Do you recall when?

Deuchler: Yes, it did. I don't remember when, but it did pass.

DePue: Okay. And then it was certainly abused.

Deuchler: And then it was abused. Exactly.

DePue: Okay. Let's talk about these budget battles. You already talked about the 1990s. Edgar was elected in 1990. In 1991, he gets to office and discovers, holy cow, there's a billion dollar deficit. How am I going to fill the billion dollar deficit? And you mentioned yourself, he got labeled as Governor No. Those are a couple of tough budget battle years, especially 1991 and 1992 were pretty brutal, from what I understand. Do you recall any specifics of that timeframe?

Deuchler: I really don't. I just know that it was out there and that he was staunch in his opposition to spending money, staunch in not spending money that we didn't have.

DePue: And you were supportive of that?

Deuchler: Absolutely.

DePue: How about the ongoing problems the state has had with funding of pensions: State employee, teacher pensions, etc.?

Deuchler: Of course, that's mentioned all the time and it's true.

DePue: But even during some of the times that Edgar was governor and trying hard to balance the budget, there were some compromises made in that respect. Do you recall?

Deuchler: No, I really don't.

DePue: Okay. How about environmental issues? One of the things I've seen a couple of places is support of the clean indoor air act, that you were a supporter of that. Not ringing any bells right now?

Deuchler: It's not ringing any particular bells. I mean, that's what I would have supported, and did support, but in terms of specifics, I don't really remember.

DePue: Okay.

Deuchler: You mean non-smoking?

DePue: I'm not sure, myself, so I'm afraid I'm ignorant on this, too. How about educational reform?

Deuchler: Well, Jim Edgar did have his program, which didn't pass.

DePue: There was a couple of things going on. In the mid-1980s, the City of Chicago found itself in serious financial straits as far as the Chicago school system, and I think the state had to bail it out with a little bit of money. Then in 1994, that was the Republican sweep—and it not only swept at the national level, but at the state level, as well—so you had two years that Lee Daniels is the Speaker of the House and you have Pate Philip, of course, in the Senate. And Edgar was able to push through some initiatives, the first one being Chicago school reform. Do you recall that battle, in particular?

Deuchler: Not in particulars, but yes, that it happened.

DePue: Okay. How about the Illinois school funding? And that became an issue a couple of years later, 1997, 1998 timeframe.

- Deuchler: You mean the per capita amount that was going to be guaranteed?
- DePue: Right. Supportive of that measure to try to establish a **guaranteed** amount?
- Deuchler: For a certain.....yeah. Yes.
- DePue: Okay. Infrastructure improvements. You mentioned you were on the transportation committee, at least to start with, and I know there was a couple of things in Aurora, in particular, that you were interested in seeing happen.
- Deuchler: You're talking about the Orchard Road interchange or the RTA or?
- DePue: Well, I think you were also telling me earlier about a.....
- Deuchler: Flood control?
- DePue: Parking arrangements in downtown Aurora?
- Deuchler: My parking problem occurred in Geneva, Illinois.
- DePue: Okay. Geneva.
- Deuchler: The chamber of commerce had a very big issue with downtown parking because Geneva is a market town, in that it pulls people from all around the area to come there. Their whole economy is based on what the merchants can sell. And the chamber of commerce was very concerned because the state had come in and said you must give up your diagonal parking in your downtown and put in parallel parking, because your streets are somewhat too narrow, or are too narrow. They came to me and said we can't give up our parking downtown. It just would be a terrible loss of business and just the look of the downtown full of cars and people coming and going, we are absolutely adamant that we need to get this corrected. So I worked hard to get them their parking retained and finally the state did admit that they could make their places slightly less diagonal and would have more width in them so they wouldn't be backing out at quite an angle and it would meet the criteria.
- DePue: Was that an aspect where some legislation was required, or you were serving as an advocate for the city?
- Deuchler: Yeah. I was serving as an advocate and the mayor in Geneva just more or less said he was going to be my opponent in the primary; he essentially thumbed his nose and said, "You can't get this fixed. You can't take care of this. Let's see what you can do." A whole delegation came down from Geneva—the merchants from the Little Traveler and all the major stores—and it did work out. But whether the local merchants realized that I was the one who got everything worked out, I don't know. At that time Governor Edgar wanted to make Lake Calumet into an airport and I said, "Well, I can probably vote for that. I know it's not going to pass, but I could vote for that, but would you

help me on the diagonal parking?” And they said, “Yeah, we’ll help you.” So that all worked out, too.

