

JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with
SHARON ZELASKA
January 23, 2012

Interviewer
Morton Kondracke

JACK KEMP FOUNDATION
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[Sharon Zelaska edited this transcript. Consequently, it may be at variance at some points with the original recording.]

Morton Kondracke: This is a Jack Kemp oral history project interview with Sharon Zelaska, his personal assistant from January 1977 to February 1997.

Sharon Zelaska: Actually, June 1, 1977 to February 1, 1997.

Kondracke: And we're doing this at Sharon's home in Manassas, Virginia, and I'm Morton Kondracke. Today is January 23rd, 2012. You said at our staff symposium that you were proud to have worked for Jack Kemp. Tell me why.

Zelaska: Well, he was just a standup guy. I said I was never ashamed to say that I worked for him. All you had to do was say you worked for Jack Kemp and you immediately got a reaction from people and 99 percent of the time it was a positive, even if it was just something to do with his football career, or I remember, somebody would say, "Oh, yes, I remember he was a great football player," or whatever. I was always proud to say I worked for him. He was just a standup guy. I don't know what else to say about it. He was honest, sometimes to a fault. He played by the rules. Again, back to his football career I guess. He was just a good guy. Good family man. That was one of the other things that people always looked at. We had to work everything around the family all the time. When I first went to work for him I remember [Jeffrey A.] Jeff Kemp was still at home. He had just graduated from high school, or he was just about to graduate from high school. The rule was that nobody went out at

night until Jack got home and they had dinner together, and I was just really impressed with that. Because that was the way my family was. We always had dinner together every night and I just thought that was a really important thing. Sometimes Jeff would call me and he'd say, "Sharon, can you get him home earlier, because I have a date tonight," something like that, but that was one of the rules in the family, so he was a good family man.

Kondracke: On June 1st, 1977 when you went to work for him, when was the first interview that you had with him? You've said that you were not sure that you were going to take the job but that he convinced you in the first interview. So what happened in that interview that was so impressive to you?

Zelaska: I was working at the American Enterprise Institute [AEI] at the time and totally happy with my job. I was the office manager. I loved my job, absolutely adored my job, hated for weekends to come because I loved my job so much. I got a call on April 16th, 1977 from Jack, personally, he called me on the phone and he said, "I have an opening in my office and I've heard a lot about you. Would you come in for an interview?" I was totally taken aback because I certainly didn't expect to pick up the phone and hear his voice. I really didn't know much about him; I knew he was an ex-football player. He'd come into AEI a couple of times to do some of our TV shows and all the girls went gaga over him every time he came over there. So I said, "Well, okay." So I went in for the interview, again, being totally happy with my job and I walked out of there accepting the job. It was like, how did this happen? And then I had to go back and tell my boss that

I was leaving and it was a very difficult time for me to make that decision. But I made the decision and started June 1st.

Kondracke: So what happened in that interview that was so—

Zelaska: I don't know. He was just so upbeat and positive. "I need you," that kind of thing. Secretly in the back of my mind I'd always wanted to work on Capitol Hill. Actually, I wanted to work in the White House, and I almost had a chance to work in the White House. I'd had interviewed for a position as [Donald H.] Don Rumsfeld's scheduling assistant under [Gerald R.] Ford [Jr.] and unfortunately didn't get the job. I was really kind of disappointed about that. So I sort of said, "Oh, well, it's just not meant to be" and then I got this opening and thought, "Well, I'm just going to take a chance." The difference was when I was working at AEI, I worked autonomously. I was given a job and all I had to do was make sure it happened. I saw a beginning, a middle, and an end. But working for Jack it was not the case. After I was there about a month, the office was in such turmoil with everything that was going on, and it was so hectic with him running back and forth to the floor, you never got an answer on anything, and I was used to being very structured all the time. It was a totally different atmosphere up there. Everybody was sitting on top of each other, there wasn't any space. It was very difficult. I remember going in there on a Saturday morning and sitting in the middle of the floor; I was there all by myself, and I just started to cry. I said, "What did you do? You loved that job, why did you leave this job?" But, I followed my rule that I'd give to every young person, which is always give a job a year. Because you cannot tell what it's going to be like.

And of course [I] went on to work for him for 20 years and it was the best thing that ever happened to me.

Kondracke: In all those 20 years did you ever think about quitting any other time?

Zelaska: I got frustrated, sure. There were times when I got frustrated. Again, it all came down to the fact that he was not a very structured person when it came to, I mean, he had all these ideas going around in his head and he didn't always focus the way I wanted him to focus. But once I learned to work around that I became a happier person. But yes, there were times when I thought I couldn't take that anymore.

Kondracke: Did you ever actually threaten to quit or—

Zelaska: Not to him. Behind the scenes I probably did to a few staffers. I probably even talked to Joanne [Kemp] about it a couple of times. But I don't think I ever really seriously thought about doing it. It was hard to work for him because he almost made you beg to do your job.

Kondracke: What do you mean by that?

Zelaska: Scheduling was the one thing he hated to make decisions on, and I needed to get these things done, because the requests were just pouring in. I'd go in there with stacks and he wouldn't let me make all the decisions. He wanted to be the one to say I'm going to go to this state or that state or whatever. This is again when things

got hot and heavy in the late seventies when he was campaigning for [Ronald W.] Reagan and all of that. It just got to be so much. I was always the last person he wanted to talk to because he knew I wanted him to make decisions on things that he didn't want to make decisions on. So I would wait until very late at night sometimes, when Congress finally got out of session, and I'd be the only person left in the office, and I would just sit there waiting for him to help me make decisions on these speaking engagements. He would talk to everybody else beside me, and sometimes I would say that to him. "You will talk to every other staff member in here just so you don't have to work with me, which is because you don't want to make these decisions." So I just learned to go to him and say, "If you don't make a decision one way or the other, this is what I'm going to do." And then suddenly I'd get an answer out of him, because he didn't want me making that decision. He wanted to make it ultimately. His ego was such that he had to be the one to make it. But that's how I learned to work around it, but he did make you beg to do your job sometimes.

Kondracke: What was the range of your duties?

Zelaska: Oh, gosh, it was everything. I took all of his phone calls, I did all of the scheduling. I mean in the early days I did everything, including getting him to make the decision, I then had to call the person and say, "Yes, we're going to do it, we're going to do it on such and such a day, we'll do a breakfast or a lunch or a dinner, whatever." I'd have to make all the airline reservations, and back in those days you actually talked to somebody on the phone. I'd call American Airlines and I'd say, "I want this flight," I'd have a copy of my own O.A.G. [Official Airline Guide] back in those days and I'd make all of

the reservations, I'd make the hotels, the airlines, I'd talk to the people at the other end about who's going to pick him up, I'd type up the schedule, hand him that, make all of his daily appointments. I paid all the bills—the House bills, the bills to take care of the office.

Kondracke: Did you do personal stuff too?

Zelaska: I did personal stuff too. I took care of his checkbook, I made sure Joanne had money, paid some of their personal bills.

Kondracke: Were you basically his personal accountant as well?

Zelaska: I was his personal accountant, yes. I did everything having to do with income tax, which is why I remember the day that he called me, because it was the 16th of April, and later on I saw a letter in a file that said, "Dear Jack, Attached are your income taxes (this is dated April 15) for 1976. This time next year I can't promise you you won't be talking to the IRS [Internal Revenue Service] if you don't make some changes about how you report your income. You're not giving us the right information."

Kondracke: This was from the IRS?

Zelaska: No, this is from his accountant. That's what made him decide he had to make a staff change, because the person who was doing it at the time was not doing a very good job of it. So I called the accountant, and they came down from Buffalo and we worked together. We set up a system, and of course in those days we didn't have QuickBooks, Quicken, and all those other things. I literally did a

spreadsheet and took care of all of his income taxes. And I did it from then on, all the way through '96, where I had to work with all the accountants and lawyers about giving all that information over for the vice presidential run, and then back in '88 when he ran for president.

Kondracke: Did he basically live this whole entire time on his Congressional salary?

Zelaska: He did. Except back in those days they changed the rules and you could only make, I think it was \$20,000 in outside income for speaking engagements and he always met that limit. So he gave a lot of speeches away for nothing, but he made the \$20,000 on top of his salary, and they weren't making very much back in those days. I mean it was under \$100,000, I think. But his family lived on that salary. I can honestly say, if you remember the whole check kiting scandal that went on, and we had just left Congress and were going to HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development], and that whole thing hit the fan with the sergeant at arms and everything in the House. He was sitting at HUD, reading the newspaper when that article hit, and I happened to walk in that morning and walked across the big room where he had his office. He put the paper down and he just looked at me and he said, "This article is a testament to you." Because his name was not in it. Everybody else, they lost their jobs and they had to quit and everything else. His name wasn't in it. I said, "Well, Jack, I appreciate your saying that, but two [three-SZ] things. Number one, I didn't know it wasn't a real bank. Number two, I treated it like it was my checking account—I treated your checking account like it was my checking account and I always balanced it. But number three and most importantly, you never asked me to do

anything illegal or to live outside your means. You always lived inside your means. And that's a testament to you and your family that you were able to do all that you did and you never asked anything different." A lot of the people evidently were writing bad checks and he wasn't one of them.

