

JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with
FREDERIC V. ("FRED") MALEK
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Interviewer
Morton Kondracke

JACK KEMP FOUNDATION
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Morton Kondracke: This is a Jack Kemp oral history project interview with Fred Malek, a long-time friend of Jack Kemp's. Today is September 21st, 2012. We're at Mr. Malek's home in McLean, Virginia, and I'm Morton Kondracke. Thank you, Fred, for doing this. When you think about Jack Kemp, what immediately comes to mind?

Frederic V. "Fred" Malek: Compassion, passion, cheerfulness, inclusiveness. Those are some of the things I think about Jack.

Kondracke: What would you say are your all-time favorite personal experiences with him? You can cite as many as you like.

Malek: I guess it was more the personal experiences than the political experiences that I value. Jack was the kind of guy that was very spontaneous and funny and teasing and challenging, just a lot of fun to be around. I remember one time we planned—Joanne [Kemp] and Jack and Marlene [A. Malek] and I were going to go to the movies on a Saturday night, grab a little bite to eat. So I called with a list of some good action movies, and Joanne called back a little later and said, "Well there's this one movie Jack really wants to see." So we had to go downtown to find this special theater. It was about an opera singer, Maria Callas. [laughs] So that's what he wanted to see, so that's what we went to see. It was a pretty good movie, actually. I guess one of my favorites on the political front was when he was nominated for vice president. I remember his being in San Diego for that particular convention, and Marlene had a lot of clothes with her, and Joanne didn't because she hadn't come prepared to be selected, I guess, or wherever she was coming from she didn't have the clothes. So she turned to Marlene and Marlene lent her a bunch of clothes, and

I remember when Jack appeared for an event for major funders the morning after he was nominated. He was kind of poking fun at Marlene and me. He was just that kind of fun guy to be around. I remember we went down to our place on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, Jack and Joanne and the two of us, and I think [Lawrence E.] Larry Bathgate [II], who was then the RNC [Republican National Committee] finance chairman and his significant other, Joan. Everybody recognized him, of course, when you moved around, and he was just so cheerful and accommodating to everybody. He's the kind of guy who was as nice to the guy who was cleaning the boat that we took a little ride on as he was to the CEO he'd meet five minutes later, just as embracing and enthusiastic about all. He was just sort of a man for all seasons, a man for everybody. That cheerfulness just exuded from him all the time. Fun to be around.

Kondracke: When did you first meet him?

Malek: I probably met him when he was in the Congress at different events. I didn't really know him that well then. Probably during the Reagan years. He became very well known with the passage of the Kemp-Roth, I think it was the Kemp-Roth tax reform, so he was very much in demand on the circuit for campaigning on behalf of various candidates, and I got to know him a little bit then.

Kondracke: What were you doing then, politically?

Malek: I was president of Marriott Hotels at that point, from '80 through '88. And then I got to know him a lot better somewhat later. In late '87, December of '87, Vice President George H.W. Bush asked

me to run the Republican Convention for him, and so I took a leave of absence and then later resigned to do it fulltime from Marriott to do it. I got to know him a bit then. I was convinced that Jack was going to be selected as Bush's running mate. Marlene and I would get invited to go up to the Vice President's residence about every other Sunday. He would call personally and say, "Do you want to come up and pitch some shoes and have lunch?" So we would go up and pitch horseshoes and we'd have lunch and we'd talk about politics. And two weeks before the Convention, and the next day after the Sunday, I was going down to New Orleans to be on site for it to get ready, we were up there. After we pitched horseshoes we were sitting around a big dining room table there. It was George W. Bush and Laura [Bush], [James A.] Jim Baker, [Victor] Vic Gold, I'm trying to remember who else was there, Marlene and I, and I think our daughter Michele was with us. And we started talking, as usual about politics and what was going on, and he asked everybody around the table, "Why don't you give me your thoughts on who I should pick for vice president? I'm not going to react to it, but—" So everybody did, and he would give some remark after, but nothing that was telling. I don't think he'd made his decision at that point. But we got in the car and on our way home I said to Marlene, "You know, Marlene, it's going to be Kemp. It's going to be Kemp, that seemed to be the consensus there, and I think he reacted well to it. It's going to be Jack Kemp and I think that will be great." Still I didn't know Jack extremely well at that point. I thought it was going to be Kemp to the point when I saw Joanne at the Convention on the first night, I was roaming around, went up to the Bush box, where I think she was sitting, or one of those nice boxes. I said, "Joanne, I think this thing looks really good. Don't count on anything, but let's keep our hopes up." And I was dead wrong, of

course. Dead wrong. History would have been different. History could really have been very different.