DePue: Was that the same kind of a situation that developed when you were trying to get an exit off of I-55 on Orchard Road? Is there a background story to that one, as well?

Deuchler: Well, that was a time when, I believe that Jim Thompson was involved in the interchange and wanted more access for the towns along here. My local business, Barber Greene, built machines for road building and asphalt paving. They wanted that tax passed very badly; it was a gas tax I guess. So because of that, the state agreed that they’d make an interchange. And they did.

DePue: I’m sure there’s some other issues and topics that we need to be talking about, as well, so I’ll kind of turn it over to you to reflect about.

Deuchler: Well, that one bill, the Chain Gang Bill, was something that I was very opposed to. It was a terrible bill that originated in the Senate; I don’t remember who the senate sponsor was it may have been Pate Philip, I’m not sure. But the bill came over to the House and it was authorizing the Department of Corrections to take prisoners from the jails, with guns and dogs to go out and guard them, while they were working on the highways. This was the most wild debate in the House floor that you could ever imagine. It was just terrible as to the opposition to this bill, because it seemed racist, and it may well have been in a way. Well, it wasn’t deliberate, but why, why would you think of doing something that you would see in Alabama or some of the southern states here in our state? And so after about four or five hours of heavy debate—it was really extremely bad—mostly with the Democrats, I thought: Well, okay, you’re going to have to get up and say something about this. So I said, “This bill cannot pass in this House. You must take it from the record because it’s not going to pass. It’s wrong. To see our State with this spectacle of people on the highway with guns and dogs is just terrible.”

DePue: And you said something about the Democrats; I’m assuming that the Democrats were vocal in the opposition.

Deuchler: They were violently, violently opposed.

DePue: Okay. Okay.

Deuchler: So then five or six of the moderate Republicans jumped up and they backed me up on it, and I said, “The sponsor has got to take this from the record.” The floor leaders went around and they quizzed to see who would support the bill then. They didn’t have the votes. The sponsor took the bill from the record. I saw him the next day and his face was red as a beet and he said, “Suzanne, why did you do that?” And I said, “Look. In this Land of Lincoln we can’t pass a bill like that. That’s un-American. It’s unacceptable.” After that, the Democrats all swarmed over to my side of the aisle and they thanked

me. They said, “We thought a lot of you before, but now we really do,”
(laughs) “because you really went the extra mile and we really appreciate it.”

DePue: So that’s one of those things where you were proud to retain that label as an independent?

Deuchler: Well, and just going against the stream, but standing up for what you knew was wrong.

DePue: Uh huh. Some other issues?

Deuchler: Well, I always was on the side of good government and informed voters and things of that type, but when you don’t have the speakership so much of the time that you’re down there, those bills are not going to be pushed by your side of the aisle. You may be able to vote for them and you could co-sponsor good bills, but you’re not going to be able to push them.

DePue: One of the things that I know: one of the things Edgar was pushing early in his administration was the welfare-to-work program.

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: Your position on that. Some of these fairly significant welfare reform issues.

Deuchler: Yeah. I supported that. Uh huh. Yeah.

DePue: Okay. Thompson, Governor Thompson had the reputation of being tough on crime, and I think it was Class X felony?

Deuchler: Uh huh. Yeah.

DePue: Your position on crime issues?

Deuchler: Yeah. I supported that.