Kondracke: A lot of members of Congress have a way of being offered investments and stuff like that, investment opportunities, stuff like that. Did he?

Zelaska: Not until he got out of government, when he got some stock options and things like that. But no, he never did any of that.

Kondracke: He went on a lot of boards after he was out of HUD.

Zelaska: After he was out of HUD, yes. Went on a lot of boards. And of course after HUD he went on the speaking circuit with the Washington Speakers Bureau, and there he made a lot of money, with the Washington Speakers Bureau. But he'd give a lot of that away too, and the Speakers Bureau would get upset sometimes. "Some of these people are supposed to be paying us and you're giving it away for nothing." But he made a lot of money with the Speakers Bureau. They were very happy with him.

Kondracke: What was your workday like?

Zelaska: I never left the office until he left, which could be very late at night. I was always the last one.

Kondracke: You'd come in at what time?

Zelaska: When they started the H.O.V. [High Occupancy Vehicle] lanes and you could come in after 9:00, I started doing that. Sometimes I'd get there real early in the morning. But if not, I lived in Springfield at the time, and it could be a really long commute on [Interstate] 95, and he didn't get to work until like 10:00, when Congress was going into session. So I just made a deal with him. I said, "I'll just come in on the H.O.V. lane," I was always there by 9:30, always before he got there, and then I'd be the last one there, always.

Kondracke: This was five days a week, six days a week?

Zelaska: Five days a week. I very seldom came in on Saturday unless there was something. During the Reagan campaign I was really busy then because scheduling was unbelievable. I did eventually get him to give me an assistant to help me with scheduling, because I made a reservation for him to be in Springfield, Illinois, and he was supposed to be in Springfield, Missouri. It was after that that I said, "Jack, I need help. I can't do this all by myself." I was juggling too many balls and I made a mistake. He totally understood; he was very good about it. So I hired an assistant [Gretchen Govan-SZ] and they helped me with scheduling so I could do all the other [things-SZ], because when the Reagan campaign started, and I forget, I think we talked about what his title was, he was like chief spokesman for Ronald Reagan, the requests were just pouring in. They got them at the campaign and then I got them at the office. They had to assign somebody just to help me with just making the decisions as to where he was going to go, because we still had to work around the

Congressional schedule and his personal schedule and the football schedule, and Jeff at that point was playing at Dartmouth [College]. It was very difficult.

Kondracke: Did he actually make it to Jeff's Dartmouth games?

Zelaska: He made it to Jeff's Dartmouth games most of the time, yes. It was very difficult to do all that. But we juggled it all. We'd have some words sometimes about that. And then after Jeff got out of Dartmouth, of course, he went with the [Los Angeles] Rams, I guess it was. And then we were working around that schedule. And then Jimmy was in high school and he was playing and we had to work around that schedule. And then he'd say to me, "I've got to be home for Monday Night Football. You can't book me when it's Monday Night Football." Monday Night Football? Come on! [laughs] We did it all. We tried it all.

Kondracke: So he comes in at 10:00 in the morning and he's got, obviously, his Congressional work to do. He actually went home for dinner every night? Sometimes Congress is there all—

Zelaska: If it was those really, really late nights. Most of the time they were out 7:00, 7:30, something like that. So he would race home; there wouldn't be any traffic at that point so he could be home by 8:00. They usually ate dinner at 8, 8:30, something like that.

Kondracke: It was your job to know where he was all the time, right?

Zelaska: Yes. And we didn't have cell phones. We didn't even have beepers back in those days. Even when beepers were given he didn't want one, he wouldn't carry it. Yes, I always had to try and find him and I had a special number on my phone that only he called, 225-6068, I even remember the number. And when that light would light up I would know it was him. And the only peace I ever got was when he was on an airplane, because they didn't have phones on the airplanes back in those days and there were no cell phones. So once I got him on the plane I could relax a little bit.

Kondracke: Did he ever sort of disappear on you?

Zelaska: Oh, yes, but I could track him down. The House floor, I was telling you earlier, the guy Jay [Pierson] on the House floor would know where he was. He never ate lunch or anything like that. I always worried about that. Sometimes he'd ask me to get him a sandwich at the office, but I always wondered about that and I remember [Randal C.] Randy Teague, and this was in the early days and Randy was still there. I said something to Randy, "This guy doesn't seem to ever eat. Does he ever eat lunch?" And he says, "Oh you think he's not eating, but you don't know that there's a little hotdog stand right off the House floor, and he gets his hotdogs there. Occasionally he'd come back with the junk food bags, you know, of Fritos or Natchos.

Kondracke: What did he like to eat? What were his favorite foods?

Zelaska: Hotdogs and tuna fish sandwiches. One quick little story about tuna fish sandwiches. When we were at HUD, we hadn't been at

HUD a week when he said, "I need a tuna fish sandwich." And I always did the running for all that, but then I remembered, "I've got 3,000 people in this building who are just sitting here waiting to do something for him, so I called the office manager, "Where can I get a tuna fish sandwich?" She said, "Oh, I'll go get it." Everybody wanted to make sure they did everything for him. "I'll go get it." So she brings back a tuna fish sandwich and he bites into it. "This is the worst tuna sandwich I've ever eaten." He says, "Get that cafeteria changed." So the next thing I know we're changing the food in the whole cafeteria, and then I find out after we got all of it working and new vendors coming in and everything to change all the food. The staff at HUD, they were delighted. They were getting all new food vendors at the cafeteria. I found out later they didn't get the tuna sandwich from the cafeteria. They got it from a place in L'Enfant Plaza Mall. But, I never told him that. I said, "Well, we got the whole cafeteria changed just because of your tuna fish sandwich." But tuna and hotdogs were his two favorites, and grilled cheese.

Kondracke: And was he a Diet Coke guy?

Zelaska: And he liked Diet Coke—Coke. He drank real Coke back in those days.

Kondracke: Lots of coffee?

Zelaska: Yes, black with two Sweet and Lows.

Kondracke: And junk food?

Zelaska: And junk food, yes. Doritos, mostly Doritos.

Kondracke: Was he a steak guy?

Zelaska: He did like meat and potatoes kind of eating, yes. He hated chicken because of the chicken circuit. Everybody that goes on the rubber chicken circuit, they always seem to hate chicken. And I know he didn't like chicken and he didn't like turkey that much.

Kondracke: So you had a bunch of nicknames. You were Mother Superior.

Zelaska: I was Mother Superior.

Kondracke: Why were you Mother Superior?

Zelaska: Just because I took care of all the kids in the office. Some of them I was older, some of them I was younger, but I took care of everybody. I was sort of the person that if they had to get something done with Jack they'd say "What kind of mood is he in?" And I'd say, "Maybe not right now. Maybe a little bit later." And then I'd say, "Okay, now's a good time to go get him and ask him about something." So I was the mother hen kind of person, just took care of them food-wise, like at Christmas time we would get all this food that came into our office, and some of it I would hide from the staff and put it in the safe, if it was something that wasn't perishable, obviously. And then at the end of January when everybody was poor as a church mouse because we hadn't gotten paid for six weeks, I'd bring it out and share it with all the staff to make sure that they were—

Kondracke: Why would they not have been paid for six weeks?

Zelaska: Because in those days, I don't know if they still do this, on the House side we only got paid once a month, and in December they always gave us our paycheck on December 15th instead of December 31st. So we didn't get another paycheck until January [31st-SZ]. So we would, you know how it is. Christmas you spend all this money you have in your pocket and then January would come and we would really be hurting. We'd be on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and things like that, so I'd bring some of the food out to take care of the staff.

Kondracke: You were also a decision forcer, not only on the speech business, but Richard Billmire says that there would be these staff meetings or group discussions, and that you'd eventually at some point say, "Okay, nobody else gets to go see Jack."

Zelaska: Yes, because sometimes it was the last person who talked to him that got their way. There had to be somebody that stopped the ball, and I guess sometimes I was the one who did it.

Kondracke: Describe a kind of situation where this would crop up.

Zelaska: You know, I can't remember anything specific. I'm not sure what Richard would have been talking about specifically there. But yes, sometimes I just had to be the one—

Kondracke: What he said was that Jack would start talking to somebody and then three or four other people would gather around, and it would go on and on and on and on and you finally were the one to call a halt to it

Zelaska: I guess it would be that he'd have to go someplace, or whatever. I found myself more in the role of stopping Jack from doing things, like taking corporate jets, things like that. I was also Jiminy Cricket. That was the other name they gave me, because I was his conscience, and I would say, "I don't think you should do that."

Kondracke: So, he was taking corporate jets and then you told him not to?

