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The Axe Files - Ep. 158: Bill Daley

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Axelrod: [00:00:16] Very few Americans have lived more history than Bill Daley, the son of the legendary late Richard J. Daley--the mayor of Chicago from 1955 to 1976. The old boss of the Democratic machine, the kingmaker as a Democratic Party leader, and then the brother of another mayor of Chicago Richard M. Daley. But in his own right the secretary of commerce under President Bill Clinton and then chief of staff to President Barack Obama: Bill Daley has a rich lore of stories that paint the picture of the last half century in our country and I sat down with him the other day to hear some of them.

Axelrod: [00:01:11] Bill Daley, welcome always good to see you.

Daley: [00:01:13] Thank you David.

Axelrod: [00:01:16] The name Daley in Chicago is like the Windsors in England or the Kennedys in Massachusetts. And you grew up really in the sort of in the zenith of your father's power and influence here. What was it like? What was it like to be a kid growing up when the mayor was in charge of everything?

Daley: [00:01:43] You know early on obviously when my dad was first elected I was only seven. So the impact was not as great as my--as it was for my older siblings. And times were different. It wasn't as though it wasn't as public. People didn't press gave wide berth to families they didn't focus on. And so it was we always thought we were pretty normal lived in a neighborhood with walk to school with you know a mix of economics. My dad was mayor and he had cops in front in back of the house. But that it was not too different than every other house. And you know my grandparents live with us as most in the neighborhood and we went to school with everybody whose parents were everything from cops to you know some point and maybe some prison. And so it didn't even feel it until as you got older obviously in the 60s when the social change and then the war and the impact of all that and the sort of press attention that came to it later on. But--

Axelrod: [00:02:46] How much did you guys talk about politics? Was that--was politics all--all around you?

Daley: [00:02:51] All around us. It was you know my dad was early and was you know he he had a he had a pretty good temper in public and you know when he wanted to make a point he could make it so. My mother was always trying to get him to calm down relax. But we talk politics a lot. He'd come home at dinner just about every night at home and sit around the table and and talk it but it was it was all consuming. But it was you know we talked about it all the time.

Axelrod: [00:03:23] Now your brother Rich told me once that your dad would then go out he would have to go to wakes and he would go to public events and so and sometimes you kids would jump into the limo with him so you could spend some time with him.

Daley: [00:03:38] Right. We he come home the usual m.o. and we only lived where we lived Bridgeport and it was only about 12 minutes from downtown so he could come home. We'd go out in backyard throw the baseball around play catch for a while he'd have dinner he shower put a fresh shirt on and he was pretty meticulous about his appearance and then he'd go out to wakes her in a reception. He rarely stayed for dinner at events and we jump in you know and talk to him on the way to awakening and we're going to wake up going with him one night he said Come on you know we'll go and ask Will you come out into the wake. I said I don't know this guy. It is I don't worry about it just you know. So you go in. It was always a big deal and I still had people come up to me today and say all your father came into my

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grandmother's wake or my grandfather's wake in and it was part of the politics of the day. It was all personal.

Axelrod: [00:04:32] Yeah explain explain a little bit more for people who aren't from Chicago where this is sort of baked into people's public consciousness.

Daley: [00:04:41] Well, the system was an organization. Opponents call that a machine. That was broken down from the bottom up at a precinct level with a precinct captain almost all the captains or helpers were employees of different government entities the city or the state if it was Democratic control in Congress and county and it was a real organization from bottom up very structured very organized and then from a precinct level to a ward level and then the ward Committee was on the Democratic Central Committees organization and it was a system that that honored loyalty and results and the precinct captain was the contact the state city government from a broken down trio of problem with the family and obviously that captain and hoped for loyalty on election day for the candidates of the Democratic Party. So it was an entire system generally got and generally you got it. Sometimes maybe a little too too too much of what I. But but it worked. It was it brought government down. It wasn't an 800 number you didn't call if you had a problem an 800 number to report a tree down or a pothole you went to the precinct captain and he somehow magically maybe. And obviously if the captain or the ward committeeman was more important they got quicker results and there was just the system as it was obviously developed in the early 20th century very much around the grants and what we call it was one of the last cities big cities with that structure still pretty much in place.

Axelrod: [00:06:23] Your dad was so interesting though because he consolidated that power he was both Chairman of the party and Mayor which really unified the two kind of hubs of power in a way that some of his predecessors did. And this gave him enormous influence.

Daley: [00:06:43] It gave him you know he was the chairman of the Democratic Party of Cook County and ran against incumbent City mayor of Chicago and beat him and then kept those two positions obviously so no one could really challenge him politically within the organization. And there was an at the time sort of out of the box there were a few. What did what what would be called reformers Stevenson or Paul Douglas who were not part of the organization but yet lived within that. My dad was--

Axelrod: [00:07:14] But your dad started working for Stevenson.

Daley: [00:07:17] Right, he was revenue director for Governor Stevenson back in the late 40s after he had run for sheriff and lost the election he lost and his mother told him she was glad he lost because in those days the sheriff was the executioner of people. So she didn't want him to have that role. And but but but. So there was a system that everyone relatively worked with in that then began to break down in the 60s and 70s and then after his death it really began to diminish his government.

Axelrod: [00:07:51] But. But you know and you know the criticism is that people shouldn't be awarded public services on the basis of political loyalty. Maybe a few people were on the payroll who weren't exactly working terribly hard all the time on their government jobs and that there was you know there was there was tolerance of corruption and so on. But what's been gained and what's been lost?