DePue: DUI legislation. Something else again in the 1980s, late ‘80s. That was somewhat controversial in some areas, that you’re pushing a change in DUI legislation.

Deuchler: Being tougher, a little tougher. Yes. I supported that.

DePue: Okay. And another one would have been requirement to have auto insurance for all drivers.

Deuchler: Sure. You should do that.

DePue: Okay. I’m kind of fishing here. Anything else that you wanted to mention in terms of issues or topics that we should be discussing?

Deuchler: Well, I just did want to say that as the Chairman of the Conference of Women Legislators, I co-sponsored that or was the co-chairman with Mary Flowers from the Democratic side and Jan Schakowsky from Evanston. We worked on issues that the women's caucus could agree on that were issues that related to education or other societal issues that were able to be agreed on by the women's caucus. That was quite a good atmosphere of cooperation, both sides of the aisle. I hear that that is not continued as much in today's legislature as it once did.

DePue: That the two parties.

Deuchler: That the two parties' women do not, and at one time we even had a budget that we were pushing and our budget items got in the mix and some were accepted, and that was greatly objected to.

DePue: Was this Conference of Women Legislators strictly an Illinois entity?

Deuchler: Yes. Yes.

DePue: How did that come about?

Deuchler: Well, I believe it was started by Eugenia Chapman, and Giddy Dyer, perhaps, and it was just thought to be a good avenue for discussing issues.

DePue: That sounds like that would have been something that was created early or mid-1970s, then. Would that be about right?

Deuchler: Yeah. I think it was earlier. Yes.

DePue: Quite an honor, then, to be the chair of that group?

Deuchler: Yes.

DePue: What were the parts of being a legislator that you most liked?

Deuchler: Well, I liked a lot of the constituent work, that we would find out there was a problem with somebody who had bumped into some issue with state regulations, or something needed to be corrected and they're applying for worker's comp, or some technicality that they just had not. Very frequently I'd say, "Well, let's go to the unemployment office," or "go to public aid" or "I'll take you by the hand and we'll just go in and see what's going on." One time one of my constituents from Elburn had a problem with state licensure and he was told that if he had a federal license he didn't need the state license. Well, it turned out that he did and he was very upset because he was called on the carpet. There again, I found out when his hearing was and I just went with him to the Department of Agriculture. And they said, "Representative Deuchler, nobody ever comes in here." (DePue laughs) Directly. And I just said, "Well, I just wanted you to know that I know my constituent and he's a

pillar of the community and if anything, if he needs to make anything right, he will. I just want you to know that he's a good person and I'm just going to sit her with him. I'm not going to say anything more." They gave him a fine of twenty-five dollars and gave him his license and he was really pleased. He said, "I don't want to complain to you. I don't want you to do anything about this." But here's this old gentleman sitting down there kind of called on the carpet and he felt pretty happy that he wasn't chastised.

DePue: Were there any aspects of the job that you just didn't care for?

Deuchler: Well, of course, you have to run for office every two years, so that can be a nuisance. You have to put on an entirely different hat and make some speeches and make plans as to getting your vote out and you have to be a part of the campaign.

DePue: Tell me about the process of raising campaign funds.

Deuchler: And that's the problem. Well, you have to do it and it's going to cost money to make mailings or to print literature. I don't think I ever spent that much money, but I might have spent around forty- or forty-five thousand the last time I ran. Now, today's world, people are spending a half million dollars to run for these offices, some.

DePue: Well, from your perspective, that must be insurmountable to try to figure out how you'd raise that kind of money, I would think.

Deuchler: Well, it would be very difficult. Yeah. It would be a major deterrent.

DePue: Even forty thousand dollars ten, fifteen years ago, where were you finding that kind of financial support to run a campaign?

Deuchler: Well, I got some contributions. It was kind of funny. My aunt lived in Hawaii and she gave me a fairly big check like, I don't know if it was a couple thousand dollars, but it was funny, it was in the paper and people said, "What about this person from Hawaii? How did you get that money?" (DePue laughs) But we would have fundraisers and would get maybe ten thousand dollars at a couple of fundraisers each and, you know, some of the groups that I liked and that supported me would give me checks. They wouldn't be large ones, but it all added up.