Zelaska: No, he would want to, and I'd say, "No, you can't do that." One incident in particular, which people seem to remember, again at HUD, we were having a staff meeting and he came in and he said "I want to take this corporate jet," because that was the only way he could have gotten someplace. And I said, "No, you can't take a corporate jet." And he said, "Well," and I'm not going to mention the person's name, but it was his legal person back in those days. He said, "So and so told me I could do it." And I said, "Well, I don't care. You're not going to take that corporate jet." And I had a whole staff right there listening to me, and they all agreed with me. So he didn't take the corporate jet. And I swear to you the very next day, the front page of the *Washington Post*, there was a big article about John [H.] Sununu taking a corporate jet. So, Jack came in the office that day and that same group of staff that was there when I was telling him he wasn't taking that corporate jet, he came in and he said, "What are

you guys doing?" And I just looked up and I said, "We were talking about John Sununu. Sure glad you didn't take that corporate jet, aren't you?" And he just looked at me. There was this little look he would give me when he wanted to kill me because he know I was right, but he didn't want to admit that I was right, and that was the look I got that day. But he wasn't going to yell at me because he knew I was right. I just had to do that sometimes, and just be his conscience. Again, not that he wanted to do anything wrong, and I'm not quite sure I'm explaining it properly, but he just sometimes needed to be told no, you can't do that. He would listen, I mean he would always listen to me, well, most of the time he would listen to me.

Kondracke: Lots of members of Congress take corporate jets all the time. Did you stop him from taking corporate jets in those days?

Zelaska: Under the [George H.W.] Bush administration there was a rule about it.

Kondracke: Yes, I can understand a cabinet secretary.

Zelaska: Well, there wasn't really any need back when he was in the Congress to take corporate jets. You had to tell people when you did it, because you had to fill out those financial disclosure forms. They started that financial disclosure in 1978, I believe. This was the first year you had to fill one of those out. I was just always looking in the future, because even in those days people were talking about him running for president, and I just always worried about that kind of stuff popping up down the road. Maybe I was too cautious, but it

certainly paid off, especially in '96 when we had to turn all those records over. I bet you can't find one article that says anything about his—Price Waterhouse, it was Price Waterhouse back in those days, always did his financial disclosure and his income tax, and he paid a lot of money to have that done. A couple of times he'd look at the bill, and he'd say, "I'm paying so much money for these people to do my income tax. Can't we find somebody else?" I said, "No. You're going to have Price Waterhouse do it, because they've got their name on that, and if people see Price Waterhouse on there they know it's done right." And it paid off. In 1996 in particular it really paid off. Nobody ever challenged one thing in there.

Kondracke: What else did Jiminy Cricket imply?

Zelaska: Just that I was his conscience about things. I'd just question him about things. I'd say, "Do you really want to do that? Do you want to find your name on the front page of the *Washington Post* about things?" which is what everybody should look at. Do you want to find your name on the front page of a newspaper because you've done some stupid little thing? It wasn't worth it.

Kondracke: You said that sometimes you, [J. David] Dave Hoppe and John [D.] Mueller would go to church in the middle of the day, and that indicated that there was turmoil in the office. What was that all about?

Zelaska: Oh, I don't know about turmoil, but we were three Catholics that sat in this small little office, and there was a 12:10 mass at St. Peter's. Now both Dave Hoppe and John Mueller had very long legs,

and we would always walk to church and I had to keep up with those two guy to get there by ten after twelve so we wouldn't be late for mass. Jack would be on the floor, and we'd take a half-hour out just to go to church. It wasn't necessarily some turmoil, but it helped us clear our heads sometimes. He'd come back to the office and say, "Where are they?" "They're at church." He'd kind of make fun, and say something like, "Oh, those three incense-burners" or something like that. Sometimes we did it just to get away and compare notes too, because Jack had a way of assigning us all the same task, which was not necessary sometimes. One of us could handle it but he would sometimes give us all the same task to see—

Kondracke: Like what?

Zelaska: I don't know. I can't remember anything off-hand. John would be on the phone and he'd be doing something, and I'd say, "Did he just tell you to do that, because he just told me to do that." And thank goodness we were in the same room so close together. We were in a room smaller than this area right here, with three desks, and we could overhear every conversation. But it was good because then we didn't do double-duty on things. He would do that sometimes. It wasn't a vicious thing; his mind was racing so fast sometimes he'd forget who he told to do what.

Kondracke: [David M.] Dave Smick actually said that he did that the way Franklin Delano Roosevelt did that to sort of keep control by having other people not in control. Is that accurate?

Zelaska: I know Dave used to say that, and there probably was a little truth to that. But again, it wasn't a malicious thing. He had a saying, he would check you on minutia. He would give you 10 things to do, and my way of doing it would be I'd prioritize what is the most important. But in his mind he was going to ask you about the one that was the least important because he knew, in his mind, if you did that one, then he knew that the other nine were taken care of.

Kondracke: So this is like tests.

Zelaska: It was a test. And I learned that that was what he was doing. So I would always say, "Oh, yes, I did that." I might not have gotten to that one, but, that's the way he worked. But he would repeat that to me, "I check on that because if you've done that little one then I know you've taken care of all the other ones.

Kondracke: Well Smick said that this became a problem in the campaign, for example, in the '88 campaign where he had John [P.] Sears and [Charles R.] Charlie Black [Jr.] and Dave Hoppe all sort of doing the same stuff, and that it got totally completely disorganized.

Zelaska: Again, I wasn't in that particular area, so you'd have to ask them about that. But I think probably that's true, there probably was a little of that going on.

Kondracke: So did it create confusion in the office, or did you always just—

Zelaska: Well, again, because we sat so close to each other, we were able to figure it out, and it got to the point where we knew to check after that. "He's just asked me to do this. Did he ask you to do this too?" We would talk, and that's probably why John and Dave and I are still very good friends, and we get along so well together. Because we took care of each other back in those days.

Kondracke: Just back on the church issue. How religious was he?

Zelaska: Well, I knew he went to church on Sundays when he was home with the family, and he went to the Presbyterian church. Later on, and I can't remember exactly what year, he did go back to reading his Christian Science papers. I can't remember, that was like the early eighties, maybe.

Kondracke: Yes, that's interesting. Somebody else told us that he started reading a lot of Christian Science sort of in the run up to the '88 campaign. Do you know what that was all about?

Zelaska: I don't know. I never asked him.

Kondracke: How much reading did he do?

Zelaska: I don't know what he did on his own. I do remember walking in his office a couple of times and he'd be sitting at his desk, and all of a sudden he'd look up at me and he just had this very peaceful look on his face, which was unusual because usually it was so crazy in there. When I'd walk up to his desk he'd be sitting there reading something out of that book.

Kondracke: Was it *Science and Health*?

Zelaska: He just looked very peaceful and calm, so I don't know if that was his way of calming himself down at that point. I wouldn't say it happened every day, but I do remember one or two incidences when I walked in—

Kondracke: How long did his return to Christian Science last?

Zelaska: Again, I didn't see it on a daily basis. I don't know. I don't think he did much of it when we were at HUD. That was after '88, obviously. I don't remember seeing him do that at HUD, but then, boy, there was just so much more to do back in those days, he wouldn't have done any of that during the day.

Kondracke: Besides that instantaneous peacefulness, was there any other effect on his demeanor?

Zelaska: He wouldn't drink anything. I mean not that I ever saw him drink before, because I never really did. He never drank beer or wine or anything like that, and I remember one time after the Kemp-Roth bill passed I had a bottle of champagne and glasses and everything. When he came back to the office we were passing champagne around. He took the glass but he never drank it, in fact he threw it up in the air as a way of celebrating. We had champagne all over the floor. I never saw him drink at all.

Kondracke: Not even at Super Bowl parties or anything like that?

Zelaska: Always a Coke. That was all he ever drank.

Kondracke: Were there differences in style in the way the office ran under Randy, Dave Smick and Dave Hoppe? Because they were there during different periods. Randy Teague was there for the tax issues; Smick was there for Reagan, I guess, and Hoppe was there for the campaign, right?

Zelaska: Not from my personal vantage point, because I had my own thing to do, and they never bothered me. I would go to them if I needed some help on something, but I was pretty autonomous. Jack had already learned at that point to trust me on things, and I guess the AAs all knew, well, Randy wasn't really there that long. I'm trying to remember, he was only there like a year.

Kondracke: '77-'79.

Zelaska: Yes, so he was only there like about a year or so. Again, I was trying to reorganize everything during that period and then we got into the Reagan stuff, so I was so busy I didn't really pay much attention to that.

Kondracke: Smick said that when he came there there were a number of women working in the back office that he replaced or got jobs for somewhere else because he didn't think they were very effective. Do you remember anything about that? He says he got them jobs as executive assistants, executive secretaries, but I guess they were

doing either casework or something like that. Do you remember anything like that?

Zelaska: [No.]

Kondracke: No?

Zelaska: We had that same staff when I came on board. I mean, there was a natural attrition, but I don't remember him doing much of that.

Kondracke: Okay.

Zelaska: Especially in the casework area. We had three caseworkers and they all were there for a long time. One of them finally left and went to AID [U.S. Agency for International Development] under Reagan, but I don't remember too much about that.

Kondracke: Okay.

Zelaska: The biggest change, and this would have been after Dave, was hiring Mary Brunette [Cannon], and Mary Brunette was an intern in our office. Jack had a summer party at his house, which he always did, and Mary was there that summer. They had just redone the redistricting from the 38th District and we were now the 31st District, and he took on some new areas, and Mary happened to mention that she was from the new area. And he says, "Do you want to come work for me permanently?" Of course that was the best decision he ever made. Mary was brilliant, is brilliant.

Kondracke: What did Mary do for him?