Kondracke: Because—

Malek: Well, because if he had picked Jack, Jack would have been at his side and giving him profound counsel on the economy, as opposed to Secretary of HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development], who didn't have as much influence on the economy. There were only three people inside the administration who shared my and many other outsiders' views on the economy as we finished the Persian Gulf War and got into '91. They were [Robert A.] Bob Mosbacher, Secretary of Commerce, who was kind of not taken seriously in the Cabinet Room. [Nicholas F.] Brady and [Richard D. "Dick"] Darman were the people whose advice was more influential. Jack, and Jack was viewed as Secretary of HUD, and therefore, and a little bit of a gadfly, they viewed him, frankly. And Michael [J.] Boskin, the head of the Council on Economic Advisers. But they weren't listened to. Brady and Darman were listened to. And he did nothing to address the economy, and the rest is history. I don't think that would have happened if Jack had been VP.

Kondracke: This is because they were more deficit conscious, Bush became more deficit-conscious than growth-conscious, or what was the reason?

Malek: There were two reasons for it. One is that Brady's advice had generally been that, "Well, you know that if you do anything to interfere with the economy, it's just as likely to be wrong as right, and

you've just got to let the economy work its way through." He might have been right about that, policy-wise, but it certainly wasn't smart politically. Bush looked like he was out of touch. Second thing is Bush was ill during '91 and '92. He had Graves' disease. The public didn't really know; very few people knew, but he had Graves' disease, and it's a disease of the pituitary gland which affects your production of adrenaline, and he didn't have the energy levels. He just didn't have the energy level that he had before, and it made him—basically it made it very difficult to deal with the big issues.

Kondracke: Let me go back to this '88 meeting at the house. Who among those people was for Kemp in the discussion?

Malek: I don't recall, exactly. It was more of a discussion than "I firmly believe that this should be the choice." Nobody wanted to be too vocal about it. But I kind of think Barbara [P. Bush] might have been, might have said some good things about Jack. I surely felt that he was the best choice. [Robert J. "Bob"] Dole was mentioned. [James Danforth "Dan"] Quayle was never mentioned at the lunch. Not one person mentioned Quayle, because nobody thought it was in the realm of possibility, or should be. [laughs]

Kondracke: What do you know about what happened after that?

Malek: I remember going out on a Tuesday of the Convention, around noon, going out to the airport to meet Bush, who was arriving on Air Force II. We had arranged a tarmac handoff from Reagan to Bush. We felt that if the two met, we didn't want to be overshadowed, so we thought that they'd meet on the tarmac and it would be about passing

the baton kind of image. So Air Force I is sitting out there, Air Force II lands, Reagan arrives. Bush goes out on the tarmac and the two of them talk alone for about three or four minutes. And then we go to a holding house before we're going to get into a riverboat and arrive in New Orleans. But before that I went up on the plane. The plane lands my big moment, my Convention, bounded up on the plane and the plane was like the mood of a funeral, except for Bush. He was changing his shirt, he was jaunty and full of himself. Baker was there. Everybody looked morose. They'd been told on the plane ride, and they weren't excited about the choice. So we go to the holding house, and Baker asks Bush, "George, what did you and the president talk about?" "Just about general stuff." "Did you tell him about Quayle?" He said, "Yes, I told him about Quayle." Baker said, "Geez, George. He'd got the traveling press on that plane. He's going to tell them. That's going to get out. We've got to announce him now." We had the press guessing when it was going to happen. We were going to do it Wednesday night to kind of keep everybody interested. So I had to find some people to go out and find Quayle and get him to where we were going to arrive at the riverboat, and he was out golfing. I don't know if you remember the scene, but you get there and he arrives sweaty, just in a shirt without a jacket, and he didn't do too badly, but they jumped all over him on the veteran stuff.

Kondracke: Were you around Kemp at all at the Convention when he found out that he wasn't going to get it? And how did—

Malek: No, I wasn't around him when he found out, but I had to call him to ask him to do a seconding speech for Quayle, and he agreed to do it. I told Dole the same thing, asked him the same thing, and he

agreed to do it. I'm not sure how enthusiastic anybody was. Jack never registered any objection, but—

Kondracke: Any more memories about that '88? What did Bush think about Kemp in those days? Do you remember anything he ever said about him?

Malek: Energetic, compassionate, good speaker, right instincts. Maybe a short attention span, maybe a little bit fixed on certain pet issues like the gold standard, which he was known for.