Daley: [00:08:22] Well it's hard to see this--so we reformed the system. You know in those days the organization raised the money and Dole the money out for candidates basically. Now everybody raises their own money. Every wealthy person can throw in hundreds of millions of dollars and whatever. Is that really a better system? I don't know. I think it's debatable to be frank with you. Yes--

Axelrod: [00:08:47] You also have--your dad had--I mean control, you know, Mike Royko wrote his book

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"Boss." And you know I was a young reformer when I came to town. And so there was a great sense that too much of too much consolidation of power. And yet he was able to get things done in the legislature he certainly controlled the city council in a way that allowed him to respond to problems.

Daley: [00:09:17] His--the phrase he liked most which he used in his first inaugural I think in 1955, was good politics is good government and good government is good politics. If you do your politics right that's good governing and vice versa. So there was enormous consolidation of power. But you know it was an unchecked because in spite of the fact that there was a system the voters really did vote and at times his candidates lost not everybody won and that he went to the voters one day one year with a bond issue to vote on. No more please stay more police and more construction. And at last I was the last one and only time you were in the voters with a bond issue because it was a tax increase and people didn't like that.

Axelrod: [00:10:05] He he also I think people don't who aren't steeped in Chicago history that they associate Mayor Daley with the machine but he was seen as kind of a visionary mayor in the 1950s and early 60s in terms of how he viewed cities, the building that he did--

Daley: [00:10:22] He always--even though he had this enormous political power what he enjoyed most and I remember one night about a month before he died it was after a rally for Jimmy Carter was one of those [crosstalk].

Axelrod: [00:10:34] 1976.

Daley: [00:10:35] In 1976 we were riding home and everybody who spoke that night really laid it out about how great he was in the politics and Jack Kennedy's election and blah blah blah. And I said Boy they really buttered you up tonight everybody who spoke including President Carter but then governor and he said Yeah but he said you know what I really want to be remembered for is what we did in the city in the change in the city so he was a reformer as a governing mayor and doing things to protect the city build in the neighborhoods and most viewed nationally as somebody who was really brings Chicago back from a pretty dark period. He's viewed nationally in a quake to a city that had a lot going on in modern city modern city global city had young you know reformers all on a staff he brought in the whiz kids sort of they called him in a number of departments it wasn't just a bunch of political hacks. And so he and he was hacks the hacks there as I said not just hacks, but he also was very good at finance as revenue director for the state. And so his forte was the finances of the city and kept him very strong and was a big believer in unions even though there was never a city contract. There was no union that had a contract with the city of Chicago during his 21 years it was a handshake. And his attitude was if my hand shakes that good well that's too bad for you. But he didn't believe in his city in contracts with the city employee unions. But yet they did quite well under him.

Axelrod: [00:12:08] You once told me a story about someone who came in and wanted to put in for a commissioner's job. What did your dad tell him?

Daley: [00:12:16] He had plenty of people come in when there would be an opening for a big job and Commissioner he'd say Well look I got a deputy commissioner spot it pays \$5000 left take a small job you last longer as I well as God's you of life for lots of different occasions why she did in other places--

Axelrod: [00:12:36] The wisdom of that [crosstalk].

Daley: [00:12:38] It really is. If you look a lot of people you know plenty of people will run for office or wanted big jobs. And I've often thought as I've gotten bigger jobs that actually the list of them maybe.

Axelrod: [00:12:50] You mentioned Jack Kennedy. People--he's very much associated with the election of

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John F. Kennedy. You must have known Kennedy as a kid.

Daley: [00:13:02] I remember my dad was close to him for a long time matter of fact one of the first speeches Senator Kennedy gave was right after my dad became chairman of the Democratic Party I think in '54 '55 he came out as a guest speaker was one of the first speeches west of the Alleghenies that Kennedy did.

Axelrod: [00:13:19] The Kennedy family owned the merchandise [crosstalk] He was president of the school board.

Daley: [00:13:25] My dad knew Joe Kennedy. After he bought the merchandise mart. So there was a connection citywide. And then Kennedy came in so he came out and spoke to the Democratic Party Cook County in '55 or '54. Even before my dad was mayor. But but. So they had a long relationship and in '56, my dad tried to be helpful at that convention when he would try to be vice president and then leading up to 1960 and played a big role at the convention. We were there we sat for like 12 hours the day of the nomination on the floor with signs and we had signs. My brother Janna and I--I was like 12 or something and we had a sign Oregon's for Kennedy. We were sitting in the [unclear] delegation not quite sure why we had that sign. But we were there like for 12 hours and then the acceptance speech. And then that summer, we were at it--my parents had a home up they rented it up in Michigan at the time. And I remember answered the phone one night and he said is Mayor Daley there. I said no. He said who is this. I said Bill he said well this is Jack Kennedy and he said will you tell him I called. I called it like okay no problem. So, but they were close and it was the second time I ever saw my father cry. Once when his dad died and then November 22nd, 1963.

Axelrod: [00:14:43] Did he--how much of a role do you think he did play? I mean we know what the history is. How much of a role did he play in counseling Jack Kennedy leading up to 1960? You know Adley Stevenson for whom he worked and who had been governor of Illinois wanted to be the nominee ultimately for a third time. How did--how did your dad navigate all that?