Zelaska: She was his legislative assistant, domestic policy, and she went on to do the enterprise zones and then went to HUD. I mean she's just a brilliant, brilliant mind. Did a lot of his speeches on the floor.

Kondracke: This is after John Mueller left?

Zelaska: No, John was still there. It was after Dave had just left or was just leaving or something like that. She was just a great asset to him.

Kondracke: You said that you all used to joke that he was like Pig Pen in Peanuts.

Zelaska: Pig Pen, he's the one that had the little dust thing around him?

Kondracke: Right.

Zelaska: Well that's the way Jack was. Wherever he went there was just a little stir of activity all around him. It was everywhere he went. Because of his being a football player and people knowing him and then his name being bantered around for president, everyone wanted to be around him. People would walk up and down the hallways and they'd see his name, because we all had our little name plaques out there, he had his name plaque. And they'd go, you could hear them,

[whispering] "That's Jack Kemp's office. They'd come in and they'd just walk in uninvited and they'd just go, "Wow, this is Jack Kemp's office." Because we had all these plaques all over the office. You know how everybody has them all? And they were just mesmerized by him. So when he would walk down the hall that's the way it was. People would just gather around him, and they'd ask him to sign things. It was just a stir of activity all the time.

Kondracke: And he had about 12 balls flying in the air all the time.

Zelaska: And he always had all these things he was doing and he never said no to anybody. I would tease him sometimes, it was more than teasing. I would say, "Jack, just say no. Read my lips. See how I say the word no." Because he would never say "no" to anybody. I'd say, "Alright, don't say no specifically, but just say 'I'm not at my desk right now; I don't have my calendar in front of me. Call my office and they'll help you.' That's all you have to say. You're not being mean to them, you're not saying yes, you're not saying no, but give it to somebody else."

Kondracke: Instead he did what?

Zelaska: He would say yes to everything. Well, next thing I know I'd get a phone call from somebody. "Well he said he could do this breakfast for me on such and such a day." And the worst thing that happened, and this was during the Reagan campaign, was a member, who still happens to be there, he was running for Congress and Jack saw him someplace, and he said, "Will you come and do a dinner for me?" And Jack said, "Oh, yes, sure, I'll do a dinner." Just like that.

So, I did get his name, and when we were doing the scheduling a dinner just didn't work out, with the airplanes and everything, because there were other people in that state that needed him. And the way it worked out with the airline reservations, because we didn't have a jet at our disposal, the best way to get him in there would have been a breakfast. So I'm all happy, I'm calling his staff and saying, "We can do a breakfast on such and such a day." Now this guy should have been really happy he got him at all, but instead, that guy hung up on me. Next thing I know I get a call from this guy, this candidate, he says, "You tell Jack Kemp he can stick his breakfast . . ." and he hung up on me. All because Jack says, "Oh, yes, I'll do a dinner for you." So I told Jack what he said. I actually called the Reagan people and told them, and the next thing I know somebody from the Reagan office called this guy and gave him the riot act for acting like that, that he should be glad he got anything. And then that guy came in and apologized to me. But that's what happened because he would always say yes to everything. And he didn't always understand the consequences, but he didn't want to be the bad guy to anybody. He wanted everybody to love him, and people would have loved him no matter what. He didn't have to always say yes to everything they wanted.

Kondracke: Did he say yes for requests for other things besides speeches, that complicated his life?

Zelaska: Do you mean like, "I'll sign that piece of legislation"?

Kondracke: Or, "I'll look into your problem, or—

Zelaska: Yes, he did that, and that was fine, because that's what we were there for. If it was a constituent, that's what we were there for, so I had no problem with that at all. Our caseworkers were busy, and that's what they were supposed to be doing for our constituency. We had a very good reputation with our constituents for getting things done. And a lot of it had to do because of his celebrity. We were able to make calls and get things done.

Kondracke: Do you remember any specific cases where you really pulled something out of the hat?

Zelaska: Not a constituent necessarily. For the NFL [National Football League]. During one of the Super Bowls there was going to be that guy with the jetpack that was going to fly across the stadium, I think they've done it since then, but this was the first time they were ever going to do that. And they needed a certain kind of fuel for that jetpack, and the only people that had it were the military. So I got a call from my contact, his name was [James] Jim Steeg at the NFL, he was the guy that ran all the Super Bowls back in those days, a really nice guy, and Jim called me and said, "Do you think you could help me find this fuel?" And I said, "I'll try." So I called our liaison, the Congressional liaison at the Pentagon, and he put me in touch with somebody at the Pentagon. Bottom line is I hooked them all up, I never even knew if it worked out, but on Super Bowl Sunday that guy in the jetpack flew across the Super Bowl field, and I went, "Yes, we did it. We got that fuel for him!" But then again it was Jack's name, and his celebrity, and the NFL, the whole thing. And I'm sure that's how it got done.

Kondracke: Any other famous service stories?

Zelaska: I can't think of anything.

Kondracke: Okay, so you said that he was disorganized, but he always knew where stuff was, so how does that square?

Zelaska: I'm not saying he always knew where stuff was.

Kondracke: Okay. Concentrate on the disorganized part.

Zelaska: He took a manila folder like you have right there. It was a legal-size one. And he would get one of those on Monday morning. He'd say, "Do you have a manila folder?" So I'd just keep a stack in his office of clean ones. And the next thing I know he would carry that thing around all week long, and everything anybody handed him would go into that manila folder. He would just put it in that manila folder. And at the end of the week or 10 days or whatever he would lay that folder down on his back credenza and he'd never touch that thing again. And they would just stack up and stack up and stack up, and I went, "Oh my God, when are we going to . . .?" And he wouldn't let me touch them. But he didn't like the fact that his office looked so messy back in those days, and we didn't have scanners and all of that stuff. He just thought it was going to go to Never Never Land if you let anybody else touch it. But I realized if something hadn't been touched in six months, there wasn't anything in there he really needed. So, periodically when he was out of town I would go, and I wouldn't take anything off the top; I'd just take the ones on the bottom, and I'd pull them out, slowly, and I would page through it to

see if there was anything in there, and I'd find campaign donations, checks, things like that in there sometimes people would hand him, and the rest of it was just garbage, it was just propaganda that people would give him on a bill or something like that. But I'd go through it and I'd look and see there was anything important in there. I might find a letter from his son or daughter that they'd have given him or something, at breakfast. But that's what I'd do. I'd just pull the ones out of the bottom. And the staff got to know that that's what I did. This one time he was going to the airport—it was always a white-knuckle flight to the airport and he'd have somebody drive him down. He would always go to the back credenza and start to look through something. What he was doing was looking for reading material and knew there was a whole stack of stuff there he could look at. So he would go to the top folders and start looking through them. I said to him once, because he was running late, "Jack, you're going to miss the plane, you're going to miss the plane." And he goes, "Well I'm just looking for something here." I said, "You know, when I write my book, I'm going to talk about how you store all this stuff on the back of your credenza." And he looked at me and he goes, "There will be no books." I said, "Don't worry. There won't be a book." But obviously there will be a book. There was never really anything in there.

Kondracke: How high was the stack?

Zelaska: Oh, it could get pretty high.

Kondracke: Like a foot?

Zelaska: Probably two feet.

Kondracke: Two feet.

Zelaska: Yes. That was before I would really start to pull the stuff out. He would notice if it went way down.

Kondracke: Let me get a picture of the office. So his desk is facing the door?

Zelaska: Yes, I can show you. It's in that collage.

Kondracke: So this is on a credenza in back of this desk.

Zelaska: Right.

Kondracke: And what did his desk look like?

Zelaska: Same. But I kept the inbox and the outbox clean so that I could give him that and he would always put the out stuff in there. It was kind of stacked too, but it was mostly the back credenza that had a lot of this stuff.

Kondracke: But the staff says that he would read stuff, tear it out and then fire it off to them too.

Zelaska: Oh, yes. He would do that too. He would pull something out of a newspaper, write "Mary" on it, and then he would put it in his outbox, and then that is what I would do, I'd distribute all that stuff to

all the staff. Yes, he was big at pulling articles out or circling something.

Kondracke: You said that he read all the papers. How many papers did he read?

Zelaska: Most of them he got at home. Obviously the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, *Washington Star*, back in those days. We had the *Washington Star* delivered every afternoon by this young African-American boy who was just adorable. He was just this little teenager, and he'd come through and deliver his paper, and Jack really liked him a lot. Then when the *Star* closed down the kid didn't come back anymore and we were all so sad that he wasn't delivering the paper anymore. But he'd come by every afternoon. So we got the *Star* and we got all the magazines, *Time*, *Newsweek*, et cetera.

Kondracke: And he read them all?

Zelaska: Well, he would look through them, I know that.

Kondracke: What about books? Were you the one who got him his books?

Zelaska: Books would just pour into our office. Everybody was always sending him something. They'd be autographed copies. He never threw any book away. And then he would buy a lot of them himself. That's where he would go, he would go to bookstores in airports and things like that and he'd come back with three or four books. He did his own shopping for those kinds of things. But other books would

arrive because people were always trying to get him to write an endorsement or some blurb for a back of a book or something.

