

JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with

LEON W. PARMA

August 4, 2011

Interviewer

Morton Kondracke

JACK KEMP FOUNDATION
WASHINGTON, DC

Kondracke: This is a Jack Kemp Foundation Oral History Project interview with Leon Parma, a longtime friend and political supporter of Jack Kemp. We're at the offices of the Parma Management Company in San Diego, California. Today is August 4th, 2011, and I'm Morton Kondracke. Mr. Parma, when you think about Jack Kemp, what comes to your mind?

Parma: A vibrant, confident, overwhelming personality. There wasn't anything impossible for Jack. Football field, politics or what have you. And he loved people, and expressed that in a way that people understood, and they loved him in return. Great family man, loved his kids, loved his wife. I was just talking to my wife this morning about it, and she said, "Remember the time we went to see [James P.] Jimmy [Kemp] play football with him? After the game, Jack runs down on the field, hugs him and kisses him. You know, Jimmy's pulling away, but he's down there embracing his child." One time we were with him, which we were with him a lot, their kids were all over him-- little tikes up to in high school and the rest of it—he'd always have them sitting on his lap or close by. He and Joanne [Kemp] were a real team. That's what I remember.

Kondracke: When did you first hear about him?

Parma: I heard about Jack and met him when the Los Angeles Chargers moved to San Diego, became the San Diego Chargers, and my dearest friend, [Herbert G.] Herb Klein, was the executive editor, I guess, of the *San Diego Union*, and right off the bat Herb was smitten by Jack Kemp. His lingo of talking about things other than football—

economics, politics and the rest of it. I guess we went to a football banquet or something like that, and we met Jack then and got to know him very well. Herb and I took him to the 1964 convention in San Francisco, where he was exposed to [Barry M.] Goldwater, which had a lasting influence on him. And from then on we were good, close friends.

Kondracke: The Chargers come to San Diego in '61, and he's the quarterback, and so you met him right after that, '61, you think?

Parma: Yes. I didn't know who Jack Kemp was until they came down here. That's when we met, so it's been 50 years.

Kondracke: And how did Klein first meet Jack Kemp?

Parma: I think the same way, through the Chargers. Jack Murphy, the sports editor for the *San Diego Union*, had a relationship with [William] Barron Hilton, I think, through hunting, perhaps, and Barron owned the team. Jack Murphy, they were playing, and the L.A. Coliseum, and [Sidney] Sid Gilman used to tell the players, "Go up there and shake hands with fans." Fans, you know. A few fans up there he wanted the guys to go up there and shake hands with them. There were so few who would attend any games, so Murphy enticed Barron to bring the club down here, which he did, and we were pleased that he brought Jack Kemp with him. And that's when we met Jack.

Kondracke: So how often would you see him while he was here in San Diego as a quarterback?

Parma: Several times a year socially and politically. Herb would not let him write anything on sports, and he'd do work on political stuff, economics, or whatever, but he would do some writing, he'd back up some reporters and information he was putting together. Herb liked him very much, so Jack and Joanne would join us a lot for dinner.

Kondracke: So it was basically three couples?

Parma: Three couples at the time. At the convention we had a broader group of people. That convention in '64, they overran the time. The time management of that convention was really to the detriment of the Party, because we were going into post-midnight, so much so that we couldn't find places to have dinner. We were driving over to Trader Vic's in Oakland, which was open late, and we'd made reservations over there, and we'd take two, three carloads over there to have dinner. Trader Vic's in San Francisco was closed and most of the restaurants closed up. As a convention site, we didn't do San Francisco any favors. The time management of that convention.

Kondracke: What was your role, Herb Klein's role, Jack Kemp's role? Were you just attending? Was he covering it?

Parma: Just attending. Herb is a newspaper man. I still had the latent political interest of having been in five years work with [Robert C.] Bob Wilson, which had included his assumption of the position of chairman of the Republican National Congressional Committee, the body responsible for electing House members. That was just a natural carryover. And then I always helped Bob historically through every

election after that. I was part of his team every two years, so we were always in the middle of it and we went to a lot of national conventions. And Jack, as his interest continued to grow, wanted to go to these things, and we always had him involved with us. He was a good friend.

Kondracke: Even though he was already, by '64 he was already at the [Buffalo] Bills.

Parma: Yes, he went to the Bills. He didn't play for us more than two years. Classic story was that he was throwing a pass, came down on a helmet of one of his guys, he claimed [Ronald J.] Ron Mix, and hit his middle finger so hard that he crushed it. And when they went to the doctor and took the x-rays, the doctor said, "We can't do anything with that finger. It's going to be stiff, and how do you want it?" And Jack said, "Well, let's get a football," and they got a football. Jack grabbed a football and he said, "That's how I want it." So he took the hand and the doctor looked at it and he said, "Okay, I got it." From then on Jack would shake hands with you and that finger would be out like this, but that was how it developed. Sid Gilman put him on waivers. They thought they could hide him. [pause] I don't know if they have the same system in the NFL [National Football League] or not, but Sid put Jack on waivers and they were hiding him so he could get some other kids in and play until his finger healed. The coach of Buffalo at the time started this, I think it was [Louis H.] Lou Saban. He spotted Jack on the waiver list, so he sends the Chargers a hundred bucks and says, "Send that kid up here." Several other teams evidently were trying to get him too, but Buffalo got there first. And they were stuck. They had to sign him up. He really went for a

hundred bucks. Best deal anybody ever had because he took them I think to two championships.

Kondracke: How did Jack Kemp feel about getting sent on waivers?

Parma: He didn't like it. He didn't want to go to Buffalo at all. Cold weather and the rest of it. He would much rather have gone to Denver or someplace else, I guess, where he could ski. He loved to ski. And we'd go on skiing vacations with him as well. Jack couldn't get golf into his blood, he didn't have the temperament for golf. He needed action. I ended up with a group of guys and we were about to lose the San Diego Padres here, and so 15 of us got together and bought the team from Joan [B.] Kroc. [Raymond A.] Ray [Kroc] had died, Joan wasn't having any fun running a team, so people were making offers, never going to move the club, so we bought the team. The first call I got about it was from Jack. He says, "What the heck, are you buying the San Diego Padres for? That's the most dull, boring sport there is." And he went on and on and on with me about it. I said, "Jack, we're just trying to keep the team in San Diego." Well, we kept it for four years and finally got John [J.] Moores to buy it, and didn't lose any money, which was a miracle in those days. But Buffalo was a sad day for him, when he had to go, when he had to leave San Diego, number one, and Herb Klein and the opportunity that Herb was giving him, and to go to Buffalo.

Kondracke: But you stayed friends, because you ended up at the '64 convention, so you saw him fairly frequently even though—

Parma: He'd spend the off season out here.

Kondracke: Oh, he did? Did he live in San Diego?

Parma: Yes, I think they had a place in Point Loma. I think they would come back to that, and of course he had his family over in LA. Joanne had her parents up in Fillmore, up in the Valley someplace above LA, so they'd spend time there. But they'd always spend time here, and I think Herb probably put him on. And then one of Herb's very closest friends, [Robert H.] Bob Finch, Finch was lieutenant governor to [Ronald W.] Reagan, and he got Finch to get Jack involved with Reagan, and so Jack started on the off season working in the Reagan office in Sacramento. So he spent time up there. We were always interfacing. When he was elected to Congress it became more intense.

Kondracke: Describe your role in his political life.