Daley: [00:15:08] Well, my dad knew that Adelle wasn't going to make the decision early enough and the system was changing primaries playing more of an active role. You couldn't just get the sort of leaders of the party. And he went to Adelle early on probably in '57, '58, maybe '59 at the latest and said are you going to run. And he said no, he said OK, we're going to I'm gone with Kennedy and we're going to kind of push that. Lyndon Johnson came to see him and my dad used to always tell a story Johnson when my dad told them he was with Kennedy Johnson's or you know the first guy who has been straight with me. But it also tells me maybe I don't know. And then at the actual convention and Eleanor Roosevelt called my dad she was leading the charge to try to get Tom Stevenson to stop Kennedy and ask. She said I want to come to meet with you. And he said No I'll come to see you. He drove out to was driven out to Pasadena to see her. More on my brothers went with him and told her I'm sorry I'm with Kennedy and we're staying with Kennedy. And then Adelle came out to the floor of the convention hall that night with a big demonstration we're trying to orchestrate and they thought because he wasn't a delegate he wouldn't give a seat, but my dad had somebody get up and leave. And I had Adelle sit there but my dad always respected Adelle went to when he passed away in London went to his funeral went to London with the delegation that Johnson appointed. So but he had enormous respect for Stevenson but he also knew that he was hesitating and you couldn't hesitate he knew the game was changed.

Axelrod: [00:16:43] How much did did Catholicism and the notion of electing the first Catholic president mean to your dad?

Daley: [00:16:49] Oh, it meant a lot. A lot. I mean it was the thought that you know my dad grew up in an era that Catholics were very much shunted aside in many ways. Obviously many Catholics went into

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politics because that was one area that could succeed. So it played enormous part. The thought that you get that bogeyman off the back of Catholics the next generation and for the future. Understood though that that was a difficulty for Kennedy that he had to overcome. And when you went to a lot of the opposition to Kennedy downstate especially in Illinois there was a big piece of the anti-Catholic thing.

Axelrod: [00:17:30] So this is a complete non-sequitur. But I I heard the story and it's so good that I need to share it with you and I don't know if you've heard this story but it sort of speaks to the whole role that your father played in the city and the story was about Anne Burke who's now on the Supreme Court of the state but she was then a young playground instructor and she wanted to start a special olympics ultimately worked with I guess the Shriver family and she had a letter from the--They were going to have their ceremony and she got a letter from Avery Brundage who was the chairman of the Olympic--U.S. Olympic commission. It was a cease and desist letter saying you can't use our name. And according to the story, Tim Shriver told me this story, she went to your dad and he's--and she was in tears and you know she she's just a playground instructor but--and he said give me Avery Brundage. He gets on the phone. Avery and he explained the situation as this young lady has this letter I know it's a mistake but I just wanted to double check with you and he's listening and he goes it's not a mistake. Oh I'm really surprised to hear that. And then he said to him--I guess Avery Brundage owned a hotel, one of the hotels around the street.

Daley: [00:18:48] Yeah.

Axelrod: [00:18:48] And he said Avery you know on another subject you know my inspectors were over at your hotel. Lot of problems, there a lot of problems and we may have to shut you down. And then he said oh you know I knew it was a mistake. And he handed the letter. He hung up and he handed the letter back to her and said don't worry about it.

Daley: [00:19:09] I--I'm sure it's accurate. OK. And Brundage had an office for the Olympics out of that hotel was on LaSalle Street and ended up the Democratic Party of Cook County ended up moving in those offices right. Brundage moved out. But but that was that's how politics was in those days. You know you you worked that out. And for my dad for Brian Drage or the Olympic Committee because it was about their money and they're protecting them. That wasn't as important to him as doing the right thing. And if he used his power for that purpose great.

Axelrod: [00:19:49] Well as a father of a special Olympian I have to tell you I love that story. We're going to take a short break for a word from our sponsor and we'll be right back with Bill Daley.

Daley: [00:19:59] Great.

Axelrod: [00:20:04] You mentioned earlier the 60s and some of the tumult of the 60s. If if there's one criticism that you hear about your dad it's about race and about how African-Americans were treated in Chicago. You know traditionally and about his handling of the city in the 60s when all of this erupted. What was it? From your vantage point like when riots started erupting in the city in the 60s and what kinds of conversations did you have with your dad?

Daley: [00:20:45] You know he was of a different generation and he was of the generation that believed or much of it that you know the order was paramount and the system had to be protected. Obviously he was head of the system in Chicago so he believed on the other hand there was this sort of you know African-Americans were very much part of the political system and had a lot of power in that system. In Springfield, you had you know--

Axelrod: [00:21:14] They were part of the alliance that got him elected in the first place.

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Daley: [00:21:17] In 1955. Absolutely. A big part of it. Bill Dawson. Ralph Metcalf you know they were down and I remember him telling the story back when they were down in the legislature and one of the hotels wouldn't allow an African-American legislator. And Ralph Metcalf at the time room so they know all the other the rest of the Democrats weren't that many there were so few in the legislature. All moved out of that hotel and to another hotel and Cecil party was the first president was one of the highest. Was a former state senator was that became the president of the all time when he may have been one of the highest ranking local black officials in the country.

Axelrod: [00:21:57] And your father helped orchestrate that.

Daley: [00:22:01] Oh, all of that. And made sure that the ballots you know the candidates were balanced with race and and religion and all of that. But there's no doubt Chicago's had a history for a very long time a segregated city and race a big piece of it. Obviously there was a enormous influx of African-Americans in the 40s and 50s in Chicago from the south and the clash of that ethnicity with that was it was a challenge for the entire period.

Axelrod: [00:22:29] Martin Luther King came here in 1966. And and you know volumes have been written about his experience here in dealing with your with your dad and over the issue of open housing.

Daley: [00:22:45] And then in Chicago was the first northern city to have the council pass an open housing law. And the final vote and in those days there were real Republicans in the city council It wasn't like it is today all Democratic. There are real Republicans. It passed by one vote and the aldermen who cast it was from an all white rather ethnic Ward on the south side and had to not run again. And they made him a judge because he took a tough really the toughest vote you could take in those days. As I said it was the first northern city with an open housing.