Kondracke: Right. So you said at the staff symposium that he could be so irritating sometimes. "That was the thing about Jack was that he never held a grudge. He'd yell and scream at you one minute and then the next minute he'd say, 'Honey, can you go get me a cup of coffee?' " But he didn't actually call you "honey."

Zelaska: No.

Kondracke: This raises a couple of questions. First, other than these things that you've already talked about, what could be so irritating about him?

Zelaska: I think that's pretty big, because he would let people walk all over him, but he did not keep a grudge sometimes. Not that I wanted him to keep a grudge, but I just wanted him to see that not everybody is out for you, Jack. They've got their own agendas. He didn't see through that sometimes. The more popular he got it seemed like the less he realized it.

Kondracke: How's that? Can you think of any specifics?

Zelaska: He just liked people liking him I guess. He liked the attention. He had an ego, that's no secret. He had an ego. The only time I saw him get scared, though, there was one time when I saw him get scared with all the attention, and that was when we were in Dallas for the Convention. And we had a big reception.

Kondracke: This was '84.

Zelaska: Yes, I think it was in Dallas. We had a book that had just come out with some of his speeches in it. You've probably seen it, *An American Dream* I think it was called.

Kondracke: *An American Idea*.

Zelaska: *American Idea*. His handlers wanted to give them out at the reception, and I said, "I don't think that's a good idea, because everybody's going to want him to autograph that book. You should give it to them after he's left, and then hand them out to everybody." Oh, no, they had to give those books out. Next thing I know people are literally crawling on top of him and just attacking him like a rock star, and he was getting smothered by the people trying to get those books signed. He finally got away, and I could see he was a little shaken by it, and I said, "I told you not to give those books out, because I know how those people are." Also at this particular reception we had all these hors d'ouvres laid out, and the hotel had used decorations in the middle of the table, and they were laminated pieces of bread, you know, faux bread kind of things to make decorations and everything, and fruits and things like that that weren't real. It was like locusts had come in on that table. They were even stealing the loaves of bread just to be able to say that they'd been in a reception where Jack Kemp was. We went in and just looked at the table. There was not a morsel, nothing. Like I said, he was visibly shaken.

Kondracke: You said that he would yell and scream at you. Did he yell and scream at you?

Zelaska: Yes, he did.

Kondracke: What did he—

Zelaska: He had a big booming voice and he would raise his voice at me and he would appear to get mad at me if I didn't do something exactly the way he wanted it or something like this. But I knew it was, I did learn. At first I was very sensitive about it, but I learned he really wasn't directing it at me in particular. He was frustrated, because he had so many things on his mind. His mind raced a lot. He had a lot of pressure, from the floor, and all of the things he was doing and the people trying to get him to run for president. He had to think about this and think about that, and, you know, sometimes I was the closest person. Me and Joanne. Joanne and I would talk a lot, because I was the day wife and she was the one at home, and he would yell. But again, he never kept a grudge. The next minute he would be just as nice as he could be, and he didn't remember what he even yelled about. I would still be upset about it, but he wouldn't even know [what upset me-SZ]. Then he'd go, "Why are you upset at me?" But I think some of it had to do with my childhood and my dad and my relationship with my dad, to tell you the truth. I hate to admit that. My dad had a really booming voice too, and he could be very loud, and sometimes I think I thought about that.

Kondracke: Did he get mad at any other staffers?

Zelaska: Oh, yes. We all had our moments with him. He was not just directing it at one person.

Kondracke: When he got mad did he swear at you?

Zelaska: No. It wasn't that kind of—I mean, he might have done it to the guys; he didn't use those kind of words with me.

Kondracke: [raised voice] "Sharon, I told you. . . !"

Zelaska: Yes, exactly. And sometimes I didn't do things he wanted me to do because they just didn't make any sense sometimes. As a matter of fact there were times when I got to the point where I didn't do some of the things because they didn't make sense, and I had this thing that I called the "three-time rule." I would make him ask me three times before I would do it if I thought it was something that didn't need to be done. Something simple, like every time somebody sent him a picture of something he'd say, "Oh, that's nice. Can you get this framed?" When I first started working for him I would send out every single [picture-SZ], I would do everything he wanted. I would send it down to the frame shop and it would come back, and then nothing would be done with it. He didn't really want that thing framed. And then I got to realize, 'Well, why are we wasting taxpayers' money getting this thing framed? We have no place to hang it; it doesn't mean anything to anybody.' So, I wouldn't do it, and then if he asked me the second time, 'Well, I'm not going to do it.' But then if he asked me the third time, I'd think 'He really wants this done.' So I'd get it done. When I retired, at my retirement dinner, John Mueller admitted, he told the story of my three-time rule, and

Jack had never heard it, so John squealed on me about my three-time rule, and Jack just looked at me, "What do you mean the three-time rule?" I said, "Well, I had this little way of not doing something you asked if I thought it was insignificant."

Kondracke: You said that part of your Jiminy Cricket job was to sort of keep names of people who had crossed him. Anybody in particular on that list?

Zelaska: Yes, but I don't think I'm going to tell you anybody in particular. There were a couple of people that I just thought used him, you know? And I would tell him. I'd say, "Jack, they don't really care about you. They're just using you to—"

Kondracke: Is this fellow members?

Zelaska: No, no. These were people who were using his name to get business for themselves, to be able to say they were close to him.

Kondracke: These are campaign contributors?

Zelaska: Yes, sometimes they were campaign contributors, but they were lobbyists and people like that who just wanted to be able to say they had contact with him. They were always looking for an appointment with him, to be able to, they had nothing to say to him, they just wanted to be able to prove and be able to say in a conversation, "When I was in Jack's office the other day. . . ." That kind of thing.

Kondracke: Did you tell him?

Zelaska: Yes, sometimes. It got to the point where he would actually say, "Well what do you think about this person?" He got to realize that I did have sixth sense about certain people. One time there was a staff member that he had hired; I wasn't really sure about this guy, and I said something to him. I said, "You know, I don't know about this guy. The jury is out on him. I haven't made up my mind about him." And then as I got to working with the guy I thought, 'No, I was wrong. This guy is a pretty good guy and I shouldn't have said anything to Jack.' So I went to Jack and I said, "I was wrong about so and so. He's really a good guy and he's working really hard." I should have known better, because the next time he saw this guy come into the office, I mean, he was a staff member, he says, "Sharon didn't like you when you first came, but now she's decided she likes you." I went, 'Oh, no, Jack. You weren't supposed to say anything to him about it.' But I learned after that you had to watch what you said to him. He thought he was helping you by saying you really like this guy now, but he told too much of the story. He did that to others, too, and we all realized you can't tell him everything.

Kondracke: You said in this staff symposium he would say to you after getting mad, " 'Honey, can you get me a cup of coffee?' But he didn't call me honey." What did he call you?

Zelaska: Sharon. Sometimes he would call me Babe, but back in those days we didn't take things like that personally. He would call me Babe sometimes. Sometimes he would call me Joanne. Honestly, he

would call me Joanne, and she told me he'd call her Sharon sometimes.

Kondracke: Distracted.

Zelaska: Yes, that's all it was.

Kondracke: In general, how did he treat women?

Zelaska: Well. I don't think any of the females that worked for him could ever say anything derogatory about him. He was pretty normal with everybody. That's about all I can say about it.

Kondracke: The issue came up about blacks. You said that he had one black staffer, fulltime staffer, named [James] Jimmy Whitehead. Who was he?

Zelaska: He took care of our—what do you call it?

Kondracke: IT [Information Technology]?

Zelaska: Well it really wasn't IT. because we didn't have IT back in those days. He kept the list of names of constituents and things like that when we did mailings and that kind of thing. It was a very unsophisticated system back in those days and I don't even remember how we did, to tell you the truth. But it wasn't like today. Mailing lists were very archaic back in those days. Robo typewriters and things like that.

Kondracke: Since he was clearly an Equal Opportunity person and had lots of black friends and stuff like that, how come there weren't any high-ranking black staff members? Did he go looking for them or not?

Zelaska: We didn't have a whole lot of turnover, we really didn't. Once they got there Jack treated everybody so well, people wanted to be there. And they weren't fools. They saw what was happening with his name and everything. He treated people well and people wanted to stay. Yes, there were certain incidences where people had to move on for various reasons. They'd go back to Buffalo, or something like that happened. But there really wasn't a lot of turnover. We were blessed—I don't know if I've already told you this—because the way our staffs were set up financially, we had a pot of money for staff that everybody got. It was the same amount of money for every Congressional staff. But he was a member of the leadership, so he got an extra pot of money for that, so he got some staff for that. And then he had positions on different committees, that's how Michelle [K.] Van Cleave was paid, that kind of thing. But then we had our PAC [Political Action Committee], we had a foundation, we had a lot of outside sources, so we were able to pay people better on the Congressional staff because we were able to use some of these other pots of money—not the outside ones like the PAC and that, because those obviously had to be very rigid in reporting and all that. He took pretty good care. Back in those days, again, they didn't have these really high-paying salaries. When I left I was only making like \$60,000, in '88, which was a pretty good salary, but it certainly wasn't—

Kondracke: Did he go looking for African-Americans?