DePue: Did Walter help on the campaign?

Deuchler: Yes. Not so much financially, but he certainly did. He put up yard signs and, oh, yes, he was very involved. In fact, later, he was retired, so he had the time that he could, you know, do that.

- DePue: Okay. Well, here's an issue that has been coming up repeatedly in the last twenty years: gambling, gambling as a source of revenues for the state. How would you, how would you come down on that issue?
- Deuchler: Well, of course, we've got the casino here in Aurora and it does supply money to the city and certain percentage allegedly is sequestered for education.
- DePue: Allegedly?
- Deuchler: Allegedly. Because how do we really know? As my husband always says, money is fungible, it can go any place; if it's just in a big pot of money where, where's it go? But it doesn't seem it's a very healthy way of paying for governmental costs. But it is a way that people have come up with and those who want to gamble are willing to pay the freight, but it is not a healthy process.
- DePue: Well, one aspect of that whole debate about gambling in the State of Illinois is the issue of whether or not to have a casino in Chicago itself.
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: Would you be a supporter in that one?
- Deuchler: No, because, basically, way back when, when these river towns were given the option of casinos, Joliet, Aurora and Elgin were said to be allowed to have casino licenses because they were towns that were trying to recover from economic decline. And so to take that away from the towns that have put in infrastructure and are managing to stay afloat, more or less, and give it to Chicago, which would just enlarge tremendously gambling and gaming and people spending money that they don't have.
- DePue: Uh huh.
- Deuchler: I don't like it.
- DePue: Okay. 1999. That means that would have been the year that you stepped down.
- Deuchler: I didn't run. Yeah.
- DePue: You decided not to run because of the eyesight issue?
- Deuchler: Yeah. Uh huh.
- DePue: Does that mean you had two years when Ryan was governor?
- Deuchler: You mean before Blagojevich came in?

- DePue: Yeah. Were you serving in the legislature for anytime while Ryan was governor?
- Deuchler: Oh, yeah.
- DePue: Okay.
- Deuchler: Sure.
- DePue: Your impressions of George Ryan, then, as governor?
- Deuchler: Well, you know, I had very little contact with George except I did like him as a person and I knew he was a downstate guy from Kankakee and a pharmacist and....
- DePue: All of those being good things?
- Deuchler: Yes. Yes. He was a downstate guy.
- DePue: Did you consider yourself a downstate girl?
- Deuchler: Not really, but I mean I knew the mentality. I knew where he was coming from, Shelbyville.
- DePue: Okay. Okay. Was it tough for you to realize, then, that you weren't going to be able to run for re-election in 1990?
- Deuchler: Nine.
- DePue: For the 2000?
- Deuchler: Yeah. Yes. But, you know, you have to do what you have to do. I mean, I was commuting to Boston, participating in a clinical trial, which was successful in my case for treatment at Massachusetts General Hospital. I was out there about every three months.
- DePue: What's been keeping you busy then since you retired from politics?
- Deuchler: Well, we travel quite a bit. We go to the Virgin Islands and up to northern Michigan. We have a cottage. I work, very active in the NAMI, National Alliance for Mental Illness, and I just took a bill down to Springfield for them, which I authored and got passed.
- DePue: It sounds like you've been keeping just as busy out of office.
- Deuchler: Well, and we have a granddaughter in college and our daughter just moved here.