Axelrod: [00:23:19] So in '68 when the city was-- I think it was '68--when there were fires and--

Daley: [00:23:25] Right, after Martin Luther King's assassination was the worse of the riots in the city.

Axelrod: [00:23:30] And what what what did your father . . . ?

Daley: [00:23:33] It really--it was unbelievably difficult because you know '68 we had you you it was a very difficult period for the country. I think one of the worst years in the history of this country and in Chicago you had in April the Martin Luther King assassination and then the riots where the entire west side quite frankly Chicago most of the west side has didn't recover for another 40 years almost 35 years and he couldn't believe that such damage was done to the city to the point where you know they had to call in the federal troops the last time federal troops were called in to a domestic situation in Congress and then acted alone can never happen again. But it was really tough. It was tough to see the city burning. The police--

Axelrod: [00:24:26] Someone told me he went up to a high rise and looked out--

Daley: [00:24:28] In a helicopter and cried because it was just devastating if you saw what was going on on the west side and it couldn't stop it. Obviously his orders shoot to kill. You know you can interpret it different ways. The truth is the violence that slowed down after that his attitude was if somebody saw a Molotov cocktail in a building where somebody is living in it that's a potential murder. And that person shouldn't--

Axelrod: [00:24:54] Yeah, but that phrase came to--

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Daley: [00:24:56] Yes.

Axelrod: [00:24:56] That was came to identify him.

Daley: [00:24:59] Yes, yes.

Axelrod: [00:24:59] In history.

Daley: [00:25:01] Right, and then you had the convention four months later where nobody was killed at the Republican convention the same year in Miami six people were killed in adjacent riots and in Liberty City in Miami. So that was a pretty bad year for him. Very difficult in many ways. Even though he went on to win two more elections. It was a very difficult year.

Axelrod: [00:25:24] You you decided you went to law school now in the 70s. You still you said you became more aware later in life what it meant to be the son of. And you guys came under all kinds of scrutiny at the time I guess you and your brother started an insurance business or something.

Daley: [00:25:43] Right. And we took a lot of heat for that. Our brother Rich got stopped for going through a stop sign I was on the front page of all the papers so suddenly you felt the difference in newer sort of media world we were in. So there was a lot of sort of [unclear].

Axelrod: [00:26:01] Mike Royko the famous columnist the late columnist who I mentioned earlier wrote a column at that time and he told me the story later. He told me it actually admiringly of you that he had written a column saying that the Daley boys weren't smart enough to tie their own shoes and that you had called him and said Mike I don't want you to worry about because we're all wearing loafers.

Daley: [00:26:26] Right, I did.

Axelrod: [00:26:27] And he said it was the worst thing anybody ever did to me because it was totally disarming. He's willing to make fun of himself.

Daley: [00:26:35] But you know we learn a lot of that from my dad who used to he didn't hold a grudge years tough and he had a lot of battles in his life political. But but he didn't hold a grudge and he understood the you know as I said he had a lot of difficult times with the media but he said they had a role and as did my mother. And years later when Reichel was pretty friendly to my brother Rich's he was running my mother and he and remember Rich's the party the night he got sworn in as mayor. There is Mike Raichel dancing with his wife and my mom is talking to him. And I'm like "Oh my, the world has really changed you.

Axelrod: [00:27:14] Your mother is a sainted figure in the history of the city, beloved. She--there was a story that she had Rekos book removed from the local grocery store in Bridgeport.

Daley: [00:27:28] Yes.

Axelrod: [00:27:29] When boss was published.

Daley: [00:27:30] True. She shopped there all the time and she went in and they had--in those days had a stand of books for sale and saw it and went right to the general manager, the manager of the store and said this is outrageous. This is terrible. Obviously he yanked the book off and let Mike go because it was great. Added to the whole thing of it probably helped them with the sales and he appreciated that she she

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she knew she would--but in her mind and in her life that was the right thing to do. She was defending her husband.

Axelrod: [00:28:02] She also she didn't exercise a lot. She didn't have a big political voice in the city but there was one story about the public library here downtown when the public like your dad was considering tearing down the public library which is a beautiful old edifice and she apparently said somewhere publicly that she thought that wasn't necessarily a good idea.

Daley: [00:28:24] Right. And he really they were all set to announce big plans to knock it down and put a whole high rise up right out of Michigan and Randolph and some place somebody one reporter asked her about it and she thought that was a terrible idea and it shouldn't happen. And my dad killed it and said it survived and it's a beautiful thing.

Axelrod: [00:28:44] Now it's the Chicago Cultural Center it's a beautiful building right across from Millennium Park which your brother Rich was instrumental in building when he--so you--when he was mayor. You you became involved in politics in the 70s you were involved with the Carter people. You knew that this is you. You wanted to be engaged and at a national level.

Daley: [00:29:08] Yeah I guess you know kind of rituals. And my brother John were very local and I said well and I always had the interest in in Washington and national politics. And so I helped Jimmy Carter and I was kind of the link from my dad to the Carter campaign in 76. And the people ran it. And then often '80, '80 I ran Rich's campaign for state's attorney so I didn't get that handily mounted.

Axelrod: [00:29:31] Although you did in a sense and we'll talk about that in a second. So your dad died I remember this because I was a young reporter and I got thrust into the fact they sent me down to the eleventh Ward Democratic headquarters in Bridgeport. Your father of course was the committeeman of the eleventh ward because [unclear] He was elected chairman as the committeeman of the Eleventh Ward. And so the question was would the Eleventh Ward then elect Rich Daley, his son, your brother, to be his successor. And I think Morgan Finley was a county official and there was some talk that he was going to make a move for it.