Zelaska: Go looking, I mean, I don't know. A lot of people he hired just because he would see them someplace and was impressed by them. Sometimes that's what he would do. I'd come into the office and there'd be a new person sitting at the front desk. That's how Susie Summerall got hired.

Kondracke: Who's she?

Zelaska: That's [George A.] Pat Summerall's daughter. I came in one day and Susie—no, Susie isn't the right one. Take Susie out. She wasn't the one. It was another girl. Anyway, she was there, and I'd say, "Who are you?" And she'd say, "Well Jack hired me. I'm so and so, and I'm the new receptionist." Well we did have an opening, but it was not like, you just don't hire somebody off the street. But that's the way he was. He was impressed with this person someplace, and the next thing you know, that's how he would hire them.

Kondracke: Were there any celebrated firings?

Zelaska: Celebrated? No.

Kondracke: I mean dust-up kind of firings, big failures of a staff person?

Zelaska: There was one person in Buffalo that had to be let go.

Kondracke: Over incompetence, or misdeeds?

Zelaska: No, not misdeeds; just didn't seem to get along with people. This person had been there quite a few years. She's no longer alive. She'd been there a long time, and she just complained all the time. She just was a chronic complainer and caused a lot of other turmoil in the office because of her constant complaining. But that was about it.

Kondracke: Okay. Tell me all about these Super Bowls.

Zelaska: Okay. Well, again, when Jack played football he took them to the AFC [American Football League] championship, but they didn't have Super Bowls back in those days. The first Super Bowl I don't remember exactly what year it was.

Kondracke: It was the year after he left the—

Zelaska: So it would be the early seventies, I guess.

Kondracke: It might have been 1970, actually, or '69

Zelaska: Yes, a few of his friends, Leon [W.] Parma, [Herbert G.] Herb Klein, and I think there was one other couple, but I can't think, it might have been the California Congressman at the time [Robert C. Wilson—SZ], who was sort of Jack's mentor. Very nice old gentleman. They went to the Super Bowl together, that was Super Bowl I, and then the next year, Super Bowl II, and they added another couple, and before you knew it, there were 25 couples that went, and sometimes we actually had fundraisers revolved around them and it just got bigger and bigger and bigger. A staff member in his office did all the

work. Susie Summerall back in those days got the hotels and all that. All the people would pay their own way to get there and they would pay for their ticket, but Jack got them access to the tickets and access to the hotel rooms. And then we'd set up parties and lunches and things like that, and it would just be a nice social thing. At that point there were a lot of people from Buffalo that were included, Buffalo people who were big contributors and that kind of thing, who were there from the early days, the people who believed in him when he was first a member of Congress, helped him get there. As years went on it was other people, he would just keep adding to the list, and then it was more national. The group got bigger and bigger.

Kondracke: What's the biggest gang that ever went?

Zelaska: Would have been the one in Atlanta that I was mentioning to you. Which year did we decide that was? '94?

Kondracke: I forget.

Zelaska: Yes, whatever. It was in Atlanta. We were still pondering the next race.

Kondracke: That was '95 going into '96.

Zelaska: Right.

Kondracke: He decided in '95 that he wasn't going to run, but he was still thinking about it.

Zelaska: Right. So the PAC put together a fundraiser in Atlanta, and I had over 400 tickets in my hand, so that meant there were at least 200 couples, 400 people that came to it, including some staff, because we always made sure they got tickets if we could. So I think that was probably the biggest group.

Kondracke: What were the events? Did he ever charter a plane?

Zelaska: No. A couple of times, the Tenneco [Inc.] plane. We had to get back for Reagan's inauguration, the second inauguration, and the Tenneco plane brought him back so that he could be back in time for the inauguration, which of course, mid-air was cancelled, because of snow or ice. Remember they had to cancel the second Reagan inauguration.

Kondracke: So he did sometimes ride corporate jets.

Zelaska: Yes, but that was just for convenience to get back to an event. We never rented a plane. There were just too many people.

Kondracke: But you said earlier that he never rode corporate jets.

Zelaska: Yes, I did say that. But that was again when he was in the [George H. W.] Bush administration and corporate jets were against the rules. He could ride a corporate jet if he put it down on his disclosure report, and we had to pay the equivalent of a first-class ticket or something like that. But we didn't abuse it, which is what I'm trying to say. We didn't abuse it.

Kondracke: At these events, you had to be there four days, as I understand it, you had to rent a hotel room for four days. How was it organized?

Zelaska: On Thursday night people were just coming in at different times. These people came every year so they would make their own little cliques, and they'd say, "We're going to have a group at such and such, and anybody that wants to come, come." Dow Chemical [Company] used to put on a big party on the Friday night, not for Jack, but for Super Bowl people, and Dow invited all of Jack's group to that because [Charles T.] Chuck Marck was working at Dow at the time so he made sure he included all of Jack's friends in that. Then Saturday night was the big NFL party, the commissioner's party, so he let all of his group come to that. So they had evening events. And then, like I said, the little cliques would break up and do their lunches and go shopping and whatever they wanted to do. And then he'd have a political breakfast-type thing on Saturday morning where Herb Klein would get the guys together in a hotel room someplace and Jack would come and they would just shoot the breeze there.

Kondracke: Were these fundraising events or—

Zelaska: No, those were just the regular events. But occasionally we did, there was one when it was in Los Angeles one time, and that would have been for the '88 campaign. Eighty-six, '87, someplace in there we did one. That was a really big fundraiser. And then the one in '88.

Kondracke: I'm sorry, what was the first one?

Zelaska: In Los Angeles. We were at the Biltmore Hotel, I think.

Kondracke: In what year?

Zelaska: This would have been raising money for the '88 campaign. Yes, that would have been in the eighties—'84, '85, '86, something like that.

Kondracke: Going in the run-up to the '88 campaign.

Zelaska: Right.

Kondracke: So what day of the week would that be? Would that be the Saturday morning instead?

Zelaska: No, that would have been Friday or Saturday night.

Kondracke: He was friends with [Alvin R.] Pete Rozelle?

Zelaska: Very close friends, yes.

Kondracke: What was the basis of their friendship?

Zelaska: I guess it went back to the fact that he was on the NFL Charities board, and the whole relationship he had with him when he was with the Buffalo Bills and everything. And he knew a lot of the owners. Jack knew everybody.

Kondracke: And he'd been president of the AFL Players' Association.

Zelaska: Exactly.

Kondracke: You talked about the issue of his clothing, and making him look like a president.

Zelaska: Yes, that was Jude [T.] Wanniski.

Kondracke: Talk about that.

Zelaska: I did notice, when I first went to work for Jack, that he didn't wear suits. He wore sports coats and pants. That was sort of his standard thing. Always with his collar pin, he still had the collar pin back in those days. And his pants weren't always the length they should be. I just remember Jude, and I'm going to have to tell you my relationship with Jude and how I got to know Jude. But Jude told him one day at some point he needed to spiff up a little bit. He needed to get blue suits and all that sort of thing. So he started shopping differently. And one of the guys who worked on our staff, his name is Michael O'Connell, he was, I forget exactly what position he held, he did a little bit of everything—he was a driver, he did a lot of different things. Anyway, Michael is a very spiffy dresser and shopped at Joseph [A.] Bank's and pick out suits and sometimes Jack would take him with him to help him.

Kondracke: Joseph A. Bank is not a high-end clothing store.

Zelaska: Well, not now, but back in those days I think it was. There weren't that many places but back in those days it was one. And then we moved up to having somebody actually come into our office. I don't even know how we found this guy, but really nice guy. I wish I could remember his name. [Gary _____-SZ] But he started coming in and doing measurements and started making all of his clothes. But it was Jude who told him he needed to dress more presidential. So you never saw Jack in anything but a blue suit after that, or a nice dark suit. Always had a nice set of ties, and he had his shirts made with the monogram and all that sort of thing. But Jude was the one who pushed him to it.

Kondracke: Did Jude think he should give up the tie pin?

Zelaska: I don't think so. It just got to be his trademark.

Kondracke: What about his haircut? You know there was this cartoon in the Post that used to lampoon him as Bob Forehead.

Zelaska: Bob Forehead, yes.

Kondracke: Did anybody ever say, you know, cut your hair shorter? Because you see his football, well, you wouldn't want a crew cut, but there's a normal haircut and then there's this big haircut.

Zelaska: I don't know. He went to the barber on Capitol Hill, the House barber. He had one guy over there that he always went to. And then when he left the Hill, actually when that guy retired, it might have been about the same time, he started to go to the guy that

Joanne would go to. And then that guy used to come, his name was Ari something. [Dan Avissar-SZ] He used to come to Jack's home to get it done.

Kondracke: He obviously liked his hair that way.

Zelaska: Yes.

Kondracke: Because he had it the same way for years and years. How conscious of his appearance was he? Somebody actually told us that he was vain, that he would look in the mirror a lot.

Zelaska: Yes, he did. The last thing he did was when he would walk out the door he would do one of these things. [demonstrates] One of our other pet peeves among the staff which we always laughed about but it would get so frustrating too was the fact that he wouldn't shave in the morning. And we teased him about this all the time. And he had a bathroom in his Congressional office and he would have his dock kit in there, and before he was going to go out for the evening, if it was some social event or he had to get on a plane or whatever, it was the last thing he'd do is go in there and shave. I was like, "Jack, you've got a plane in a half-hour and you're in there shaving. Why don't you shave in the morning when everybody else shaves?" "Well, because I have a very thick beard and I'd have to do it twice."