Kondracke: They'd run against each other in '88, even though Kemp didn't get very far. There was no ill feeling.

Malek: No, no ill feeling at all. I mean, he picked him for his Cabinet. But just think of how history could have been different. If Jack had been on the ticket I think we would have won reelection. I think we would have run reelection, and then Jack would have been running. Who knows? After eight years of Republican, it would then be 16 years—eight of Reagan and eight of Bush—kind of hard to tell what would have happened, but it would have been interesting.

Kondracke: But Bush was the guy who thought that Reaganomics originally was voodoo. He was never a Kempian. Even in 1988, after Kemp had lost, he had to decide between endorsing Dole and endorsing Bush, and he ultimately endorsed Dole because he thought at least there was a chance with Dole that Reaganomics would continue, and he didn't think that Bush would. So how did Bush talk about tax cuts and all that?

Malek: I don't recall.

Kondracke: You said that you've been a supply-sider all your, that you've been a Kemp Republican all your life. So why did you not endorse Kemp in '88?

Malek: Well, I was much closer to George Bush. I'd gotten to know him when I served in the White House in the seventies. I was the head of White House personnel, he was chairman of the RNC, worked very closely together with him during that period, knew him well. I just knew him better. Didn't know Kemp that well.

Kondracke: Did Kemp ever ask you to support him?

Malek: No. I wasn't a real political player then. I was president of Marriott, I was doing my thing in business. It wasn't like I was a sought-after person. The reason Bush asked me to do what he did is we knew each other. That was the whole link. It goes back to the seventies.

Kondracke: You said in this article you wrote when he died that you'd been a Jack Kemp Republican "all my life." What's a Jack Kemp Republican?

Malek: I've always believed that you need to emphasize inclusion in reaching out to bring people in, and not to exclude, and that was surely Jack's philosophy. There was nobody who related better to the less privileged, to minorities, to immigrants, than Jack Kemp, because

he truly believed that. It wasn't a political calculation. Hey, he believed that. He played with these guys, guys who weren't necessarily raised in the greatest of circumstances, but who had made it, and who were progressing. He'd seen the aspirations of people and he really believed in the need to help those who aspire to gain their goals. He was a person who could bring people together better than anybody else. I really identified with that. I identified with some of his economic theories, not all of them. Certainly I thought Kemp-Roth was a breakthrough bill, and it worked. It produced growth and it produced jobs and it ended the misery index of Carter years. And I kind of liked his ebullient spirit. He wasn't somebody who got up there and hectored or scolded; he was up there painting a brighter future, and this was a way to go. That to me is the politics of hope, not the politics of disparagement.

Kondracke: I take it that you think that there is an example that Jack Kemp has to teach the contemporary Republican Party?

Malek: I think so, although it's hard to say what the Republican Party really is, it's so diverse. I think the party label that was eclipsed by the nominee of the Party at the moment, and right now it's [Willard] Mitt Romney, Romney believes in inclusiveness, but I don't think he has a sunny demeanor or the ability to connect in the warm way that a Jack Kemp could. If he did he'd be 10 points ahead. He's clearly a better man, clearly better prepared to be president and would be a better president, but he doesn't have that Jack Kemp ability to connect with people of all categories on the economic strata.

Kondracke: You said that Kemp-Roth was one of the great economic breakthroughs in history. When did you decide that you were a supply-sider, or did you?

Malek: Never did. I don't think in terms of supply side. I just think, I'm not a theorist, an economic theorist. If a supply-sider means that having lower taxes and providing incentives to the private sector to achieve and grow is a better way to go, then I'm a supply-sider. I'm not sure what a supply-sider is beyond that, but I do believe that the private sector, and providing incentives to the private sector, is the way you're going to improve your economy, increase competitiveness, and increase jobs.

Kondracke: Did you have any association with the various people who were part of the Kemp entourage, like Jude [T.] Wanniski or Arthur [B.] Laffer or Irving Kristol or—

Malek: Not too much. I got to know some of the people close to him. We'd go to Super Bowls, he would invite us to Super Bowls. He always had a block of tickets and there was a small group that he would invite, and I was included in that. A great group of people. But the Laffers and the Kristols, I wasn't at all close to.

Kondracke: How many Super Bowls did you go to?

Malek: Oh, probably five or six.

Kondracke: Tell me about those trips. Do you have any particular memories of what those trips were like?

Malek: Some.

Kondracke: So how would you all get there?