Daley: [00:30:12] My dad died on a Monday and he was buried on a Wednesday and Rich said well you know we'll wait till Monday to have a committee meets me and meet the precinct captains me to elect a new committee man and my mother said which have it right away. And it was like my you know everybody's getting over sudden death very sudden death or dead. And--

Daley: [00:30:35] So she had learned a few things.

Daley: [00:30:36] Yeah. She had learned a few things and within a day of his burial somebody walked in and said I just got a call from a precinct captain and they're trying to put this together for Buddy Finley to replace--

Axelrod: [00:30:50] Who was a member of the organization, a county official. your dad made him a county official.

Daley: [00:30:54] And so Rich called the meeting the next day of the captains and they elected Richard but he finally moved out of the ward moved to the suburbs.

Axelrod: [00:31:01] Yes. Yeah I remember Finley coming out very grim. I was a young reporter standing out there and he just said sort of tersely. Richard Daley is the new committeeman of the Eleventh Ward. It was unanimous. So . . . but--

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Daley: [00:31:20] I just told my mother who was an integral part of my father's politics from the very beginning and his campaigns had a very good sense about politics.

Axelrod: [00:31:31] I bet. You--And then Rich, your dad died, he was the--still a state senator but now he's a state senator sort of on his own who is kind of a sink or swim situation. There was an interim mayor Michael and it came from your ward. Nice earnest guy. Terrible politician. And he gets beaten by Jane Byrne. This was I covered this campaign this was my big opening as a political reporter at The Tribune who is a reformer or so she says as she runs that way and she is intent on snuffing out the dailies as a political force because she obviously feared that right. You know Richard M. Daley would come back and try and reclaim the office. And so all the levers that a mayor has patronage and all of that aimed against you guys. And and he decides to run for up to everybody's surprise for prosecutor here. Nobody thought of him as much of a lawyer.

Daley: [00:32:39] I've never been in a courtroom, that didn't matter.

Axelrod: [00:32:43] So what made you guys make that--?

Daley: [00:32:45] I--the expectation was he was going to run against this buddy Finley guy because there were a bunch of [unclear] is jobs there. And Rich had no interest in that. And really. So he kept he kept a very quiet that he was going on for state's attorney. There was slight making. And there was a very popular well-liked Republican states attorney at the time had been there for quite a long time. So rich white in a slight making and announced he was running for State's Attorney shocked everybody and because nobody else then the powers that be Jane Byrne and the other committee men who are going to try to stop rich then ran out and got Eddie Burke and Alderman Alderman these aldermen rich used to go to school with them in law school with your brother my brother Rich. And so he they slated him rich beat him in the primary and then beat Bernie Kerry by sixteen thousand votes.

Axelrod: [00:33:38] But this just where I want to go with this, that primary got intertwined with the presidential primary because Ted Kennedy was running for president and Jane Byrne at first intimated she was going to be for President Carter and then two weeks later switched to Ted Kennedy. And you guys were very much hooked up with President Carter. So this primary it became like the Carter daily right slate right.

Daley: [00:34:05] Yeah it was. And and not just James didn't intimate. She told Carter she was for him and then she and when the Carter people told me that I said don't worry about she's not going to be with you. Forget it. She will be Kennedy and she was. But it became a proxy in both sides and it was awesome. And Carter versus Kennedy and burn and the Republic and the Republican candidate it was crazy it was the entire organization that my dad ran for all those years was against his son in order to help a Republican in a direction. And Reagan indirectly Reagan one county in a landslide one won the election in a landslide. Rich won barely and then went on to be state's attorney for eight years until he ran for mayor and they wrap their arms around him. This was the big mistake they made. Had they endorsed him and all at least gone through the motions of being for him there's no way rich that he would have beat Bernie Kerry in the general election.

Axelrod: [00:35:06] In '83 he ran for mayor against Jane Byrne. That is you know is she in fact created the race that she always feared and then Harold Washington jumped in. An African-American congressman and won the race. Did you see that coming?

Daley: [00:35:23] Well, we we saw we didn't see Harold had been pretty clear saying he wouldn't run and it will reach that privately. But he said he said I put out these conditions I've got to register 200,000 people

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so they'll never ever do it telling everybody that they did it and all of a sudden he runs. We fell pretty early on. Rich was strong. I do remember though poll in 1982 and Rich hated polls. Hated to talk about them as you know. So the pollster was there and Rich was beating Jane Byrne by enormous amount and basically the pollster said he can't lose this. I can't--I can't say what Rich said to the guy and got up and left--

Axelrod: [00:36:02] It's a podcast, you can say whatever you want to say.

Daley: [00:36:03] And never came to apologize. And never came back to a polling meeting ever. But but you could feel a turn when Byrne got stronger. She went heavy on the race and I remember about two weeks out we had a poll come back and the only way you could do it quite frankly in a political way the only way you could win was to push her way down. He had to do that by going very white against her you know to try to consolidate the white vote versus Harold who obviously was overwhelmingly popular in the African-American community and which we knew right there that was the end of the campaign. And then because he tried to stay above everything and then he began to drop rather quickly.

Axelrod: [00:36:47] After that race there was an incident in a toy store in Bristol with him and Rich was there with his son. [crosstalk] And someone came up and started screaming at him about having made-- I'm sure the language is--also not what you want to repeat but so it was pretty deep.

