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SPIRIGEL, JANE

Du Page board's

Chicago Tribune, Sep. 18, 1985
only Democrat quitting

bers is "obedience" and not innovation," Spigel said. Knuepfer "has dominated the committee system" and "eroded what she called 'the hands-off policy with regard to partisan political intrusion.'"

She said the perception that Du Page County government is of a high caliber is based partly on a tendency to compare Du Page with Cook County and Chicago, but Spigel said that should not be the standard.

In 1974, Spigel, a Democratic committeeman, rode into office on what other counties might consider a minor political swell but in Du Page County was considered a veritable seismic.

In that year, Spigel and two other women, also Democrats, joined board member Donald Carroll, of Bensenville, to form the largest group of Democrats on the county board since February, 1939.

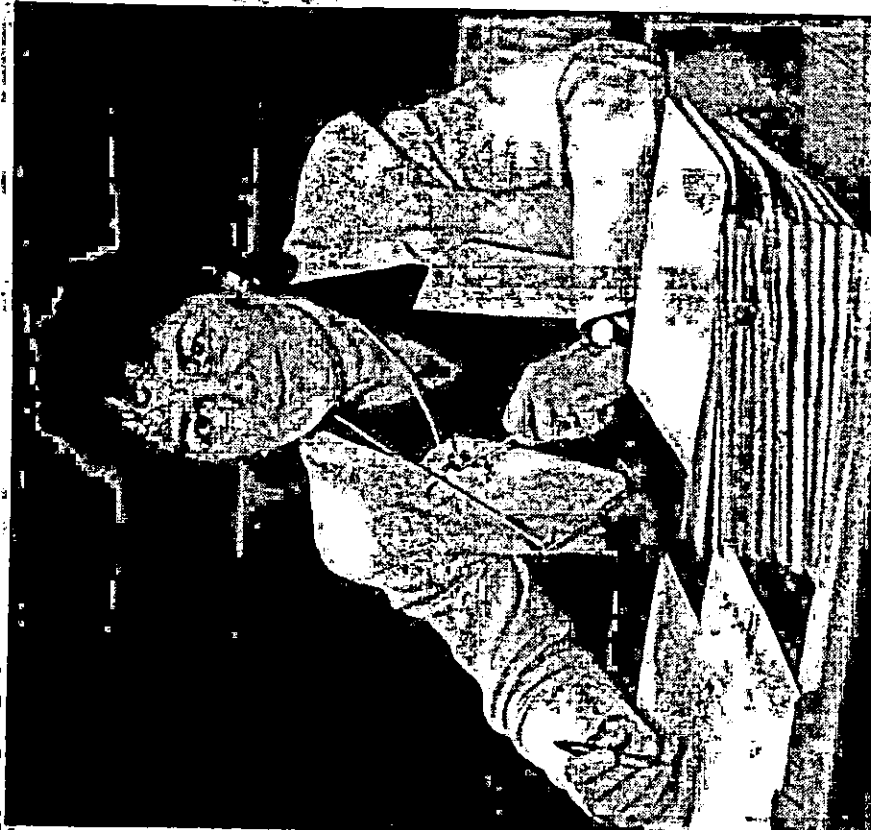
In 1974, Democrats, including Spigel, won three seats in District 1. The district is generally considered the most Democratic of the county's five county board districts.

But Spigel said the district's newly drawn boundaries will make it difficult for another Democrat to get elected. The district now includes parts of three northeast townships with 11 cities and towns.

Spigel, a New York City native, moved to Elmhurst in 1966 when her husband, Bernie, a civil engineer, was transferred to Chicago. The couple has two children: Keith, 21, and Pam, 21.

It wasn't until Spigel became impatient at being an impartial observer for the Elmhurst and Du Page County chapters of the League of Women Voters in the 1970s that she decided to enter politics. Though she shunned a proffered draft for the county board candidacy in 1972, she decided to run in 1974 and won.

To the amazement and dismay of some Republican board members, Spigel won again in 1978 and was elected to her current term in 1982.



Three photo by Don Campe

Du Page County Board Member Jane Spigel (D., Elmhurst): "People get stale after 12 years and the time to get out is before you get stale."

don't have critical remarks for individual county board members," she said.

Nevertheless, Spigel used the press forum Tuesday to take a swipe at County Board Chairman Jack Knuepfer (R., Elmhurst), whom she described as "honest and well-intentioned" but "rather Teutonic" in his style of leadership. She said Knuepfer "has not encouraged innovation, participation and excellence on the part of the county board."

"I have seen an erosion, a clear erosion, of responsibility on the part of the county board members," Spigel said. "What is rewarded among county board mem-

ber for more than half of it. Since 1978 she has been the only Democrat on the 26-member county board.

Along the way there have been good days and bad days for Spigel. Her coexistence with her Republican colleagues admittedly hasn't always been peaceful. At times she has lived up to her reputation as a liberal, a maverick and a gadfly.

During her county board tenure Spigel has been chastised and patronized. She alternately has earned the respect and repudiation of her board peers.

"By and large I have a great deal of respect for the individual members of the county board. I

By William Presecky
It may not have been so unusual that at a recent employees' picnic, Du Page County Board member Jane Spigel (D., Elmhurst) was the only woman and the only Democrat to take a turn in the "dunk tank."

That's the way Spigel has spent much of her decade-old political life—alone and a target, chiding, cajoling, daring, challenging, ready to take a plunge.

Spigel took another big plunge Tuesday. She announced that her political career was coming to a close—at least temporarily. She told reporters that the time and the energy necessary for her to seek another four-year term in the county board "dunk tank" has escaped her.

Spigel, the only Democrat on the Republican-dominated county board, will not seek re-election in 1986, she said.

Though she said she has no immediate plans to seek any other elective office, Spigel hasn't foreclosed on the possibility of running for another office at another time.

"I care too much about this county and about public issues in general to stop being an active Democrat and an active citizen," she said.

Spigel said she would devote more of her time and energy to her family and her career as a teacher and administrator at Northern Illinois University, in De Kalb, where she earned a master's degree in public administration.

"People get stale after 12 years and the time to get out is before you get stale," Spigel said. "It's a very rare person who can maintain the freshness and enthusiasm that government deserves for more than 12 years in the same position."

She said she never intended to serve more than three terms.

Spigel, 44, has lived in Du Page County for nearly 20 years. She has been a Democrat for all that time and a county board member