Malek: I think we'd all get there on our own and meet up there. Commercial. We didn't have any big charters or private planes or anything. And we'd meet down there. I remember being in Miami, I remember being in New Orleans. New Orleans I probably remember best. We actually sat with Jack and Joanne during the game, and interestingly, Johnny [L.] Cochran, who was the [Orental J.] O.J. Simpson attorney, was there. I don't know what the heck he was doing there. Maybe he was just sitting behind us. He seemed to love Jack. I don't think he was part of Jack's entourage, that's true, but I remember his being behind us at the stands and they were talking a lot. He was obviously a fan.

Kondracke: Is this before or after O.J. Simpson?

Malek: Well, I think it was after. Maybe during, I don't know.

Kondracke: Did Jack ever talk about O.J. Simpson? Because they played together.

Malek: Oh, he did. But I can't remember. I don't recall too much about it. It was fun being with him because a lot of people knew him, and he had access everywhere, so we'd get invited to the NFL [National Football League] party, and we'd have good seats. I remember on that particular day, my firm owned a hotel in the French

Quarter, and we laid out a really nice reception after the game and went over there. Just had a really nice time.

Kondracke: This was after he was out of politics, or while he was still—

Malek: Yes, he was then at Empower America. Let's see, he served from '89 to '92 as secretary of HUD, and then Bush, I was campaign manager in '92, so I obviously had a lot of contact with him then. Up until that point I hadn't known him as well, but I got to know him well while he was in the administration, during the campaign, and then when he was about to found Empower, I remember talking to him at the Vice President's residence. I think Quayle had something going on up there. Or was it afterwards? It might have been the spring after they lost, and [Albert A. "Al" Gore Jr.] had something that we were invited to as a charitable thing. I remember talking to Jack about it, he was describing it, and we met about it, and I went onto his advisory council and contributed a little bit to it, and went to their events. He was definitely a moving force. His three partners were not as involved as was he. [William J.] Bill Bennett was certainly there and a part of it, but I think Jack you would regard as more the CEO of it, spent more time on it. Jeane [J.] Kirkpatrick, spent not too much time, [John V.] Vin Weber didn't spend that much time on it. They were all helpful, but I think Jack was the prime mover. I remember they held their summer event in Aspen [Colorado], and we have a home in Aspen, and after one of the dinners we'd have everybody come up to our place and sit around and talk, and it was great.

Kondracke: What was the Empower America Aspen retreat?

Malek: They had an annual conference where they would have different speakers and policy roundtables with their donors and their board and board of advisors, and it was two-thirds substance, policy and one-third social. It would go a couple of days.

Kondracke: Where was it held?

Malek: One of the hotels in Aspen, I don't remember which one. Actually, I do remember which one. It was what was then, I think, a Ritz Carleton, and now the St. Regis, because I can remember being there in that courtyard for the event.

Kondracke: And was it Jack holding forth or did he have—

Malek: Oh, he had a lot of people there. He had certain Senators and members of Congress would appear, and certain other policy experts would come out for it. I remember one evening we had a, come up to the house afterwards, it was [Samuel D.] Sam Brownback's birthday. He was a Senator then, and he was appearing at the conference. We had a little birthday cake. It must have been his fortieth, so that kind of dates us.

Kondracke: What was the idea of Empower America, what was it supposed to accomplish?

Malek: I think it played to Jack's economic philosophy, to Bill Bennett's social philosophies and to Jeane Kirkpatrick's foreign policy policies—a strong and independent America, fueled by the growth in

production of the private sector without reliance on government to create jobs.

Kondracke: Was it a vehicle for Jack to stay relevant, and was there a thought about '96?

Malek: No, there was no thought about '96 as far as I could tell. It was very much a way for Jack to stay relevant, but it was also something that was needed to bring our party together again after our defeat. It was a devastating defeat in '92. We could see it coming for a while, and the economy had been poor and we hadn't properly addressed it, we knew that. But it was still a devastating defeat, and everybody was intent upon what could we do to bring ourselves together and bring us back. This was one very appealing way to do it, and in fact I thought a lot about Empower America. I founded something called the American Action Network in 2009 after [John S.] McCain [III] was defeated, and I thought a lot about it as a way to bring, again, the Party together, to encompass the beliefs that could be supported by Olympia [J.] Snowe on the left of our party to a [James W.] Jim DeMint on the right. And to emphasize those kind of things that would bring people together. In some ways, it was not patterned after, but in some ways it was Empower.

Kondracke: Going back, when Bush broke his "No new taxes pledge," Kemp was critical of that, and at one point actually said, was quoted on "Meet the Press" or somewhere as saying that Bush's economic policy was a gimmick. Do you remember that? And what the fallout from that was?