Daley: [00:37:05] Yeah, oh yeah. They figured they being the sort of white political characters, Burne and the rest of them figured Rich was finished. He couldn't get reelected the white voters would hold against them black voters would hold against them for running as Harold Washington the guy jumped him in the toy store and he's rolling around on the floor. The state's attorney time nobody has kids yelling at him "hit em dad!" Rich is like--like 40, 35, 40 years old running around in the toy store on Halstead street with some goof ball.

Axelrod: [00:37:36] But when he decided to run for mayor again in '89. I mean you and I we when I worked for him in that race, we went over to see him and his wife Maggie and he apparently neglected to tell her that he was planning a run.

Daley: [00:37:51] What we were there for!

Axelrod: [00:37:52] Yeah. And--but her admonition to us was if this is going to be about race because there was a African-American mayor who would replaced Washington with died. I don't want anything I don't want any part of that and that was a big--

Daley: [00:38:08] Yeah. She was very frightened of that race getting back into what at the end of the '83 race it became very race oriented and then the politics in Chicago as you know during that period from '83 to through Harold's death and until the election in '89 was all about race and you really want to part of it. But Rich had done a state's attorney in '84 and '88 had gotten overwhelming support from the African-American community and the white community so that the expectation after he helped elect Harold in some people's mind was never fulfilled because he got even stronger as it went on and he very much stayed out of politics. One state's attorney had a good office a good reputation honesty and competent people and he and that set him up with the African-American American vote even though he didn't get much in '89.

Axelrod: [00:39:09] We're going to take another short break and we'll be right back with Bill Daley.

Axelrod: [00:39:14] There's so much to talk about but I there's like we've got decades of history that I want to cover and in your history, I'll ask one more question about your brother Rich and your father and that is they each served as mayor of Chicago for about the same amount of time that your dad 22 years, I think

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your brother 23.

Daley: [00:39:34] Rich, 22. My dad, 21.

Axelrod: [00:39:36] All right. I was close.

Daley: [00:39:37] Yeah.

Axelrod: [00:39:38] How would you compare them?

Daley: [00:39:41] They were they were very similar in in two ways one. That's all they wanted to be. I remember when I became secretary of commerce I thought was pretty important job which was like why are you going there, why are you going to do that? Chief of staff or president, you know. But. So that's all they wanted to be. And that helped them do a better job because they were never about the next job they were going to go for. And so that I really believe that gave them an enormous ability to make decisions what was best for the city and not worry about the political career where they may go. Yeah. Number one. Number two--

Axelrod: [00:40:21] So not worrying about running statewide.

Daley: [00:40:23] Statewide or what was going on nationally. Rich didn't you know he really didn't care who was president or whatever and as long as he was on fairly good terms with him it wasn't as though he focused on that in any way shape or form or been in the Senate or ran for governor or God forbid something like a meaningless job like that compared to the mayor of Chicago. Second of all they really knew the city. I mean Rich knew the neighborhood knew the blacks. He was like my dad you'd ride down. If you were in the car with him they'd be writing down a pothole. I remember one day my dad were gone down National Avenue. And I'm like in high school and we hit a big pothole in the limousine and I don't know what he was doing but he said call whoever the deputy mayor was at the time and tell him about this Powell. And I'm like a kid in high school. Call the deputy mayor and a car phone. They had a phone and a car not a cellphone obviously. And I said know we just had a big pothole in Ashland Avenue and he thinks somebody ought to get out and fix it. So they were totally focused on and understood the city and the yingyang of the different neighborhoods the feel in the neighborhoods new people. And so those two things were very similar. Difference was obviously my dad had the political organization to depend on and came up through that Rich came in a different way in the politics of it for which he wasn't burdened by the old system. Matter of fact he went around that old system as we talked about earlier. So. So they were personality wise--

Axelrod: [00:41:58] On social issues though they were, I mean Rich Daley marched in the gay pride parade. He was you know he worked hard on the relationship with the African-American community in ways that were different than yours. You said you know--

Daley: [00:42:13] But he was he he--My dad did those things. Probably more because they were smart politics to do. Even though you know he had enormous empathy for people who were in trouble I remember in their neighborhood we had a lot of guys who went to prison people with alcohol problems all he was he was never judge battle about that. And and Rich in a different and different issues around as you said gay rights and issues like that where people wouldn't expect Daley's kid to tell you a funny story. And in 2004 when Gavin Newsom the mayor of San Francisco's giving marriage license to two people of the same sex to marry it became a very big issue in the presidential campaign of Kerry and it was a big issue in the congressional campaign. Barney Frank called me one day and Barney Frank gay congressman great guy said can you do me a favor. I said what. He said can you talk to Rich about not being so strong about gay marriage. So he said you know this has caused us problems with a lot of

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congressional campaigns because it was still a it was very early on in the whole the school was out in front of it is way out in front of it. And I said Well Bernie I'll talk to them but you know I don't think this is going to go anywhere as I call them and which was like I forget what he said no he said this is ridiculous I don't know what they're all talking about before and so. So Rich felt strongly on a lot of the issues that one one would not think Oh Mayor Daley's kid and somebody who grew up where he grew up when--

Axelrod: [00:43:53] The other thing was that they both were authentic. No one would accuse either of them being inauthentic. And that's seems like something that people miss in politics today. So you mentioned that you were secretary of commerce before you became secretary of commerce under President Clinton. You helped shape that NAFTA law through through the Senate. Looking, looking back now and looking at where we are on this trade issue other great concerns then about the tradeoffs. And and we've seen the tradeoffs and now you'd have a president who has withdrawn the country from the Trans-Pacific Partnership from the tree from the agreement that was being negotiated with Europe. Make the case.