Parma: Anxious supporter, I guess. Helping him stay on track. I think he was a self-starter politically, ingratiated himself with everybody with his confidence and his philosophy and pushing his philosophy. I sat on his committees. He'd have informal committees. Otto [A.] Silha, who was the editor/publisher of the *Minneapolis Herald Tribune* I think it was. Big guy with Cowles Publishing, he sat on several boards with Cowles publications. Otto may even have had something to do with *The Washington Post*, I don't know. Otto was a very significant supporter of Jack's and made introductions to him throughout his sphere of interests. Complimented Herb Klein's side with the working press, Otto with the professional guys who owned and ran the newspapers. And Otto and I were very close as far as

Jack is concerned. I don't know how many times we'd talk on the phone, mostly Otto calling, "Why the hell did he do this?" "Let me talk to him, Otto." But he had a lot of people like that.

Kondracke: So you were a political adviser as well as a fundraiser?

Parma: Yes, I guess. I never felt like an adviser per se. I'd tell him what I thought, and I'd bounce things off of him. He'd ask me what my opinion was on things. What my influence was I can't say. I took issue with him a lot with guys he would hire that I felt weren't good enough to be doing what he wanted them to do.

Kondracke: Like who?

Parma: [Edward J.] Ed Rollins, [Charles R.] Charlie Black [Jr.]. I didn't think they, they weren't heavy enough in my estimation, you know.

Kondracke: This was for the '88 presidential?

Parma: That's right. This was for a lot of campaigns. They were kind of peripheral Jack Kemp guys that were doing political advice and things like that. I never crossed swords with them, but a couple of times I did with Black. We'd have meetings, generally in Washington, and Otto would be there. Otto and I probably talked too much together. We did have opinions on how they were handling him.

Kondracke: So is this like kitchen cabinet? He would have a bunch of you in?

Parma: Yes, it was like a kitchen cabinet I guess.

Kondracke: And so who else was in this kitchen cabinet?

Parma: Bob Wilson was around at times. Herb, of course. Bob Finch at times. Then he'd have the guys that were on the philosophical side, the [Jude T.] Wanniski's, [Arthur B.] Art Laffer, people like that that propped him up on the issues. And Jack was quick at picking up stuff. He'd pick it up and be way ahead of them before long.

Kondracke: Were you in meetings with those guys?

Parma: At times. At times. They were just simple give and take, a few minutes—

Kondracke: How often would you go out to Washington to see him?

Parma: Oh, I did not make specific trips back there for Jack per se, but I was involved with companies that did business in Washington, took me back to Washington, and whenever I'd go to Washington sometimes I'd stay with Jack, sometimes at a hotel, but we'd always end up with dinner or getting together at some point. I'd see him in the office, something like that. I wasn't an adviser that he'd call and say, "What do we do about this?" I wasn't that guy. I was a kibitzer, I guess. A friend. That was my relationship with [Gerald R.] Ford [Jr.], as a friend. I never worked for Ford and I never worked for Jack. I was involved in the '76 campaign with Ford. He wanted me to take California; I took California. He called me right near the end, he

said "We're going to win California?" And I said, I was kind of wishy washy, I guess, and he said "I want to know if we're going to win California." And I said, "Yes, you're going to win it, you're going to win by 150,000 votes." "Alright, that's all I want to know." And we did.

Kondracke: You were Ford's California state chairman?

Parma: I was the chairman, co-chairman here with [Evelle J.] Ev Younger who was attorney general. I'd asked Ev to join with me on this thing. He was structured politically. I wasn't structured politically in California, never have been.

Kondracke: On a personal basis with Jack Kemp, how often would you get together as family after he left for Buffalo?

Parma: Whenever he was out here, and whenever I'd get to Washington I always made it a point to go by and see him, either in his office or at the house, or we'd have dinner together. If Barbara [Parma] was with me we'd always have dinner together. And I stayed at the house a couple of times. Sharing the bathroom with four kids was another—I used to like to stay at the Madison [Hotel]. I'd say "I'm going to stay at the Madison." They took good care of me there. But it was fun.

Kondracke: You went on ski trips together.

Parma: Yes, we'd see them in Vail [Colorado]. Vail mostly was where we'd see Jack.

Kondracke: Did you stay at his house at Vail?

Parma: No, we had a house. Generally being at the same time Ford would be out there, and we always took a house near Ford, wherever he was. Jack would come in. Sometimes he'd come in. Jack would ski a lot of places, I think. His kids being in school and all, there were times when he could get there and times he couldn't. Whenever he'd come out he'd call me and I'd put him together with Ford.

Kondracke: Something I've never asked anybody, but what kind of a skier was Jack?

Parma: Very good, aggressive, deep powder—

Kondracke: Black Diamonds?

Parma: He wouldn't even ski—the one time that we skied together, I was not a skier. I'm a California boy. He said, "I don't have time, I'm going down the hill. You go down with Joanne." So Joanne took me. Joanne could ski very well too. I was a terrible skier. Ford damn near killed me. I was doing well with the short skis, so Ford says, "You've got to get the big skis on." So I got the big skis on. That day he decided at Vail he was going to ski the Back Bowl[s], I guess they call it. Well we get to this thing and it's like here. I said, "We're going down there?" And he said, "Yes, come on." Off he goes. I tumbled all the way down. Secret Service guys were going crazy. "You killed him." He got down to the next station where we were going to the lift and I didn't show up, and he said, "They told me that you broke every

bone in your body probably.” Well, I finally got there, I didn’t break anything. I could ski, but not to the caliber they were.

Kondracke: Was Jack a reckless skier would you say?

Parma: No. He was a controlled skier, but fast. Jack was compact. He could ski well.

Kondracke: Did he ski back country?

Parma: He skied everything. He did not limit himself on the slopes. And Joanne could ski right with him. And his kids did too, of course.

Kondracke: You were both quarterbacks. You were a star quarterback at San Diego State and obviously he was a pro.

Parma: I was a quarterback.

Kondracke: Did you talk about quarterbacking and how to be a quarterback?

Parma: We’d talk about it. I don’t think we analyzed our forms or how to do it or anything. I always felt Jack threw the ball too hard. He threw that ball just, it would be a 40 yard pass, but it was a straight line. And this is before they had gloves or anything else, and they went up to catch that ball, it was, in cold weather it was difficult. And I used to tell him, I said, “Jack, you’d get a lot more completions if you’d just take a little off.” I know what he was doing, he was zipping it through so that he’d have more success at getting it to the

guy, past the defenders, but he threw hard. I couldn't catch him. We'd play 10, 15-yard catch, but I had to fight to catch the ball, because he just was strong. And his ends couldn't handle it.

Kondracke: What did he saw about throwing too hard?

Parma: "It's up to them to catch it."

Kondracke: It's up to you to catch it too.

Parma: Yes, that's right. "I'm not a catcher, Jack. I'm a thrower." He wanted his guys to be able to hold onto it. And interestingly enough, his coaches didn't say anything about it. They were on the guy for not catching it. Most coaches, if it gets near your hands, you better get it.

Kondracke: So when you're playing catch with him, though, he won't even let up on you.

Parma: Well, you know, he wasn't throwing it as hard, but he was making sure I knew he was there.

Kondracke: Did you regard that as a friendly act?

Parma: Oh sure. He never did anything to hurt you. Jack wouldn't hurt anybody. I never saw him do something that was an intentional hurt, or even in politics, of saying something that was going to be derogatory or hurt somebody. I didn't sense that. And that's what hurt him I think when he debated [Albert A.] Al Gore [Jr.]. He was a

nice guy, and Gore was not. Gore challenged him and Jack laughed him off, to his detriment. Gore, and I couldn't get him to admit it, but Gore did a number on him in my opinion. And I attributed that to Black more than anything. They went down to Florida to prepare for the debates, and they didn't discipline Jack. Jack knew his subjects and all that, but I don't think Jack had the benefit of hours of pre-debate discussion of the issues, of the questions that were going to come.