Malek: No, I don't remember it. But that's pretty significant for a Cabinet officer to be saying that.

Kondracke: Indeed.

Malek: Good for Jack.

Kondracke: So what did Jack do, do you remember, in the '92 campaign?

Malek: I think he was just a surrogate.

Kondracke: And what do you remember about his service during the HUD years?

Malek: Well, I was more focused, I wasn't focused too much on HUD issues, I was more focused on the issues of the economy. I had moved on to the private equity business. I would talk to Jack from time to time, and he recognized as did we in the private sector, how bad it was out there, how bad it was. It's kind of hard for me to separate those years from other years, but I know we had conversations about the economy, but I still wasn't as close to him as I became later. I know that he was aghast, not aghast, he was chagrined by the fact that we weren't addressing the economy, the administration, the president wasn't addressing the economy. In fact, I did a five-page memorandum to the president, President Bush, about what he should do, which he appreciated, but didn't act on. Again, I think it was Darman and Brady kind of dissuading him.

Kondracke: Was this your own, or did Kemp have any input?

Malek: It was mine. But I know that he was very supportive of doing something. But Jack, he had a reputation in the Cabinet Room. He'd sit for two minutes and then he'd start walking around the table. He was just edgy, they didn't think he had a very high attention span, and they didn't listen to him on the economy.

Kondracke: Did you ever talk to Bush about what he thought about Kemp during those years?

Malek: No, I don't think so.

Kondracke: Or Baker or Darman?

Malek: I probably did, but I don't recall the specifics, but everybody kind of had the same impression of Jack. Those guys had the impression that Jack was a strong policy guy with a lot of good ideas and a lot of energy and great compassion and ability to bring people together, but kind of was on the economy, which was outside of the HUD, was a little bit of a gadfly, and therefore didn't get treated seriously, along with Mosbacher and Boskin. I think if they had taken him seriously they would have, well, if they'd taken him seriously and if Bush had been able to overcome the impact of the Graves' disease to be proactive in an energetic way, which he couldn't, but he could have at least commissioned it to be done, I think we would have won. But he came out of the Persian Gulf War at 90 percent, and then throughout '91, with the economy going down, with him looking a little bit out of touch, with no policy initiatives coming out of the White

House, no economic fixes, no real empathy expressing the problems of the economy, by the time I became campaign manager the following January, a late start by the way, we were down about 50 percent, or less.

Kondracke: I thought Baker came in and ran the campaign, came over late in the '92 campaign from State, and—

Malek: Chief of staff. He came in in '88, Baker did, and then in '92, we started in January '92, I was campaign manager, [Robert M.] Bob Teeter was campaign chairman, and [Samuel K.] Sam Skinner had replaced [John H.] Sununu as chief of staff. It was apparent to Teeter and I that we needed either Baker or [Richard B. "Dick"] Cheney as chief of staff, because Skinner, while being a good, really good Secretary of Transportation, was inexperienced at what you needed to do as chief of staff, and wasn't able to get Bush to move and coordinate the policy and the politics of things. He hadn't done it. So we began pressing for that without success, until finally Baker came over right before the Convention, I think in late July or early August, as chief of staff, but it was too late.

Kondracke: Let me go back to that lunch in 1988. What was it that happened? What was the dynamic at that lunch that gave you the impression that Kemp was going to be the nominee?

Malek: It's a little bit hard to remember with precision, other than the overall impression. There didn't seem to be too much support for Dole. I'm trying to think who else was prominent at that point. You

might recall. As I say, Quayle's name was not mentioned. It was Dole, it was Kemp, I can't remember who else.

Kondracke: Those were the two who'd run against—

Malek: Yes, but there were one or two others in the mix.

Kondracke: There was [Pierre S.] Pete du Pont [IV].

Malek: No, that wasn't serious.

Kondracke: And [Marion G.] Pat Robertson.

Malek: No, no, no. Those weren't on the table. Those weren't in the top group. I don't recall who else, but I do recall distinctly that after going around the table and talking about the candidates, that it looked like Jack, because Jack had the—mainly based on his economic and inclusiveness.

Kondracke: And Bush said nothing about any of the candidates? He didn't react to—

Malek: He reacted in very limited ways, but the very limited way gave me the impression that there was a consensus and an acceptance of the consensus that maybe it should be Kemp. And I was really hoping it would be. I thought he would be a great choice.

Kondracke: You wrote that Jack was the true heir to Ronald [W.] Reagan. Why did you say that?