Daley: [00:44:50] Well again this is 25 years almost. So the world is very different. Bill Clinton who I believe really felt for the average working person and understood the sort of needs of people believed it was a big part of getting the U.S. economy moving in the 90s. You know NAFTA was a piece of that and it was also a piece to get our North America together Canada Mexico and try to be one block in many ways. So. So he was well motivated. My role was to try to help pass through Congress. And. And. But Clinton was an integral part of the economic revival was seen globalization happening now. Maybe what we misjudged was you had a third world nation basically Mexico at the time and the US a very developed nation during a trade agreement. There was just too much disparity between the two was first time it ever been done. So there are a lot of issues around it. We underestimated the impact on jobs. At the same time you had technology changing jobs and the ability for a company to put a plant anywhere in the world and build it were in the past that was very difficult to do. So all of this kind of came together and who got squeezed. That was small town America and towns around Illinois around all oil and then not just Illinois but around the Chicago area. And and then you had the boom in the 90s and [unclear] commerce secretary then in the late 90s and then enormous boom globally boomed globally of of explosion of technology and the openness of countries like China and others over a very short period to being part of a global economy again pushing down wages pushing down as. But it was well motivated. I don't think especially as a Democrat we would sign on board to keeping much of the world in poverty and not giving them a chance to have a middle class. The problem is when you give other parts of the world the chance of being created a middle class that gets lost somewhere and that affects other places and we were the economy of the world so if there was going to be an impact on other parts of the world growing we would suffer in many ways and we did. Was it the right thing to do. I think it was the right thing to do at the time. Absolutely. Problem is it has not been. It was not updated over the twenty five years. And Congress Democrat and Republican didn't take actions over those periods to address the problems of the diminution in manufacturing. The wage stagnation that was going on in the country the enormous wealth that was being created. And so there was so that NAFTA and trade is is the cause in many people's minds. All of us wage disparity in income inequality and that's just not true. And in this world we're in a global world we're in and that's not going to change. Everybody can't just be out for themselves and especially a country that believes in openness open trade. Our economy grew over those years in the 20th century by being open to it with low tariffs for goods to come into the United States and that helped our economy helped it grow.

Daley: [00:48:23] Welcoming people from around the world helped our growth [crosstalk].

Axelrod: [00:48:27] First of all, the notion of these treaties is to lower tariffs around the world for our products.

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Daley: [00:48:31] Right--now, there's a lot of other barriers that we weren't aggressive enough to be frank with you. I remember when I was commerce secretary I went to Japan and I think they told me there was one Cadillac in all of Japan. But GM then was not making right sided wheels. You know that you were drivers in Japan sit on the right side. GM wasn't making them. So they're trying to sell cars that nobody was going to buy. But we underestimated and weren't aggressive enough at the other barriers other than tariffs in these countries that kept us products.

Axelrod: [00:49:06] Where do you think we are now on trade? The president's withdrawn from the TPP wants to renegotiate NAFTA which you said needs updating.

Daley: [00:49:14] Well I think you can improve NAFTA. Can you bring back all those quote jobs that supposedly went overseas? Absolutely not. It's ridiculous. The vast majority I'm at this stage because of technology and because there is a middle class in those countries that manufacturers that want to be closer to the sale of those things. I think it's going to be a long period before you see an aggressiveness around trade or trade agenda by a president and by the political side.

Axelrod: [00:49:40] And what is the impact of that?

Daley: [00:49:41] I think it makes it hard for us to the economic growth that we want just as if you limit immigration it's going to slow down the growth opportunities I believe the same thing about trade. But I think there is a there is a strong consensus on both parties to stay away from trade and that's that will make it difficult to have 4 percent growth or 3 percent growth in the U.S.. I did see that President Trump's representatives are talking about try to reestablish a TPP in a different way. You know and again I look at the President Obama would not do something in my opinion that would crater opportunities for middle class and lower class. His whole career was about. And he felt very strong about trying to help those people. And I think he saw the benefit of TPP long term albeit very difficult to work with you.

Axelrod: [00:50:38] You worked for two presidents. Compare them" Barack Obama and Bill Clinton.

Daley: [00:50:44] Very different personalities. You know you have to Barack Obama accomplished something that nobody I think very few paid down Trump's selection fine. People said it could never happen. But he came over in a very short period entire system with all sorts of challenges that nobody else has ever had obviously started. First of all those race. So his political talent as seen the opportunity and the timing obviously with your guidance the opportunity was presented in that at that period was and then take the risk of doing it was an unbelievable decision. Bill Clinton's was he was much more of the retail sort of politician on the ground hugging people loving people over a long period. He was governor elected in 1978. So he had a very long career before he actually ran for president in '92. Personality wise both very smart people but they came from different systems and that that affected them in real ways.

Axelrod: [00:51:53] In different systems in that Clinton thought in terms of well, retail politics.

Daley: [00:51:59] Well, he was a governor and retail politician in a very Southern conservative state had managed that understood the world because he used to do trade missions and he had companies that wanted to sell their goods around the world. And so he he and he spent a long time sort of preparing for that presidential race unlike President Obama. Obviously short Senate career made the decision. But one of the greatest establishment the sort of candidates Hillary Clinton in '08 and pulled off an unbelievable upset upset but also in their style. Bill Clinton was very much in your face sort of personal retail as you say Barack Obama was one of the smartest people I've met you know was viewed sort of in many ways his his ability to speak and move a crowd and move the sort of political system was probably unparalleled of any of the people other than maybe Jack Kennedy back in 1960. And so and the times--Bill Clinton and the one of the stark differences I saw when I got when I was with Bill Clinton in the 90s you know it wasn't

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like everybody held hands and loved each other they didn't did impeach the Republicans. But the nastiness and the tenor the tone in Washington. Ten years later when I came back with President Obama was shocking to me how mean nasty. You know it was on both sides. You know you couldn't be seen with a Republican if you were a Democrat or you were what questions what are you doing with what that person you know my main boo I had dinner with John Boehner the first week I was there because I knew John Boehner and I kind of enjoyed his company frankly. You had a couple of glasses wine he'd walk out every 10 minutes they have a cigarette and leadership on the Democratic side. The White House no like the next day that they were upset because I had had dinner with John Boehner before and had dinner with them and I was like well you know this is crazy.