Kondracke: Were you there?

Parma: No, I wasn't, but in talking to him I was told that Jack didn't really work at it as hard as he could have.

Kondracke: Was that Jack's decision or somebody else's?

Parma: That was Jack. "I don't need it." Whoever it was, maybe it wasn't Black, but I thought it was Black who was there with him. That should have been his job, and it should have been his job to get him. "I don't care what you think, Jack. You're going to get your face smashed if you don't do this work. You've got to anticipate what is going to be asked." It wasn't difficult in those days. Today there's not a question that these guys get in a debate that they haven't gone over. I've seen it happen. I saw it happen with Ford.

Kondracke: So where did you get the report that he didn't adequately prepare?

Parma: Someplace. I might have asked Jack, I said "How much time did you spend on this?" "I spent all the time I needed." I guess I asked him, I said "Did you go through the question?" "Yes, we talked about those." Jack was head strong in many ways, and I felt you had to bring him down to say let's do it this way. Jack was a lot better than he showed against Gore, and I think that had he been able to go through some of these issues, I can't even tell you what Gore did that was significant. Gore got in his face and Jack was the nice guy.

Kondracke: Where were you when the debate happened?

Parma: I was out here, I guess.

Kondracke: You watched it on television.

Parma: Yes.

Kondracke: Did you talk to him right after?

Parma: No. It wasn't long after that we talked.

Kondracke: And how did he feel about his performance?

Parma: I don't know. I think perhaps he might have been defensive. My thought in talking to him was, "You didn't do the best you could."

Kondracke: You told him that.

Parma: Yes. I said "This guy took advantage of you being a nice guy," and people don't necessarily, they want to see, the viewer wants to see some shots taken too. Reagan's "There you go again."

Kondracke: Let's go back to the Chargers' era for a minute. Did you know what his relationship with Sid Gilman was like?

Parma: Yes. Very close, warm, player to coach relationship. He loved Sid Gilman. And Sid Gilman warranted that kind of affection. He was a great coach. He was an innovator, he really did a lot to bring the passing game in.

Kondracke: Was Gilman responsible for Jack's coming to the Chargers when they were in L.A., or was it somebody else?

Parma: I don't know if he was on the selection, I don't know who was the general manager at the time.

Kondracke: Jack was basically, had played very little when the Chargers picked him up.

Parma: He started out, I guess with the Giants.

Kondracke: Yes, five teams cut him.

Parma: Yes, he worked with a lot of teams. For some reason they didn't hold him long enough to see what he had. That's the unfairness of football at that level. Coaches don't have time to assess the talent they have. And he was playing, [Francis N.] Frank Gifford was the

halfback, I forget who they had playing quarterback with the [New York] Giants, but the guy playing third string's not going to get much. It's easy to cut the third string guy if you need another player for something else. But yes, I guess he was four or five teams.

Kondracke: Did Jack ever tell you about those days?

Parma: Not a whole lot. He wasn't happy with it, with his life then. He was fighting to stay in football. He was just a young kid. You look at the pictures of him and he's really a youngster.

Kondracke: He must have been delighted to be —

Parma: [pointing to photographs in the room] There he is up there. Now he's a youngster up there. The guy in the back row next to Ford.

Kondracke: He must have been delighted to have a job and to do well at it, because he did really well in L.A.

Parma: Oh, yes. Once he started playing, he was a star.

Kondracke: We've heard that [Allen] Al Davis, who was the offensive coordinator, didn't like Jack. What do you know about that?

Parma: That's the first time I've ever heard that, because I sensed a very close relationship between Jack and Al. We were with Al a lot at Super Bowls. I should say that the first Super Bowl was in Los Angeles and they didn't call it that. It was the world championship, or something like that, and Jack said, "You guys have to come up here to

Herb and me." I said, "I wouldn't go to L.A. for anything, Jack. I don't care for L.A." Herb went. The next game was in Miami, and Herb was, I guess, in Washington at the time, so he and Bob Wilson went down to the Super Bowl. Jack was in the House then. And so he took a small group down. Jack some place had developed a friendship with [Alvin R.] Pete Rozelle. Pete had affection for Jack, he liked him very much. So Pete would take care of the tickets and stuff. The third game was in Miami, and I told him I didn't want to go all the way across country to go to that game either. Well Herb came back, he said, "You've got to go to these things. The football game doesn't mean anything. It's what's happening all around the football game that's fun. And so the next game was in New Orleans, that was four. Well I ended up going to four through 39, always with Jack, and Herb went to all of them through 39. Thirty-nine was in Houston, and [Marjorie Klein] Marge had become Herb's wife. Very ill, and we took her to that one, and it was difficult. The next year we decided we wouldn't go. I forget where it was. All of these games, we were always the guests of Carrie [Cooke] and Pete Rozelle at the commissioner's party, and Pete would invite us to special deals, and we would have a Saturday evening reception that Herb and I put together for Jack under the auspices of Jack and Sharon and Bona [Park], later. Sharon most of the time, Sharon Zelaska. The size of our party Saturday night depended on what office Jack was seeking, I guess, or what his interests were. But Pete always showed up at that. We always got a lot of owners. Pete had put him on the Charities Committee for the NFL, and so Jack had a cadre of owners that would come to our parties, and we always invited Al Davis, who would always come. Ralph [C.] Wilson [Jr.] would generally be there, and the rest of it. And we met them all. We were at the Super Bowl in '84 in

Tampa, driving these little two-lane streets to get every place. We came back to the Saturday night party, and Jack, Herb Klein, Claire Bergner, who's my dear pledge brother and fraternity brother, who was head of the Chamber of Commerce at the time, and Johnny Sanders, general manager of the Chargers, and I were in a little group, and I said, "If these guys can have a Super Bowl in Tampa, can you imagine what a Super Bowl in San Diego would be like?" And we talked about it, everybody was enthusiastic. Johnny says, "Excuse me." He leaves for about 10 minutes, comes back, and he says, "I just called Gene Klein," who was then the owner of the Chargers. "Gene says, 'If you guys want the Super Bowl, he'll go to work for you. He'll do all he can to get it.'" And Gene was a close friend of Pete's as well. That was in January of '84. We came back, had a meeting in the mayor's office, and everybody decided let's go for it, and Herb says, "Leon will be the chairman." [laughs] I said, "Herb, I've got a company to worry about." "Don't worry about it, Leon. Let's do it." And so that was in February, I think. In May we went back and made a presentation at a hotel in Washington, DC, 15 cities total bidding. The night before our presentation Rozelle invited our little group to his little party for the owners, so we were the only ones there of all the cities bidding for it. Of course the owners were all there. And we had a chance to do some lobbying. I remember talking to [Kenneth S.] Bud Adams [Jr.] in Houston [owner of Houston Oilers professional football team] and Lamar Hunt, who owned the Kansas City [Chiefs], and Lamar says, "There's no chance you can have that game out there." And I said, "Why not?" He said, "You can't seat 72,000 people in that stadium." I said, "Oh yes we can." He said, "No way, no way." I said, Kaminsky [phonetic] at HOK, the architects of stadiums and had built Lamar's stadium, said we can." Lamar says, "Kaminsky told

you that?" And I said yes. And he said, "Well, if he says that then I'll go with you." And with that, we went in and had the votes. We made our presentation like 8:30, nine o'clock. Eleven o'clock that night Pete walks up with Gene and announces we've won the Super Bowl. But it was because of Jack Kemp. And Jack was doing lobbying for us too. He was with us.

Kondracke: It was because of Jack Kemp how? What did Jack Kemp do?