Malek: Leadership, ability to communicate, ability to include people of all categories, ability to reach out, sunny disposition, politics of joy versus the politics of despair. Those kind of things.

Kondracke: In 1996 when he got picked for vice president, what was your role that year?

Malek: I didn't have much of a role. I think I was chairman of the Presidential Trust, which is a fundraising arm, where the Republican National Committee can raise a certain amount of money to use on behalf of the presidential race, and Haley [R.] Barbour was RNC chairman, and I think I did that. But it wasn't a pivotal fulltime or even close to that role.

Kondracke: But you were pals with Kemp at that stage, so did you talk to him during the campaign about how it was going?

Malek: Oh, sure.

Kondracke: What did he say?

Malek: He was doing his thing, and he knew it was going to be tough, because you were against a very popular incumbent and there weren't severe problems in the economy at that point, but he never shied away from it. I remember somebody had an engagement party for my daughter in Bethesda, and he was home that weekend, and he and Joanne came to it, which was really nice in the middle of a race. One of our liberal friends got into an argument with him about right to life

and I was so embarrassed. I had to pull her away. But I can remember he had a kind of get together on one night that he was in for a weekend, out at this Mexican restaurant just between Washington and Bethesda called, you probably would remember. He used to like that place. Catina [phonetic] something, I don't know. A group of us there, and he just was always fun and upbeat and thought he could make a difference and would make a difference and would win. I remember going to the debate, I think it was in St. Pete [St. Petersburg, Fla.], vice presidential debate. Sat in the second row, right there, and we were going to have kind of a victory party afterwards. Well, we had a victory party, but it wasn't a victory. [laughter] Everybody knew it and so did he, so did he. He just hadn't spent the time preparing for that debate.

Kondracke: What do you know about his handling of the debate?

Malek: I know he didn't spend enough time preparing for it.

Kondracke: How do you know that?

Malek: Because I've talked to his campaign people and to him, and he acknowledged he didn't spend enough time, they said he didn't.

Kondracke: Why did he spend not enough time?

Malek: I don't know. Maybe because he's so confident of his ability as a speaker and debater, that's probably part of it. Maybe the staff wasn't, didn't push him enough to do it. But what happened is he was fine in the initial part, but then he ran out of stuff, and as you got into

more detail, as you did, Gore clearly had it, he didn't, and it became apparent, and he lost the debate.

Kondracke: Well, he wouldn't attack either Clinton or Gore on any—I mean he talked about policy differences but he wouldn't go after them, and don't you think that Dole expected him to be at least a bit of an attack dog?

Malek: I don't know. I really don't know. But do attack dogs work? Does it work? I don't know. It depends what you're attacking, I suppose. If there's real substance to attack, but at that point I'm not sure what you would have attacked.

Kondracke: Or defend Dole, for that matter. I think a lot of people didn't think that he adequately defended Dole, but he more talked about what he believed rather than—

Malek: Geez, I thought he did, but you know, I'm sort of partisan Jack, though.

Kondracke: Right. You're sitting there, and what did you think as the debate was going on?

Malek: I thought the first half hour was great. I thought he was doing wonderfully, and then as it moved on I became concerned, but without enough conviction in my own mind to think, gee, what I'm thinking is correct, but then as you reflect on it and talk to people afterwards, we sort of knew. And he knew. But of course when he came in we

congratulated him on a great win. He knew he hadn't won, and he said so.

Kondracke: What did he say?

Malek: Ah, something along the lines of, "I don't think so, I don't think I did. I don't think I did very well."

Kondracke: Where was this party afterwards?

Malek: Must have been either adjacent to or in the hall, very close. I mean, look, we were there to celebrate Jack, and we all were enthusiastically doing that, but in our hearts and in his heart too, we all knew [unclear]. But then again, put it in the overall context. As we know, the vice presidential debate is not all that consequential in the election. It could be, if you make a faux pas or if you show yourself totally unprepared to be the leader of the free world. He was fine in that category. He just wasn't as good with the depth of the substance.

Kondracke: So you put him on your board, right?

Malek: Yes.

Kondracke: And why did you do that and how did he perform?

Malek: Oh, he was great. I did that because, well, it's a private equity firm, and it's a board of advisers. We're not incorporated as a public company, we're a private company, and I wanted a group of

people who could help to find opportunities for us and Jack did that. It wasn't the kind of board where you sat around and needed to elicit financial opinions of how do you do this deal or that deal as much as it was here's an area where we'd like to go. Do you have any thoughts on any place we could go? And he did. He introduced a deal to us which we did. [William S.] Bill Cohen was also on the board, and his firm introduced a deal that we did. Jack sat on the board of it. We bought a company called Quadel, which provided services to housing. It was a productive acquisition and Jack was a productive board member.