- DePue: Okay. Some general questions for you, then. What, looking back in your political career in particular, what's the accomplishment for which you're most proud?
- Deuchler: Well, the Math and Science Academy here in Aurora, which is a publicly supported high school for the best and brightest of the students. You know, I was part of the legislative group that got that enacted and it was only because Denny Hastert could not get the votes. I went over to the Democratic side and got support from the Democrats and the Black Caucus to create the Math and Science Academy.
- DePue: Was there an equivalent of that in Cook County or someplace else?
- Deuchler: No. No. It's the only statewide high school of its kind for the last three years of high school in the state.
- DePue: So this is something that anybody in the State of Illinois can apply to attend?
- Deuchler: Yes.
- DePue: Wow. Okay.
- Deuchler: And the Black Caucus said, "If you will recruit in the city and be fair about that, we will support you, because we want this for our children."
- DePue: Is this strictly supported by state funds, then?
- Deuchler: Higher education, the state budget and higher education and yes.
- DePue: Okay. This might be kind of the same question, but the most exciting moment for you while you were in the legislature?
- Deuchler: I really can't answer that. I don't really know what that would be.
- DePue: How about the biggest disappointment in your legislative career?
- Deuchler: Well, the ERA not passing.
- DePue: Now I think there's one story about ERA that we haven't mentioned here and that's towards the tail end of your time in the legislature. You still wanted to make some other contribution to ERA, I believe.
- Deuchler: Well, when I was able to be in the Speaker's chair, that was my next question to Speaker Madigan. I said, "Well, could I call the Equal Rights Amendment?" And he said, "No."
- DePue: Why? This would have been '99.

Deuchler: Well, it would, yeah. It was out of the blue that I said that. It would have been a wonderful capping climax to my whole career to have been able to call that. Of course, the sponsor would have had to have been alerted. Both sides of the aisle would have gone into caucus. It would have made a monumental mess. But it would have been very gratifying, to say the least. And whether the votes would have been there at that moment, I don't know.

DePue: I guess that was my question. Did you have any expectation that it would have been called or it would have passed?

Deuchler: Well, you can always ask. (DePue chuckles) I don't know.

DePue: Anything else that was especially painful in terms of your experiences? Especially disappointing?

Deuchler: Not really.

DePue: Okay. What would you like to be remembered for as a legislator, then?

Deuchler: Well, that I asked the questions that people would have wanted asked and that I followed my conscience and that I tried to be fair and even-handed, as much as possible.

DePue: Okay. This has been a very fun and enlightening interview for me, so I thank you very much for that. But I always give people I'm interviewing the chance to make some closing comments themselves, so how would you like to close things up today?

Deuchler: Oh, I don't know. I think we've covered enough. (laughter) I think we've kind of done it, but, you know, it's just a great experience as a woman of today to have this opportunity in my life and to be a part of a legislative body that was composed of so many interesting people who were really very, very good people. You know, I just had a lot of respect for the colleagues down there and I found it very worthwhile.

DePue: Well, I'm taking it all back, because I do want to get your reflections on what's happened in the State of Illinois since you stepped down as a legislator, because it hasn't necessarily all been pretty.

Deuchler: Yeah, no.

DePue: Any comments about the Blagojevich administration in particular?

Deuchler: (unintelligible) Not really. Not having been down there and seeing it on a day-to-day basis, but it's sad. We've had other transgressions, shall we call them, and what they really were, or deserved or undeserved, who knows, really. He certainly is presenting a very sorry example of –I don't know— double talk or (laughs).

DePue: On the other side of the coin, did you have any experiences working with Barack Obama when he was in the State Senate?

Deuchler: You know, I didn't. I met him after I was out of office and he was not yet running for president, but he came out here to Aurora to make a presentation and support Mayor Tom Weisner. He spoke for the mayor at a forum on the east side of Aurora and I was there and I spoke for Mayor Weisner, too. He's a Democrat, but it's a non-partisan position, so I felt totally pleased that I could support him, and I wanted to, and I did. Barack Obama was there, too, and we all talked to him and it was fun to meet him personally and then see where he's gone. I didn't vote for him, but it's been interesting.

DePue: Okay. Thank you very much Suzanne. This has been a lot of fun for me and we'll take the next step and start working on the transcript f

Deuchler: Great.

(End of interview)