Kondracke: So he'd come in with a shadow all day? You could have seen it.

Zelaska: No, it wasn't really that bad in the morning, but you'd think he would just do it in the morning, but he never did it that way. And I remember John [W.] Buckley, especially during the campaign, he was so frustrated with him on that shaving thing. Because it would take out time, we were on rigid time schedules all the time during the campaign, and all of a sudden, "Well I've got to shave." And you never knew when that was going to happen. So John bought him an electric shaver, which he would never use. But that was one of our big pet peeves, that he would stop everything to shave. Again, back in those days the planes, he would just catch them just in the nick of time. As years went on and all the changes were made at the airports I wondered how in the world he ever made it two hours before a flight, because he could never do that back in those—I actually remember one time calling United Airlines at Dulles [International Airport] and actually asking them to hold the plane for him, and they did. Now that would never happen today, but back in those days we held the plane for him. And I know that to be true because the lady that I called was at his funeral and we talked about that day at the funeral. I said, "Do you remember that day you held the plane for me at Dulles Airport?" And she said, "Oh, yes. That would never happen today." I said, "No, it certainly wouldn't." That's how much they liked him.

Kondracke: Was he running chronically late all the time?

Zelaska: Not all the time, but yes, there was always a little pressure at the end, yes.

Kondracke: For every plane.

Zelaska: Yes.

Kondracke: Up in Buffalo they told these wild driving stories, him putting his foot on the top of the accelerator when somebody else is driving the car and driving on sidewalks and stuff like that. Are there Washington stories like that?

Zelaska: I'm sure the drivers have some of those. That's why they called them white-knuckle trips, because he would always do the driving and whoever it was would be the one to bring the car back and they would just sit there, you know. I know I went once or twice and I was just scared to death because he would just go so fast and seemed so reckless and he would do one of these things. [demonstrates]

Kondracke: Zipping in and out of lanes?

Zelaska: Zipping in and out—

Kondracke: Did he run red lights?

Zelaska: Probably.

Kondracke: Did he carry footballs in the car to give away in case?

Zelaska: No, I know Eddie tells that story—he would always keep footballs in the car for that reason, but no. I will tell you one story about footballs and bubblegum cards. If anybody out there has a football, I can honestly tell them that that is a real signature on those footballs. Because I would never let anybody forge a football. There

were letters and things like that that might have somebody else's signature or the signature pen, but every football out there is a real football.

Kondracke: So were you the football distributor?

Zelaska: I was the football distributor. I would get them from the NFL, boxes of them, or we'd go out and buy them or whatever. Those were always real signatures as were the original bubblegum cards. If you had an original bubblegum card from the early days, those were all real signatures. I would never let those be put on the autopen. The newer bubblegum card that came out in a pack of, I don't remember, it was a newer one with him in a suit. That's the difference between them. It wasn't a football uniform. Some of those would have gone on the autopen, but I would never let an original bubblegum card go out without—

Kondracke: How many footballs bubblegum cards a year would you

Zelaska: Oh, gosh, I can't even tell you. I wouldn't even venture a guess. But that was the other thing that he procrastinated on was signatures, and people were always sending in pictures. "Can I have autographed picture?" So I would put the person's name and address on the picture and put a paperclip on it and put it in the file and try to get him to sign these things and people would wait months and months for these things or they'd send these little miniature footballs or big footballs. They'd pay for all this stuff and they'd sometimes pay for the shipping, because I'd say to them, "I don't have the means, I don't have the money to pay postage, so you've got to include the

postage too.” Because we were in Congress and I couldn’t use the frank or anything like that. So they would send the money for the postage and all that. But all this stuff would build up in my office because he hated to sit down and sign things. And then they’d call me and they’d say, “When are you going to get it done?” “Oh, trust me, I still have it.” And then one day I’d say, “Jack, you’ve got to sign these things for me.”

Kondracke: Did you have boxes of footballs?

Zelaska: I would have boxes of them. Just boxes of stuff to sign. And then there were the people who would want an autographed picture, and then it got to the point where I started to recognize that there were the same people asking for the same pictures, so I would just hold them back after a while. One time I called somebody and I said, “What are you doing with these pictures?” There was no eBay [.com] back in those days. They were selling them. And I cut them off, because I realized what they were doing, they were selling them, and we were having to pay for all that. Months would go by sometimes. It was very frustrating. That was the other thing that he didn’t realize. Because he didn’t do something right away, then I had to take two and three more phone calls about that. Same with scheduling. Because he didn’t make a decision right away, I had to spend more time on the phone placating somebody because he wouldn’t make the decision on it. It was a waste of my time, and sometimes I would have to tell him that. “You’re wasting my time now by doing this, and I don’t have that extra time, Jack, nor do you. So let’s do it when I ask you to do it and we’ll save everybody a lot of angst.”

Kondracke: That's when he would started yelling at you.

Zelaska: That's probably was when he would start to yell at me, yes. He understood; he knew I was doing it for his own benefit, because he knew I wasn't out for myself. None of this stuff was for me, it was all for him and it was his image that I was concerned about, not mine. He understood that.

Kondracke: Did he ask you for advice about anything political, like running against [Jacob K.] Javits or anything like that?

Zelaska: No, I was not part of that, and I didn't want to be, to tell you the truth. That wasn't my role. I wasn't very political back in those days. Now if I was working for him I'd give him all my opinions, because I watch everything, I watch everything on TV, I watch all the debates. I have a lot more opinions about things now. As a matter of fact, when we would get together after I wasn't working for him, right before he got sick, and I would go over there and see him, we would have talks about some of this stuff, and he'd say, "When did you get so political about things? You never used to talk like that when you worked for me." I said, "I know. I was so busy with just taking care of business, I didn't have time to be paying attention to all that stuff, but now I do pay attention to all that now."

Kondracke: How about personal stuff and family stuff?

Zelaska: Oh, yes, he would ask me about things, and I'd give him my opinions, or ask me to do his shopping for him sometimes, that kind of thing.

Kondracke: Somebody actually said to us that in spite of his being there for his family, that he was not really intimate, even with them. There was not a lot of intimacy.

Zelaska: I think back in those days when they were younger, but as he got older I think he became more attached to them that way. Especially when he saw what they were going through with their children and that kind of thing, he understood a little bit more. But I think that's probably true when they were younger. He was traveling so much. There was the football and then the Congressional. Joanne was the one they were very close to because she was there all the time for them.

Kondracke: And somebody else said that there was this, in spite of this outgoing personality that there was a kind of an aloofness that he was a kind of a quarterback, and you're the quarterback and you can't get really get too close to all the players. And somebody else said that his relationships with other people was, "Oh that guy really loves me." But there was kind of a cocoon around him.

Zelaska: Well, I don't think he had a lot of close personal friends. I think most men have at least one or two very close personal friends. His brother [Thomas P.] Tom [Kemp] was probably the closest friend that he would talk to, and even then, I don't know that he was as close as some people get. So, yes, I think there was a little bit of that.

Kondracke: What was that about, do you think?

Zelaska: I don't know if it was the third child syndrome or what.

Kondracke: Okay. One thing that I don't know a lot about and you were there for is the HUD years, so let's walk through that. And then I want to ask you about relationships with a number of people, and I don't want to wear you out here, but we'll continue. So who were his top aides at HUD?

Zelaska: It was Scott [W.] Reed, was his first chief of staff, Mary Brunettee. Those were the two that came from the campaign. Well, I guess me.

Kondracke: Scott was the chief of staff?

Zelaska: Chief of staff, right.

Kondracke: Did Scott run the Department while he was basically out?

Zelaska: Yes. And [Frederick L.] Rick Ahern was his traveling person. He did all of his scheduling. He was in charge of the scheduling office but he traveled with him everywhere he went. He had a bodyguard and all that. All of that was so different than what we were used to. I didn't know what to do with myself. There were 3,000 people taking care of him now, and I was just used to doing everything and now I had all these people to do everything, and I didn't have much to do at HUD. I kept the home fires burning and I still kept all of his personal

stuff and all of that sort of thing. The issues were so grand there, especially since we had just come into that whole Robin Hood mess, following after [Samuel R.] Sam Pierce [Jr.]. Oh, gosh, it was such a mess back in those days, and he had inherited all of that.

Kondracke: It was corruption and—

Zelaska: Corruption, there was just so much, and Mary and Scott got him through all of that, of course his legal team and all of that. That was a very difficult time. It was difficult for him because he wasn't used to having to be so involved in all of that sort of thing.

Kondracke: He was never an administrator.