Kondracke: What does it mean to be a productive board member?

Malek: To come, to be active with ideas and counsel, to be willing to make calls on behalf of the company to help you get in doors or develop business. Bill Cohen, we wired a company called TIAC [phonetic], and one of his people was on the board. Both of them worked out pretty well.

Kondracke: So how many boards was Jack on?

Malek: Oh, he was on quite a few. I think Oracle was the big one. I don't remember which other ones he was on.

Kondracke: What was his connection with [Lawrence J.] Larry Ellison?

Malek: I don't know.

Kondracke: So how often in those years would you see Jack? I take it that you and Marlene—

Malek: A lot.

Kondracke: A lot, like once a month, once a week?

Malek: Twice a month.

Kondracke: Twice a month. And generally speaking it was the four of you?

Malek: Not always. Like when we went down to Hilton Head it was six of us. I'm trying to think of—oh, I'm on the board and the executive committee of the American Israel Friendship League. They're New York-based. And they had a relationship with Jack also. In fact, they honored Jack at one of their events. I think they may have given him an award. They'd come in and want to do an event in Washington, and they'd ask Jack, and I'd encourage him, and we'd go and have a little event, just to expose what they do, and try to get some people interested in it, ultimately to maybe contribute to it. It was a c-3 [501(c)(3)], a charitable organization. We'd go to an event like that, and then we'd go stop for dinner someplace on the way out. Just casual, that kind of stuff. He traveled with me a couple of times too. We both had some business in Chicago, and he went with me to see a few investors that I was courting, and he did his thing, and we had dinner together with a few people and came back the next day. That was just one specific example. And he was very helpful. Because

people really liked seeing Jack Kemp, and he always made people feel better about themselves and about him, and about my firm.

Kondracke: Did you ever have a conversation with him about leadership? He always said to his kids, anyway, "Be a leader." You're interested in military leadership and business leadership and he's interested in athletic leadership. Was that ever a subject that you talked about?

Malek: I don't recall any specific conversation about that.

Kondracke: Do you remember any specific deep conversation about anything that you had, or was it mainly fun and games and business?
[laughter]

Malek: Oh gosh. It was fun and games and business. I'm not a deeply philosophical, introspective guy. I'm always on the move just like he is, trying to do more things than I should be trying to do. I'm not one that sits back. I'm not a philosopher, I'm a doer.

Kondracke: Are you into sports too? Did you talk to him about sports and football?

Malek: Oh, yes. Well, more baseball.

Kondracke: Did he try to help with the Nationals?

Malek: Oh, sure.

Kondracke: He did.

Malek: Oh, sure. He was in my group. I led a group to partner with the city to bring at that point the Montreal Expos to Washington, and we succeeded.

Kondracke: Did you ever.

Malek: Yes.

Kondracke: And congratulations.

Malek: Thanks. And then we were bidding on a team, and of course we all really wanted to get it. We had a great group assembled. We had Jack, Colin [L.] Powell and Vernon [E.] Jordan [Jr.], [Franklin D.] Frank Raines, who was then riding high as CEO of Fannie Mae [Federal National Mortgage Association], he was a very integral part of it, by the way, [James V.] Jim Kimsey, [Joseph E.] Joe Robert [Jr.], [Jeffrey D.] Jeff Zients, who's now acting budget director, who was my deputy. It was a pretty strong group. And then we had some other investors. I think the strength of the group, in the commissioner's eyes, was overpowered by the fact that we were a group, and not a single entity. Because what he told me, he said, "I just think, for the long-term interest of Washington I'm going to go with a single wealthy family."

Kondracke: What part did Jack play, if any, in the effort to get the Nationals, because he did have some prestige among—

Malek: I think he added prestige, he added credibility with the commissioner, with our Major League Baseball front office. I don't recall beyond that.

Kondracke: This is a delicate subject, I know, but, since he was so close to American Jewry, did you ever have to explain to him that whole business about the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the Nixon days?

Malek: No. He understood what happened, sure.

Kondracke: He did. Oh.

Malek: He knew. I didn't have to explain it.

Kondracke: Okay. What did he think about the way the Republican Party was going under George W. Bush?

Malek: Hm. I'm trying to delve in to answer the question, but nothing is coming to mind.

Kondracke: Was he a person that you could really get close to and feel intimate with, or was there some distance? I've had it described both ways.