Parma: The introductions. Going to the Super Bowls and the parties and all that, and meeting the owners. The owners paid more attention to Herb. I was a peripheral guy. They all loved Herb Klein.

Kondracke: Why did Herb Klein have that relationship with the owners?

Parma: Through Jack, and Herb's reputation as director of communications for [Richard M.] Nixon, and the respect that Herb had from everybody. One of Herb's dearest friends and nicest guys I ever knew was Hugh [S.] Sidey. You talk to Hugh Sidey about Herb Klein, he goes on for hours. Sidey used to say, "[If the] crazy nuts in the White House had talked to Herb, they wouldn't have had Watergate."

Kondracke: These Super Bowl events, it was the commissioner's reception, your reception for Jack, was that a fundraiser or was it just a get-together?

Parma: A get-together, but coincidentally it would be people that were contributing to his campaign.

Kondracke: How many people would be at the Kemp entourage at these Super Bowls?

Parma: I'd say it would run from 20-30 people to a couple hundred or more. We had one in I forget what year it was, in Los Angeles, one of those big hotels, and we got a ballroom full of people.

Kondracke: But were there certain people he always had, like you and Klein?

Parma: Yes.

Kondracke: But who were the other—

Parma: There was a coterie of people, guys from Buffalo, a fellow that played quarterback up there, [Edward J. A. "Eddie"] Rutkowski, a couple of car dealers from Buffalo, a union leader or two from Buffalo. Jack crossed the lines with guys that loved him. And we had a coterie of people from here. We probably had 10 regulars from San Diego, we'd go back with our wives. They wouldn't make every game like we did, but they were there for a lot of them.

Kondracke: What did Jack do at these occasions?

Parma: He would mix around, and if we had a dinner, he'd have a few words. I had a hell of a time cutting him off. Jack would give a talk

and he'd mesmerize himself. I was kidding Joanne. "Joanne, you've got to figure out a way to get a hook on him." He ends a speech 10 times.

Kondracke: Would he talk at those things about whatever political thing was burning, or did he talk football?

Parma: He's always get around. Football was a key part of it, but Jack could always put his bid in for supply-side economics, whatever he was interested in at the time. The last one at Houston, it was out at some guy's house who was a businessman who liked Jack. Actually he ran the Holocaust Museum.

Kondracke: How did people in San Diego feel about Jack's departure to Buffalo?

Parma: They were disappointed. He was the starting quarterback. I think we'd won the title, if I'm not mistaken, or we were in contention, at least.

Kondracke: Yes, you played in the championship game.

Parma: Anyway, he was the star quarterback. It was a hell of a story. A hundred bucks and we lose him. Jack has always been very popular here. We can always draw a crowd with Jack in San Diego.

Kondracke: Was there any skull doggery involved in Jack's being waived and picked up. Did anybody tip off the Buffalo Bills that he

Parma: Never heard anything about it. I think that Sabin just paid attention to those lists.

Kondracke: Are you friends with [William] Barron Hilton?

Parma: I know Barron. That's it.

Kondracke: I just wonder how Barron Hilton felt about Jack's—

Parma: They were all devastated. Sid Gilman in particular was upset.

Kondracke: Let's go to the Republican National Convention again in '64. You, Herb Klein and Jack go there, and what did you do, exactly?

Parma: We had good seats in the gallery, we interfaced with the delegates and the rest of them. The meetings seemed to start late. The meeting went on. There was a lot of contention. We had Rockefeller with his group that was really pressing, and the Goldwater people. A lot of animosity between both sides, liberal and conservative. Goldwater established himself, I don't know if the conscience of the conservative was out then or it came after. But we were all, you know I was for Goldwater. Goldwater happened to be a fraternity brother of mine. Difference: he went to Arizona and I went to San Diego State, and I had met Barry when I was with Bob. Bob was chairman of the House Campaign Committee; Barry was chairman of the Senate Campaign Committee. So we'd go over back and forth. The first time I went in there, I knew Barry was a Sigma Chi, and I said, "Barry, we're brothers." And he right away gives me the grip,

and from then on it was "brother this, brother that." He never forgot. Nice man.

Kondracke: Was Jack for Goldwater from the get go?

Parma: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

Kondracke: He was from New York now, and Rockefeller's the—

Parma: Didn't mean. Well, '64, he wasn't in politics. He was playing ball. That didn't bother him that Rockefeller was going up against Goldwater.

Kondracke: What was his reason for being for Goldwater?

Parma: Conservative. Jack was a real, true conservative. Some social issues, outside the box, but a real good conservative.

Kondracke: Let's go back to Herb Klein. Klein meets Jack through the football connection at some banquet. Did he tell you what immediately attracted him to Jack?

Parma: I think probably the discussion was, "This guy's plenty sharp. I'm going to get him involved in the newspaper some way," just as a promotion, having the quarterback doing something at the paper. He said, "I'm not going to let him touch sports. Let the sports writers worry about that. I want him to get into other stuff," which he did.

Kondracke: What did he get into?

Parma: Issues involving the city, and I don't have a specific recollection of anything that he got into other than he was involved in things that weren't sports-related. And he'd write columns, I think. Herb would let him write some stuff, help him out on those. But Herb was adamant, no sports, and helped him develop, I guess, his ability to express himself on the issues. Herb was a terrific mentor. There are people around this community in significant positions today that were mentored by Herb Klein. I saw the mayor not long ago, who was one of Herb's guys, had been the chief of police, but Herb had helped him develop and run for mayor. [Gerald R.] Jerry Sander's his name. He asked me, "I bet you miss Herb." And I said, "Oh, God." He said, "I really miss him. I can't tell you the number of times I'd call Herb Klein, ask for advice." Herb had a way of cutting right to the issue. He saw all aspects of an issue, and would mentor people, and get them involved. I don't know how many Chamber presidents there have been since Herb has been involved. I'd say 90 percent were handpicked by Herb. The guys that he brought along, brought them up through the executive committees and the rest of it. Said, "This is a strong guy. Let's build on him." It was beautiful to watch.

Kondracke: Was the Klein/Kemp relationship at all strained by the fact that Kemp, when he became a Congressman sort of opposed Nixon on wage and price controls and things like that?

Parma: Herb understood those things. And I don't know if he agreed with him or not. Herb was a good soldier. Herb's job, Herb, number one wanted to be the press secretary. [Harry Robbins "Bob"] Haldeman and [John D.] Erlichman, those guys wanted their guy,

happened to by [Ronald L.] Ron Zeigler. And I guess it was Bob Wilson that called RN [Richard Nixon] or he called Haldeman or one of them and said, "Look, you can't do this to Herb, just close him out." As a result, Herb came up with the idea of the director of communications, and the idea being all the departments of government, the Cabinet secretaries, have PR [public relations] people. They don't call them that, but that's what they were. And somebody has to coordinate them. And Herb got Nixon to agree that he would allow him, even to the point of suggestion to the secretary of Labor, "Here's a great guy that can handle your job for you." Most of the guys are happy to get it off their back. And Herb had all of these guys placed in the departments and he coordinated them. I don't know how they're doing it now, but at the time he put together a powerful group of people. And Herb also had liaison with people outside of public office. He had a group that he'd bring into Washington once a month that were the VPs of PR, public affairs, in the Fortune 50, say, the top 50 companies. Politics aside, he'd bring them in, "What are we doing right? What are we doing wrong?" I think through [George W.] Bush, at least, Herb had meetings back there with, what's the little girl that was the last press secretary for Bush? Donna? Dana?

Kondracke: Dana [M.] Perino.