Axelrod: [00:54:05] You were linked to maybe one of the most famous pictures of the Obama presidency during the raid that brought down Osama bin Laden. Talk about that picture and what led up to it.

Daley: [00:54:18] Well the first day I was at the White House going into the presidential briefing Leon Panetta was there and I knew Leon Panetta for a long time he was head of the CIA at that time and I thought this is nice and calm. My first day here is there to talk about this compound in Abbottabad and how they had been watching it and they thought there was a high value target that was in January you know and that every couple of weeks we'd have another meeting in the lead up to the decision by the president. It was remarkable about this. It was to watch the president's leadership and how he managed that. You know and it came down to a gut decision on his part and there was disagreement of whether it should be done and whether Osama bin Laden was really there. But he went through a long process. Matter of fact it got to a point where he was in the SITUATION ROOM so often and we are keeping this obviously very secret. I was concerned because the president was spending so much time in the Situation Room and as you know when the president is there everybody in the building knows he's there. So it will be hard. The people were not wondering what's going on here because he's down there so much and but that day was just very very stressful. We are getting ready to go to church that morning. I said I want to go to church. And I didn't know if I should come in and a pair of jeans like a Sunday or or but I wore a coat and tie and I think I'm the only one in the picture with a coat and tie on because I figured if my mother was alive and she saw me at the White House and that uncoated died be a deep hole but I figured one way or the other this is a shortened day either we we're going to get Osama bin Laden or this is going to be a very bad day for the president. So I better we better be prepared. But but to watch his driving that process over those three months or so was really remarkable and culminating in probably one of the. For me the highlight of my professional career.

Axelrod: [00:56:22] I don't want to lead you into an invidious comparison but I can't leave without asking you what your observations are of the process that you see in the White House now and of the way this president is operating?

Daley: [00:56:35] You know the White House is reflective person at the top and the chaos or perceived chaos or lack of competence in my opinion reflects more about Donald Trump than anything else so it doesn't surprise me. They really do reflect the quality of the people reflect the president. And I would say right now the people that are there except for we're with few exceptions pretty much are the sort of people that Donald Trump attracted in his business career and on his campaign and the chaos all starts at the top or the confusion or the ad would be a very difficult place if you come from a different expectation from our president to be to be in that sort of setting and I have never seen anything like this in a business setting much less a White House or any major organization is very reflective of somebody who ran a small business basically which is what it was and ran it as a dictator. I mean that's that's what he ran his real estate business had very successful made a lot of money great. But making a lot of money doesn't necessarily mean you're smart.

Axelrod: [00:57:47] And what do you--let me just ask you this and leave it here. You've lived a lot of

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history more than almost anybody I know. I know how much you we're raised to appreciate institutions. I think your dad was one of the last people who would go and meet Richard Nixon at the airport even when he was--because he said he's the president of the United States. And what are your--what are your concerns as we sit here today about this president and and the country?

Daley: [00:58:22] Well I think our I think oftentimes you know people say our politics is so nasty and this is terrible. I think it may reflect our society more than we like to admit and we like to think they should be our politicians our leaders our political leaders our religious leaders whatever should be better than the rest of us. But but maybe he reflects more of us today. Oftentimes that crassness and nastiness I mean this is a man who ran around saying that President Obama wasn't born in the U.S. and then he feigns being shocked at the nastiness that's going on in politics. So maybe it's this is a difficult more difficult thing maybe he's more reflective and the sort of politics the world we're in the nastiness the crassness the violence we saw the assassination attempt on Republican members two weeks ago. First day I was at the White House or the day before I was even sworn in. Gabby Giffords was killed, was shot at and wounded and other people were killed that day. So this nastiness and the crassness that you see in politics maybe were more reflective surfaces as a society. And Donald Trump understood that maybe better than many and his sort of outrageousness reflects reality TV or the politics of today. And he got that before anybody else maybe wanted to act on that.

Axelrod: [00:59:51] Do you think--Do you think a leader can help change that?

Daley: [00:59:55] Absolutely. I think and I think there will be either a at some point either in three I personally do not believe he runs again but then I feel strongly that the next president I think will be I have to be very different and we'll have to bring a compass to the country. And I sort of we can all move. I'm not saying everybody sit around and hold hands and sing Kumbaya. But but you know country can stay at this level of sort of craziness for for very long. And I think the next president whoever he or she will be will have a very different tone.

Axelrod: [01:00:34] Bill Daley appreciate your long friendship. And as I said I could talk to you for hours and I probably will but just not on this podcast.

Daley: [01:00:44] Thanks David.

Axelrod: [01:00:47] Thanks so much.

Daley: [01:00:47] Appreciate it.

Unidentified Female: [01:00:47] Thank you for listening to the X-Files part of the CNN Podcast Network. For more episodes of The X-Files visit CNN.com/podcast and subscribe on iTunes, Stitcher, or your favorite app. And for more programming from the University of Chicago, Institute of Politics visit politics.uchicago.edu.