Malek: I guess it depends who the individual was. I thought we were very close.

Kondracke: Did you talk about his cares and worries?

Malek: You know, Mort, guys don't do that with guys, you know. Do you? I mean, you just don't.

Kondracke: Right.

Malek: Women do that a lot, but to our disadvantage, we don't seem to do that with other guys.

Kondracke: So what do you think his, you've talked a lot about his character strengths, and you're free to add more comments about that. But I'm wondering whether you think he had any flaws.

Malek: His only flaw was a short attention span. He would really jump around a lot. That was the only thing I would say. It wasn't a character flaw, it was just a style. He was used to doing a lot of different things at the same time, but yet he could dig in when he wanted to. And he could get philosophical, he could get deep into the substance of something, and he could deliver a very studied speech or article. But I think his natural proclivity was not to be, so he had to force himself to do that when he did it. His natural style was to have that output of energy that moved around a lot.

Kondracke: Did you ever play tennis with him or anything, because he was—

Malek: No I didn't, because I don't play tennis.

Kondracke: He was notoriously competitive. I mean that's not a flaw necessarily.

Malek: I used to go biking and wear shorts, and come into the house with shorts out in Aspen, for example, and he would look at, particularly if people were around, his favorite line, he must have used it a dozen times, he said, "With those kind of legs, someone ought to sue you for lack of support," or something like that. I'll tell you one vivid memory, more recent. In the summer of 2008, four years ago, I was at that point McCain's national finance chairman. [Thomas G.] Tom Loeffler had to leave because he was a lobbyist, and I became chairman. We had a two-day retreat in Aspen as an incentive for our major bundlers. And if you achieved a certain level by a certain date in July you were going to be invited to Aspen. We had maybe 120 people there. The first day we had four surrogates: John [R.] Thune, Jack Kemp, Jon [M.] Huntsman, who was then governor of Utah, and [Marshall C.] Mark Sanford [Jr.], who was then governor of South Carolina, all of whom I personally called and asked to come. We had talks with the donors, a nice dinner that night, and then the next day we had more talks with the donors, culminating with McCain that evening. Actually I remember that morning, before the McCain dinner, we had different people making talks, and Jack got up there just before lunch, and he got really impassioned about the economy, and he really got impassioned and he really got worked up and he really delivered it, to the fact that people were just coming out of their chairs. And I'll never forget it, when he finished, he's standing there, he just tossed the mike to me across the room and walked off, and people got up and were cheering. It was a great sendoff. He wasn't staying for the McCain dinner that night. He was going back to Vail. So he got in the car

Kondracke: There doesn't happen to be a tape recording of that does there?

Malek: There might be. There could be.

Kondracke: Where would it be?

Malek: Somebody from the campaign, I'm trying to think who. I could check with, if somebody were to remind me I could check with somebody, yes.

Kondracke: I'll remind you. Okay, we're just about done. Are there any other memories that I haven't elicited from you?

Malek: Yes. This is a fun one. This is probably during the Bush years, probably in the early 2000's. Jack and Joanne would spend a lot of time in Vail; we would in Aspen. We would ask them to come up for a day or two and we'd have a dinner for them and stuff, just hang around. We would go down there sometimes, particularly for his 70th birthday. But I can remember one time they were there, and we decided to have a group of people over, and had a caterer do a barbeque outside in back. We're kind of a little bit up in the mountain, not way up, and we don't have air conditioning, so you sleep with the windows open. So that night at two in the morning, a bear came into the room. [laughs]

Kondracke: His room?

Malek: Yes. His room was accessible; ours was on the second floor. A bear couldn't get there. So the bear knocked down the screen and they saw it, and yelled at it and he went away. So Jack bravely jumped out of bed, attacked the bear, and the bear retreated into the woods in abject fear. [laughter]

Kondracke: By shouting at it.

Malek: Yes.

Kondracke: Tell me what you think Joanne's influence on Jack was.

Malek: She really kept him grounded, kept him steady, kept him from getting his ego. He didn't show much ego. I'm sure he had an ego, but he didn't show it. I think that was a lot Joanne kind of keeping him in check. She was great, made for him.

Kondracke: How do you think history should judge him? Final question.

Malek: Well, I think history should judge him as one of the most, if not the most influential Republican leader of our generation who did not become president. He had enormous influence on politics, on policy, on the way we have formed as a center-right coalition going forward. I think he was a big part of the creation of that.

Kondracke: Okay. Thank you. I really appreciate it.

Malek: Thank you. Fun to do.

[end of interview]