Parma: Dana Perino, yes, he had a deal for Dana. And Herb would present, "Here's what these guys are saying, just thought you should know." He'd tune them in.

Kondracke: Were Klein and the *San Diego Union* boosters of Jack Kemp all the way along? Kemp-Roth, and—

Parma: To the best of my knowledge, yes. *San Diego Union* under [James S.] Jim Copley and Herb, and before Herb, [Victor H.] Brute Krulak and Andy Anderson [phonetic], were all very conservative. I mean, they were hardcore Republican guys, and that was the thrust of that newspaper editorially.

Kondracke: Did the *Union* boost Kemp as Reagan's vice president?

Parma: I don't know that they took a position on it per se.

Kondracke: Or Kemp in '88?

Parma: I think Kemp in '88 they probably supported him. Reagan deal, we were really surprised and upset. We were in Detroit, and Reagan would take George H.W. with him and Jack to a lot of these gatherings. The night that we knew he was going to make a decision we had a Reagan advance guy with us the whole time in the suite, and some time during the evening I saw the guy slip out of the room. And I went over to Jack and I said, "This is not good. That guy just left. He knows something." And it wasn't long after that Reagan called Jack, or somebody did. I don't remember if it was Reagan who called him. I would hope it was Reagan who called him, told him he selected Bush to be his VP. I'll tell you, we were like we'd been hit by a sledge hammer. We thought Jack was heads and tails, heads above him. And I think the Reagan people probably felt, Reagan being such a hardcore conservative, that it was better off that we get a more

moderate guy like [George] H.W. Bush than another hardcore conservative. I think that was what it came down to.

Kondracke: Do you remember who the advance guy was?

Parma: No.

Kondracke: And what was the advance guy doing? The advance guy was going around with Jack?

Parma: Yes, he was making sure Jack got to all of these events, and obviously he was there, so he was going to take him over to see Reagan if he was the guy. And when he left, that was a tipoff. There was only a handful of us there: Herb, Marge [Marjorie G. Klein], Joanne, Jack—

Kondracke: Whose suite was it?

Parma: In Jack's suite.

Kondracke: And how did Jack take it?

Parma: Disappointment.

Kondracke: What did he say?

Parma: I don't remember what he said, but we were down. Somebody said, "I don't believe it." We couldn't believe it. Nobody

rationalized what I just rationalized it to be. No one thought about that.

Kondracke: So let me just get the picture. You remember what hotel it was?

Parma: It might have been in the—it was a new hotel on the water, all glass. I remember during the middle of the night there was a big block of ice, ice sculpture, that was sitting on a table near one of these windows, up about the 20th or more floor, and it started melting, and it started sliding, and it slid right off and through the window. It went down and landed on the ballroom roof. It fell 20 stories. It's a wonder it didn't go through and kill somebody, but I'll never forget that. I think that was the hotel.

Kondracke: You're in the Jack Kemp suite, there's you, your wife, and Klein and his wife, and Jack and Joanne and who else?

Parma: I don't know who all. I don't remember. We were someplace with Reagan in '80. If the ice thing occurred—I don't know if that '80 convention was Detroit or not, but that was when Reagan was nominated. And they were trying to get Ford to take the vice president's job.

Kondracke: Did you have mixed feelings about whether Ford ought to be Reagan's vice president, or Jack Kemp?

Parma: That was another time.

Kondracke: No, that was '80. [William E.] Bill Brock wanted to engineer—

Parma: Well, '80, but '84.... Eighty was when Reagan was elected, '84 was—I don't know, I may have them crisscrossed. I don't sense that Ford—

Kondracke: He was definitely—

Parma: Was it Ford when they were talking about Ford? I have difficulty thinking that was the same time.

Kondracke: It was. Bill Brock was the chairman of the Republican National Committee, and he had this plan to have Reagan take Ford to be sort of co-president, vice president but sort of co-president.

Parma: Well, the way it developed they wanted too much go. Ford's guys, [Henry A.] Kissinger and the rest of them got together—

Kondracke: Right

Parma: They were going to control the government.

Kondracke: Right. Meanwhile, the Kemp people were hoping that it was going to be him, and obviously the Bush people wanted it to be him. So the question is about you, though, you're pals with Ford, but you're also pals with Kemp, so how did you feel about that? Or did you know about it?

Parma: Oh, I knew about the Ford thing, yes. I was in the suite when a bunch of House members went in to talk to Ford in the Ford suite when that occurred. That's why I'm trying to think that it had to be a separate time, because I don't remember the Ford issue. Reagan was taking Bush and Kemp with him to these things, and I hardly think that that would have been time that the guys in the back were talking to Ford about doing this other deal.

Kondracke: My guess is that the Reagan people were having none of the Ford business, so—

Parma: It wasn't Ford's idea. Ford thought it was crazy. Ford said it would never work, never work. "He can't give up." Ford's point was constitutionally Reagan can't give up these responsibilities. They were talking about Ford taking Defense and other departments. That can't happen. Ford just thought it was too far out, in my opinion.

Kondracke: Back to the suite. You're in there with Kemp. You're the one who sees the advance man go out?

Parma: Yes.

Kondracke: And you said this to Jack.

Parma: Yes. When he slipped, I mean it was very quiet. It's kind of like, "I'm going to—" He didn't say anything, like maybe—just very quietly left the room.

Kondracke: Were you there when the phone call came?

Parma: I'm not sure.

Kondracke: Now, when Ford became president in '74, Kemp is a Congressman, and there were issues where Kemp was opposed to Ford's economic policy, his inflation policy and stuff.

Parma: Probably was, yes.

Kondracke: Do you remember your involvement in that?

Parma: I wasn't. Ford's presidency, I got a call from [Robert T.] Hartmann the day before, like August 8 or something like that, said, "Your friend wants you back here as fast as you can get back. He'd like to have you here." Which told me what was happening. And Barbara and I caught the next airplane. I guess we caught the first airplane out the morning of the ninth. No, it was the morning of the eighth, it was the day Nixon read his deal. I had my gal get me a suite in the Hay Adams [Hotel], I wanted it with a window facing the White House, and she got it. And so we flew back the eighth, must have gotten there late. We just barely got into the suite when Nixon came on and resigned. I was watching the White House and watching that very momentous occasion, and I got a call, "Be over here at 11 o'clock. Come to the diplomatic entrance." And so the next morning Barbara and I got there to the diplomatic entrance and went up, and that's when he became president. We walked in with [Robert P.] Bob Griffin, who was then the Senate minority leader, and with [John J.] Johnny Rhodes, who was the House, at the time I think Johnny was House minority leader, and their wives. When we got upstairs, the

East Room was packed. Nixon had used that room to address his staff. Staff recognizing what was going to happen, stayed glued in their chairs, they didn't get up and leave. The smart guys understood there's enough confusion around, nobody knows who the hell's invited, who isn't. Just stay here. We'll be asked to leave if we're going to lay low. Here I am with Johnny and Bob Griffin and our wives. We walk in, and it's packed. Ford turns around and sees us, so he gets the kids to move so that we could come in and sit there. An usher comes over and I said, "You need four seats. Don't worry about me, but this is the minority leader of the Senate and the House. They need a seat. If you need to rouse somebody out, you better get them up there someplace." He comes back and he says, "I got six seats," and they put us over right in front of the cameras. We were about six rows back, but we were there. And Ford was sworn in. I don't know he got there, but that was—

Kondracke: I just wondered whether any of this byplay between Kemp and Ford on policy you were involved in.

