

November 2, 2011 Wednesday

**Verdict surprises pal Edgar**

By Dave McKinney

Springfield bureau chief

SPRINGFIELD - Former Gov. Jim Edgar, a longtime friend of Bill Cellini - who held significant sway during Edgar's two terms in the 1990s - said Tuesday he is "very disappointed" by the guilty verdicts in Cellini's corruption trial.

"Bill has been a good friend for years. I'm very disappointed and feel bad for him," Edgar told the Chicago Sun-Times. "I didn't sit through the trial. I just know my dealings with Bill. He always acted very properly. I'm surprised at this point."

Edgar said he last spoke with Cellini before the trial, and Cellini was confident he could beat the charges. "I'm sure he is shocked with the verdict because I know he felt like he hadn't done anything wrong in this case," Edgar said.

Edgar also questioned whether Cellini fell victim to the widespread public cynicism that exists in Illinois, where federal juries have convicted two successive governors on corruption charges.

"I think there's no doubt, probably in this atmosphere, people kind of think folks are guilty before they go to trial," Edgar said.