

William Singer has sights set on mayor's job

IT BEGAN IN 1958, his short, stubby hands grabbing the palms of the voters. For Bill Singer was always a dealer. An organizer. A little man who always won.

At South Shore High School, when today's alderman of the 43d Ward was only a senior, he decided to buck the odds and run for student council vice president against the school hero—the letter winner with the big white teeth, the guy who always got the girl.

While the school hero smiled thru the campaign, little Billy put together a machine and stood in the hallways shaking hands, freshman hands and senior hands and all the hands in between. Bill Singer never was a snob, for every hand holds a vote. Nearly everyone was surprised when he won, scoring an upset. Everyone but Bill.

That's how it was 10 years later when he scored an upset in the old 44th Ward, shaking your hand while looking over your shoulder at the next hand, toppling the Daley machine candidate and surprising everyone. Except himself.

HE DID IT again in 1971 in the new 43d, and again last summer when he kept the na-



Tribune Photo.

Ald. William Singer

tion's No. 1 Democrat, Mayor Daley himself, from his own Democratic convention in Miami.

Now, while he continues to shove his hands into the crowd, he is looking toward Chicago's Office of the Biggest Shoulders, the mayor's office, which will be open for bids in 1975. And by this time, a lot of people know a few more things about Bill Singer: He's tough, he wins when he runs, and he never gives up.

As one of his old high-school buddies says: "Billy is a fighter; tough and honest. And he has this incredible ability to associate himself with people who support his ambitions. And he gets these people to work their tails off for him."

After his student council victory Bill Singer waited until a snowy day in March five years later to jump back into politics. It was 1964. He was a student at Columbia University's law school, and he took a few days off to line up a summer job in Washington. He walked into the office of for-

mer Illinois Sen. Paul Douglas at noon. He walked out at 6 with a job.

FIVE YEARS later it was 1969, and Bill Singer was sitting in the City Council.

He is still like little Billy, running a little bit harder and a little bit faster than most of the others. In his ward office at 2258 N. Orchard St., right at the hub of the North Lincoln Avenue avant-garde, the swinging kingdom, he bubbles and bounces, building his image as the People's Alderman. Sitting at his desk he can watch the beer barrels being dropped off at half a dozen pubs, huge silver barrels waiting for night.

But in his office, in the morning, Bill bustles only in the present. When he does think ahead, his thoughts don't bother with evening; they tend to move toward the Big Future, a Tomorrowland that blends the name Bill Singer with the city called Chicago into a partnership that the former is sure the latter needs.

"This city is not running well," he says. "Daley was a man for the '50s not for today. There is a mystique that the city runs well, but really it runs well for only a few people."

HE SAYS THE city needs honest politicians, and mentions the name of the fatherly Paul Douglas as his example: "A man who bent over backwards to be honest and open."

City problems, he says, are the problems that interest him—if he doesn't run for mayor he will run for alderman again, one or the other, and he has no ambition to go downstate or to Washington.

"It's a big decision, the mayor decision. I probably won't decide for a year. I have to find out what my financial and voter support would be first. But I am definitely considering it. I feel strongly about the city, and I think it could be run better, more openly, more honestly.

"You know, a man doesn't have to be ashamed because he wants to run for office."



Rick Soll