Parma: No, no, in fact when Jack went in, when he was elected, I talked to him on the phone, I said, "Jack, you've got to do all you can to try to get onto the [House Committee on] Appropriations Committee. That's where the power is. You've got to do what you can to get there." He said, "That's where I want to go. That or Ways and Means" he wanted to get in on. So he zeroed in on Appropriations, and I said, "I'll talk to Ford." And I talked to Ford about it and Ford said, "I have no problem with him. The problem is going to be with Frank [T.] Bow." Well I knew Frank. Frank Bow was the ranking Republican on House Appropriations. Frank was out of Ohio, I think.

And I'd met Frank through Bob Wilson, and we had established a relationship, because I was president of the Bishop School out here, an Episcopal school, and Frank had told Bob that in 1911, or something like that, he had gone to the Bishop School. And I sent work back, I said, "You tell Frank, he didn't go to the Bishop School. This had been a girls' school until just recently, and Frank was adamant that he'd been there, and I said, "Next time I'm back there I'll have lunch with him, talk to him." So I went back a couple of weeks later, and I called Frank and had lunch with him. He was one of the privileged guys. He was in the corner of the House Gallery, had a suite of offices up there. That was where the ranking member of the Appropriations had a suite of rooms there. And so he had lunch brought in and we had lunch together, and we got talking about the Bishop [School], and he explained how it happened that his father had gone out there and so he knew the Scripps [family] and somehow he'd been admitted, and I said "Well let me find out, Frank." Later I found out they actually moved a trunk down there by accident in the basement of the school. There's a ledger, the ledger was 1911, there's Frank Bow's name on it. Anyway, so I went to Frank Bow next time I went back after Ford had told me what he did, and Frank said, "I'm not naming any freshmen Congressmen to the Appropriations Committee. I did that as a favor and I got [David A.] Dave Stockman, and look what happened to him."

Kondracke: Stockman.

Parma: Dave went beserk. And so Frank says, "I'm not going to have another Stockman. You tell Kemp to prove himself, and I'll think about it." Well, eventually Frank put him on.

Kondracke: Did Kemp get on Approps the first year?

Parma: I think he, no, it took a while. Frank wanted to make sure freshmen were doing what he thought was right. Then Frank gets appointed ambassador to Panama, and dies just at the start of his confirmation.

Kondracke: You urged Jack to run for Congress, did you?

Parma: Yes, I was happy when I heard he was thinking about it. I was happy.

Kondracke: When did you hear that he was thinking about it?

Parma: Through Herb. Herb told me that they were trying to get Jack to run for office.

Kondracke: Was there ever any thought that Jack might come back to California and run for office?

Parma: I never heard that. That was his base. He had a better base than he had in San Diego. Two championships, whatever. And he had a great line: "If you don't elect me, I'm going to come back and play quarterback."

Kondracke: Right. So now in '76, Reagan is challenging Ford, and what was your role in that? Because you were, I take it, a Reagan person, but you were also a Ford person.

Parma: Yes, well I was a Ford person all the way. Ford had a five-man special committee of some sort. Rogers [C.B.] Morton was kind of our chair and [Richard] Dick Herman from Nebraska, [Nelson F.] Rockefeller had a guy who was executive vice president at Chase [bank], I guess. It was kind of his political guy, he was on it. Somebody else. But I think five guys, we started out with five guys. And then I suggested we put William French Smith on, because he'd been Reagan's lawyer, and wasn't a vociferous guy. He was a steady person and would give good advice. He was Reagan's lawyer, and had the confidence of Nancy and Reagan. And we just advised on issues, some policy things that might come up. Wasn't a really significant committee, but I think it was a place to put some people. It took care of Rockefeller's guy and took care of the National Committee, had people, Herman from the National Committee. We'd have people come in and give us reports sometimes. We'd meet once a month or something like that, and go back for that. No conflict with Jack. Reagan was very difficult at the time, because he, I guess, had expected to win at Kansas City. It came down to the last state, I guess. He expected to win that, and it was a very sad time for him. John [P.] Sears had told [Richard B. "Dick"] Cheney when Ford was going over to see Reagan that night, "Make sure he doesn't ask him to be vice president." During the time we were there, William French Smith came to me and said, "Ronnie would like to have a personal interface between him and Ford, and he's asked me to set it up. Would you see if Ford would name somebody I could visit with that would have his ear?" So I went to Ford and I told him what Reagan wanted, and he said, "That's fine. Why don't you do it?" So I was the guy. And every day, seemed to me twice a day, morning and evening,

Bill Smith and I would get together to just say hello, see if there's anything going on. Nothing going on, nothing to talk about.

Kondracke: This is during the convention?

Parma: During the convention. Bill Smith said, "Make sure he doesn't ask him to be vice president." I mean that was coming now from the lawyer to me to Ford. So I told Ford, and he said "Well, you know, that's their way. We'll think about it." He didn't commit whether he was going to ask him or not. Great thought after the fact would have been brilliant to name him. Been a slam dunk election. But there was such animosity and such bitterness and so much stuff coming back to us about Ford being a dummy and everything else. I've got a picture around here.

[interruption]

Kondracke: Okay, so we're back to the 1976 Convention, this is Kansas City. What did Kemp do about the Ford/Reagan fight?

Parma: I really don't know. I don't know. I can't tell you if Kemp was a delegate or not, from New York.

Kondracke: So you didn't have any, you had other fish to fry at that convention.

Parma: Yes, I was worried about my golfing buddy.

Kondracke: Right. Because there is this story, that Kemp offered Reagan some delegates from New York if Reagan would advocate a 30 percent across-the-board tax cut, and the Reagan people said, "That's too far out. We haven't prepared that." So it never happened. That suggests that Kemp was sort of leaning Reagan's way, but you—

Parma: I don't know anything about it. Rockefeller, after all, was the vice president. And you've got to assume he controlled the delegation and he controlled New York and would deliver New York. I don't know if he did or not. At this juncture I can't tell you. I know election night I was the scorekeeper at the White House. I had, I think it was *Newsweek* had a nice layout of the states by delegates that was very convenient, and I had a White House pad and I was just keeping score as it was going. And the President was right here all the time, and if I wasn't there he'd get me over and I'd tell him what the latest was till two or three in the morning, when Cheney came up and said, "We lost." We were still there. Give me 9,000 votes and he's president. It was that close.

Kondracke: Between '76 and '80, Kemp is a rising star, Kemp-Roth is happening, what was your role with him? This is the period when he's a big supply-sider and all that. This is when you would go to Washington.

Parma: Just support, I guess. We might talk about these things. I remember Jude Wanniski being around.

Kondracke: Laffer?

Parma: Laffer was around, not as much as Jude. Jude spent a lot of time with Jack.

Kondracke: What did you think about Jude?

Parma: I wasn't sure. I wasn't sure about him. I didn't know what was motivating him. I think he'd worked for *The Journal*, but it seemed to me he was more a freelance guy when I was seeing him. So I didn't know his mission. I wasn't tuned in enough to understand what he was getting at. I think he was probably, now as I look back, probably more interested in the philosophical thing being projected out, and Jack was the guy that could carry the message better than anyone, and that's why he concentrated on Jack. That would be my cut at it.

Kondracke: Did you know Laffer? Laffer was in California for some of this time.

Parma: Yes. I just met him at political deals.

Kondracke: Now in 1980, Laffer and Wanniski tried to hatch a plot whereby Kemp would run for president but then would withdraw, and throw his delegates to Reagan, and the assumption was that Reagan would then pick Kemp as his vice president. Were you in on that?

Parma: No. That never came up in any meeting.

Kondracke: Well it never happened because Kemp refused to go along with it, wouldn't run against Reagan.

Parma: Who was Reagan's vice president?

Kondracke: Reagan's vice president was Bush.

Parma: Both times?

Kondracke: Yes.

Parma: That's why I'm confused. I can't put the Ford vice president deal and H.W. being the guy's. I can't put that all on '80.

Kondracke: It was definitely '80.

Parma: It makes sense that it would be '80.

Kondracke: It was definitely '80.

Parma: Okay, but the Ford thing was dissipated fairly early during the convention period, because I know at the last couple of days it was all who's it going to be, Bush or Kemp.

Kondracke: Right. During the Reagan years Kemp is sometimes, much of the time for Reagan policy, but sometimes opposed to Reagan policy. Do you remember any input you had during those?

Parma: I had little input policy-wise. Politically I was a support agent. Keep your powder dry, just think a little bit about what you're doing and why.

Kondracke: He wants to be president in '88 or he's going to run for president in '88. What role did you have in that?

Parma: We sat on this committee, and I think probably the guys involved professionally with him would just as soon not have Otto and me around.

Kondracke: Who is Otto exactly?

Parma: Otto Silha.

Kondracke: Spell it.

Parma: Otto Silha was the publisher of the *Minneapolis Herald Tribune*.

Kondracke: Is he still alive?

Parma: No, Otto died a few years ago. Then he was also Cowles [Media], the magazines and I guess they had newspapers too. I know he did a lot, he was on the boards, and I don't know if Cowles owned the Minneapolis paper or not. I'm not clear on that, but I know Otto was a pretty influential guy when it came to the publishers. Herb had a lot of respect for him, and I keyed off of Herb a lot, what he thought of people. Herb was a very good judge of character.

Kondracke: Did the three of you share your opinion about Rollins and Black?

Parma: I think so. I know that Otto expressed himself very strongly on the subject.

Kondracke: To Jack?

Parma: I think so.

Kondracke: And basically the message was?

Parma: And Jack thought, Jack visited a lot with Otto. He liked Otto and he respected Otto, and I don't know what the impact. But I would guess, from what Otto's temperament was with me, Otto didn't hesitate with Jack talking to him.

Kondracke: So the message was that—

Parma: Watch these guys. Either they don't understand, or I don't know what, but they didn't do things that we felt Jack needed to be promoted. An example is that damn debate thing.

Kondracke: That was later.

Parma: That was later, but the confidence factor was paramount.

Kondracke: But in '88 he's running against Bush, so it's difficult to begin with. Did you not feel that that '88 campaign was being run well?

Parma: Jack's? I didn't sense they had any traction. Bush coming out of the vice presidency and all, he had a lot of traction. To Jack's credit, at the Super Bowl in New Orleans, when Bush I think was vice president, he sat with us. In fact he sat next to me! He left about halftime, but he was sitting with our group. We had, Pete always made sure we had pretty nice seats, and I remember out of the blue Bush comes down and sits down. He's a lovely man.

Kondracke: This reminds me, I don't want to forget this. Was there ever a plan for Jack to succeed Pete Rozelle as NFL commissioner?

Parma: Not that I heard. I wouldn't doubt that that was a latent wish of Jack's. He would love to have done that.

Kondracke: He was [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development] HUD secretary when Rozelle retired.

Parma: I never heard it.

Kondracke: Did you help Kemp in '88 raise money?

Parma: Oh I'm sure, yes. Made calls to people I know.

Kondracke: Did you campaign? Did you go to New Hampshire?

Parma: I didn't, no. Never been to New Hampshire on a campaign. I didn't campaign there with Ford. The only time I was with Ford was here in California.

Kondracke: What is your impression of Kemp as a political campaigner?

Parma: It was very good, except that he needed a jerk to make his point and get off. The only criticism I ever heard about Jack was he talks too long. He never heard us when we were telling him that. I think he just got wrapped up so much, as he's winding up he'd get another thought and he'd go after it. He'd end every speech three or four times. Joanne will kill me if she reads that.

Kondracke: And what about his willingness to ask for money.

Parma: I think he found that difficult. I just offhand, I don't have anything to promote that. He obviously knew he needed it, but I don't think he was comfortable asking people for things. He didn't have any trouble asking me to talk to Bow or talk to Ford about his being on the committee. He didn't have that problem.

Kondracke: Do you know anything about Kemp's hope to be vice president, to be Bush's vice presidential candidate in '88, when he picked [James Danforth "Dan"] Quayle?

Parma: No.

Kondracke: Did you go to New Orleans?

Parma: Yes, I think we were in New Orleans, yes.

Kondracke: Were you in Kemp's suite?

Parma: I would have been. I have very little recollection of New Orleans other than Bush standing out someplace with Quayle, kind of like "Here's my vice president." I don't know if they were on a pier.

Kondracke: Yes, a pier or a boat.

Parma: That's my only recollection of that convention. And as I say, I think we were there. I didn't just go to these things. I felt I had to have something to do. And I don't know, I just can't put it together what we were doing.

Kondracke: Okay. So then he becomes HUD secretary. Did you have much to do with him about housing or what he was doing then?

Parma: No.

Kondracke: And then he leaves after that, he's Empower America. Did you help with Empower America at all?

Parma: No. I maybe made a contribution.

Kondracke: So then he gets nominated for vice president. Were you surprised that [Robert J.] Dole picked him?

Parma: I was, I guess I had some hint about it. I knew Bob Dole very well actually. He was the chairman of the National Committee in '72, and we were given, Nixon wanted to have the convention in San Diego, and I was asked, Bob Wilson asked me to be the local

chairman, so I interfaced with Dole a lot. Had him to my house, in fact, for a party, and then when we went to Denver, when they made the selection, I was with him in his suite. In fact we called John [N.] Mitchell to make sure Mitchell was on board that the convention be in San Diego. That's as much as I know about it.

Kondracke: You must have talked to Jack about Dole, about what he thought about Dole.

Parma: Yes, I guess.

Kondracke: Do you remember anything about that?

Parma: I had a high regard for Bob Dole.

Kondracke: Did Jack?

Parma: And Jack. And I felt Jack would really help the ticket. Dole was kind of a happy-go-lucky guy. I mean he was almost a throw-away for some people to be in that race. I don't know. I felt he'd do better than he did. I don't know where we got off track. I thought he'd do a lot better.

Kondracke: Did you have a role in that campaign?

Parma: No.

Kondracke: I mean, Jack and Dole had been adversaries within the Republican Party over tax policy. Did you ever talk to Jack about what he thought about Dole?

Parma: No.

Kondracke: Okay.

Parma: Again, we were more social. I didn't talk a lot of policy with Ford. I think that's why we got along so well. We figured up one time: we'd played over 250 rounds of golf together, and I think we did that because I felt my responsibility with him was you don't need to worry about me with policy and all that. I had a call early on, I guess right after the transition committee, he asked me to be on the transition committee that moved him from VP to president. We met at five o'clock that afternoon that he became president, and everybody went around the table, made comments, and Ford said, "I'd like to keep you guys together. Why don't you come back here in a month, tell me how we're doing." Johnny Burns [phonetic] was there, Bryce [N.] Harlow, Mel [phonetic], Dave Packer [phonetic], Bob Griffin, Johnny Burns. Sidebar: the ambassador corps was coming in to present their credentials. Terry O'Down [phonetic] had come in and told the President, they're in the Roosevelt Room, they'd bring them in by groups. Ford would stand up, we'd all stand up. "Sit down, sit down, sit down," and he'd go out of the room and come back in and we'd all stand up. "Sit down, sit down." Terry came back in, he got another group, so he got up again and we all stood up and he said, "I thought I said sit down." Johnny Burns says "Mr. President, we're not standing up because you're Gerry Ford."

Kondracke: Great.

Parma: That, I think, was his first realization he was president of the United States, and things were going to be different.

Kondracke: Did you talk to Jack when he discovered he had cancer?

Parma: Yes. He called me in January, and I tried to find my telephone slip and I can't find it. I know I must have been home, and Barbara heard this. So I was home. He told me what had happened.

Kondracke: What did he tell you?

Parma: He said, "I know that God has a plan for me now." That was in January, I think. Then I stayed in touch with [Jeffrey A.] Jeff [Kemp]. Jeff was calling me, letting me know how he was doing. I found it hard to believe. You know, it all started out with pain in his hip. They were pumping him with cortisone, making the cancer grow. By the time they cut him open, they just sewed him back up again. So that was a disaster. I wanted you to hear that. I thought that was a poignant thing for him to say. He loved his kids. Jimmy sings.

Kondracke: So assess Jack Kemp as a person. Well, one of the things that everybody says about his was that he was intensely competitive. Do you remember any stories about competitions?

Parma: Oh, well, he'd win. Played tennis with him or anything like that.

Kondracke: Did you play tennis with him?

Parma: I played a game or two with him. I wasn't worth a hoot, and he jammed that ball right down my throat. I mean it was get out of the way.

Kondracke: Powerful serve?

Parma: Same with his skiing. Down you go. I could never get him out on the golf course, unfortunately.

Kondracke: What did he say about golf?

Parma: "It takes too much time."

Kondracke: Well that's another characteristic we've encountered, and that is that he was impatient.

Parma: Yes, he doesn't suffer people that took a long time to say things. He'd cut in and finish your story.

Kondracke: Did you ever drive with him?

Parma: I must have. I don't have a recollection of having a close call, at least.

Kondracke: Did he get impatient with Joanne?

Parma: He was very careful with Joanne. He leaned on Joanne a lot for her opinion. She was really a ballast for him. She would take over things. Herb and I used to sit down with Jack and Joanne to decide where people were going to sit at the Super Bowl, and we'd have 100 seats, or 200 seats, or whatever, whatever the times were that we were doing things. And we'd scrounge tickets up. I'd get stuff from, I'd call Ralph Wilson, "I need 10 tickets. Can you peel off 10 tickets?" Other owners that we might know: Lamar, ask him, "Can you peel off 10 tickets for the Jack Kemp people?" Pete would get what he could. Herb and I would both get on [Dean A.] Spanos to get Charger tickets. I was a season ticket holder, so I leveraged that, and at the time I had the Budweiser [brewing company] distributorship here, and we were big time sponsors of all sports, so that leveraged into tickets, so we got tickets. We weren't ever without tickets. Herb and I would sit down with Jack and Joanne, and Herb and I generally would sit down and map out where they were going to go. Joanne would have her input. He didn't have time to screw around with it. Then pretty soon Joanne says, "I'll take care of it." So she'd take care of it. By that time the group had expanded and we didn't know all the characters.

Kondracke: Did you find him at all confiding or introspective about himself and about human relationships and stuff?

Parma: Yes, but it was careful. I knew things probably that he'd just as soon not have other people know. I don't have any examples. He kept his own counsel, probably be a fair thing to say. I think with Herb and with me he said things that he probably wouldn't say anyplace else. And we weren't his only confidants. He had a lot of guys that considered themselves confidants, and I would say I was

never an inside confidant per se. Wasn't with him enough where he could bounce things off and develop a standard of what my thinking was. Herb more so than me, because Herb would get on the phone a lot and talk to him. It's a shame that you don't have that resource. What a resource he would have been for you.

Kondracke: Did Herb keep any kind of a diary, or—

Parma: No, I don't think so. I was trying to put some stuff together on the Super Bowl with our memorabilia that he and I had collected, and I knew he had a lot of it. And I got ahold of Nancy Crespi [phonetic], his gal, and I said, "What did Herb do with his memorabilia, stuff we'd bring home from the Super Bowl?" "Well," she said, "I think he had it till they sold the last house. Then they just threw it all away." He moved into a little condo and put Marge into an assisted care deal in the same building that he ended up in.

Kondracke: What do you think the high points of your association with Jack Kemp were?

Parma: I think every Super Bowl was a great experience, being with him the few times we were when he ran for the vice presidency was a pinnacle that few people, obviously, achieve. Watching his growth in the Congress and the respect that he had. He used to bring [Newton L. "Newt"] Gingrich and [C.] Trent Lott, that whole group of guys, there was a short fellow from Texas, was a key guy on the Ways and Means Committee, they'd all come to the Super Bowls, and good camaraderie there. They were close. You talk about a gang of rebels, they were there, they were good. All as sharp as sharp can be, and

dedicated to getting things done. He was totally committed to Reagan. Whatever Reagan wanted he'd try to help him. As you say, he took issues with him on some of the policy things. And I think part of that was because he knew Stockman was probably pulling the strings or doing something, and it concerned him. I think Jack had concern about him. Jack's acquaintances were so broad, people that he knew, was huge. And he had a big time relationship within the Jewish community. He was totally committed to the Israel deal and [Benjamin "Bibi"] Netanyahu, I know he talked to Netanyahu a lot. What's his name?

Kondracke: Bibi.

Parma: Bibi. He talked to him a lot. Some way in the conversation "I talked to Bibi today." He was proud to tell me that. I think he knew he made a difference. I told him, I guess when I talked to him, when he called and told me about his problem I said "We can't lose you, Jack. This is one time where your voice is really going to be a pivot point. We need you. Don't let it up." I don't think he gave up, but he had realism set in. He told me that it had taken over the lower part of his stomach, so he knew he was dying.

Kondracke: Did you ever talk to him about religion?

Parma: Yes. He was a strong Christian. Moral, ethics were important things to him. And again, he didn't suffer people that weren't straight on. And he could see through people, and that was the thing that bothered me a little bit about his professional political guys, that he

didn't recognize that. And I don't put any ulterior motives on their part. I think it was a matter of their limitations.

Kondracke: Did you have any suggestions as to who he should have instead of those guys?

Parma: No, but I knew there were guys out there that did a hell of a job. [Stuart K.] Stu Spencer never had the accolades that he should have. Wouldn't have been a Ronald Reagan without Stu Spencer. He was one of the few guys probably in the world who could tell Nancy and Reagan "You're full of s---, that will never work." That's the way he talked to them. He was a tremendous person. But you know, we've got a lot of pros in this business.

Kondracke: Did Jack have blind spots about people out of loyalty?

Parma: He was very loyal, he was loyal. Once a friend, always a friend, unless you really screwed up. And he had confidence in people that demonstrated reason to have confidence in him.

Kondracke: Were there any low points in your association? Did you ever have a fight with him about anything?

Parma: Never. Never a fight.

Kondracke: What do you think his place in history should be?

Parma: Well, I think he'll probably, somebody will tally up who on the conservative side caused things to happen. Jack's going to be up at

the top five that caused things to happen. I think his influence today probably is felt when you mention supply-side economics, Jack comes to mind first and maybe Laffer could be in there first or second, but Jack's up there someplace. Kemp-Roth was a milestone achievement. Think about it. He was only a three or four-term Congressman. And I don't know the committee that he might have been serving on. Committees didn't mean much to Jack. He had his philosophical niche and he worked it. But he caused Reagan to think about these things. His position on gold, I wish he'd prevailed. Somehow I wish Nixon had heard him. It was a terrible mistake that Nixon made. It was the one gauge we had that was going to be stable, hopefully. See it now, \$1635 for gold, versus \$32.35, whatever it was then.

Kondracke: Mr. Parma, thank you so much for doing this. Appreciate it.

Parma: I don't think I gave you much substance.

[end of interview]