Zelaska: No. Exactly. So Mary and Scott did a heck of a job doing that. But what he was very good at is making everybody feel really good at HUD, because they had had some really tough years under the Pierce administration and some of those career people were a little hesitant at first. They didn't know quite what to make of him. And they just thought, "Oh, here's another HUD secretary that we've got to put up with." But by the time we left, those people really didn't want to see us go. They really would have liked us to be there another four years. They loved us. And he treated them so well, he really did. And that again was my little cheerleading thing that I did to make sure that he saw what he could do for these people to get their spirits up, because I talked to some of these people and I knew what they put up with. One day I was walking through the hall and I was with him, and I noticed that one of the girls who was a career person went up against the wall, kind of like this when he was going by. And I

thought, 'That was a strange thing for her to do.' So I went over to her afterwards and I said, "Sandy [Holland], why did you do that?" And she said, "Oh, we were told when Sam Pierce was here that if he was walking through the halls that we were just supposed to go up against the wall and just stand there and not speak to him." Oh my God. I said, "Jack would have a fit if he knew that anybody was told to do that with him." He didn't even like to be called Mr. Secretary, he wanted to be called Jack. When I started working for him I called him Mr. Kemp. "Call me Jack." If somebody was visiting him in the office I always referred to him as Congressman, but. So we had to do a little pep thing in the office and we started to do things like for National Secretaries' Week, he had a luncheon room and a cook that was assigned to him. So for National Secretaries I had each of the department heads, I think we had like 20-some department heads, put the names of all the secretaries in their division in a hat and pull one name out, and that person got to have lunch with Jack. We had this great big table filled with all the secretaries from all the different departments. Well, they were just thrilled with that, you know? He had a couple of birthdays of course while he was there, and, I can't remember which one it was. Probably his 55th birthday, so I put out the word that anybody that wanted to bake him a cake could bake him a cake, and I wanted 55 cakes. We set up the cafeteria in this great big horseshoe and had 55 cakes. Fifty-five people baked cakes and they all stood behind their cake. It was a total surprise to him. I had them come down, him come down, and everybody surprised him, and he went and shook hands with all 55 people who baked him a cake. Those were the kind of things we had to do to get—

Kondracke: And the whole Department is invited?

Zelaska: The whole Department, everybody in the building could come. We just had to build up the morale in there, and he loved that kind of thing. I hate to use this guy's name, but [Michael G.] Mike Tyson came to visit one time. So he took him to the cafeteria to eat, and of course those people were just absolutely delighted. You know, [Donald] Don King and Mike Tyson in the building. He included all of them in there and they just loved it, and they loved him. But again, the morale was so bad because of everything else that had happened, and there was a lot of behind-the-scenes stuff that had to be done and Mary and Scott did an excellent job. Are you going to be talking to Scott?

Kondracke: Oh, yes. The HUD thing is part of the project, but I have hardly approached it. But since you were there I'm going to ask you about how it went.

Zelaska: Yes. Anyway, I had so much extra time on my hands I started taking piano lessons. [laughs] I never could do that. I couldn't do anything, getting home at nine o'clock at night, so I started taking piano lessons. It was a great time. I wasn't real happy when I first went there I have to admit, because it was so different from the Congressional days. And I didn't get that one-on-one with him like I'd had, and I missed that, I really did. Because there were so many people that were surrounding him now. But I have to admit, it took me about a year, and then I loved it there, and I was sorry we had to leave also. We had a really good group of people. I'm sure the Bush administration, the way that works is there's all these political appointments that they have to find jobs for, and probably they were

sometimes giving us people that they didn't want anyplace else, but we got a great group of kids, we did. And they all became very, very loyal to Jack, because he treated them very well. In 2002, I did a reunion of all the people who had ever worked for Jack. I don't know how I found them all but I found over 600 names of people. It went all the way back to his very first campaign. And I was only able to find four or five hundred addresses. There are still like 150 people I've never found an address for. We had it at the Reagan Building. May 2002. And it was such a success. Oh, people came from all over the country, including Hawaii, just to come to see Jack again, and he just loved it. He just loved it. It all went way too fast that night. Everybody had a ball. They hadn't seen each other in years and years and years. I remember Dave Smick saying, he didn't say it to me, he said it to [James P.] Jimmy Kemp, because he was standing beside Jimmy, and he said, "You know Jimmy, there's only one other person in the world who could garner this many former staff to come to something like this and that's Ronald Reagan." I think that's probably true. I don't think you could get anybody else that would have had that many people show up.

Kondracke: I ran into somebody at the Library of Congress the other day who had been an intern in your office. I can't even remember his name now. And he said he was invited to that party and it was just, that everybody knew everybody and that just as you say, that it was a wonderful occasion.

Zelaska: I set up story boards from each of the different time periods from my records. I had pictures and memorabilia, and I set up all the

story boards from all the different areas of his life. It was a great night, it really was. It just went way too fast, though.

Kondracke: He was then at Kemp Partners? 2002?

Zelaska: Yes, he would have been there.

Kondracke: He had these various programs that he wanted to push through for enterprise zones and purchases of public housing and stuff like that, and the Bush administration, the White House, never really supported all that kind of stuff. How frustrated was he with that?

Zelaska: You'll have to talk to Mary and Scott about that. I know he was, he didn't seem to get the support that he thought he should get from them, but you'll have to talk to them about it because they were there living it day in and day out. After Scott left [William] Bill Dal Col took over, so he's another person that you need to talk to. Then he went on to work with us to work at HUD. I'm sorry, he and Rick both came to Empower America with us. Rick continued to do all his travel and then of course went on to help him in '96 and be his traveling person there.

Kondracke: Was he as messy in the big office as he was in the small?

Zelaska: No, because there wasn't much stuff to push around. There was somebody to do everything there. All the speeches that he gave while he was there were all put into these beautiful binders and everything was turned over to the Library of Congress. We had somebody to do everything. One little story I have to tell you. One of

the girls who worked for us, her name was Charlene. Beautiful African-American girl, Charlene Anderson. She was our receptionist. I would give her a copy of the schedule every morning, the daily schedule, and one day she saw that Pete Rozelle was coming in, and she said "Pete Rozelle is coming in!" We hadn't even been there two months, I think. And she said, "Oh, I think I'll bring my football in so I can have him sign it." I said, "Oh, yes, bring it in." I said, "You should probably keep it under your desk because you're going to see all kinds of people like that coming in." So she kept it under her desk, and through those whole four years she got every person of name to sign that football. It was totally covered by the time we left. She had Mohammed Ali on there, and Mike Tyson, [John C.] Johnny Unitas, John, John, John Mackey, all these Hall of Famer-type people on this ball. She came to my house this past May, and I said, "Charlene, what did you ever do with that football?" I said, "That football must be worth a mint now because of all those famous names you have on it." People were just always pouring into that office. Paul, the actor, Paul—

Kondracke: Newman? Not Paul Newman?

Zelaska: Yes, Paul [L.] Newman came in. Just everybody came into that office. They all wanted to talk to him about something.

Kondracke: Okay. Let's talk about relationships with various people and your take on what their relationship with Jack was, and you can throw in your own opinions if you like. Jude Wanniski.

Zelaska: That was a very strange relationship, very strange. I think Jude was sort of his, I don't think Jack would have gotten to where he got without Jude, quite honestly, because Jude kept pushing him and pushing him and pushing him all the time, to the point where it was kind of annoying after a while to Jack. But he emboldened him to do some of the things that he did. Sometimes Jude went off the deep end, though, and did some things Jack didn't agree with, and then when he didn't agree with him, you know. Jude was fine as long as Jack agreed with him on every single thing, but then the one thing he didn't agree with him and then he'd get mad about that. So they had a couple of falling-outs and when Jude died, they weren't talking to each other. It was really sad.

Kondracke: What did they stop talking about?

Zelaska: I don't know, because I wasn't working for Jack at that point. I'd already left him. And I don't know what it was. But I remember the day I heard that Jude died I called Jack on his cell phone, and I said, "Jack, I have to tell you. I feel so bad. I just heard that Jude passed away and I just feel so bad that I had to talk to you about it. That you were so close for so long, and then not to be speaking to each other at the very end." I don't even remember what he said to me. I mean, I just think he felt bad but he didn't quite know how to handle it, you know? But it was sort of a love/hate relationship. Jude was a heck of a guy but he was a little strange.

Kondracke: He was intense, right?

Zelaska: He was very intense, very intense.

Kondracke: And you said, or various people said at that staff symposium, that Jude got him into trouble sometimes.

Zelaska: Yes, but I remember this one thing about Aldo Mora or someone. I remember names, but again, I was so busy doing my thing, I knew things were happening around, but I don't always remember exactly what it was, but there was something there. There were a couple of times, and I think Dave and John probably, John in particular could probably fill you in more on the times when he got him in trouble, but yes, there were times when he just went too far. [Louis] Farrakhan, he was always pushing Farrakhan, and strange people.

Kondracke: [Arthur B.] Art Laffer?

Zelaska: My opinion that I don't think Art Laffer would be where he is today if it weren't for Jack Kemp. If he hadn't promoted, I'm sure Art won't agree with this, but if he hadn't promoted that Laffer Curve, I mean he's the one that first gave him some attention and recognition. I probably don't want that in there.

Kondracke: Don't worry about it. Actually it was Jude who first put the Laffer Curve on the map.

Zelaska: Yes, that's what I mean. He put his name out there.

Kondracke: Jude did.

Zelaska: Jude did, but Art wouldn't be where he is today if it weren't for the Laffer Curve.

Kondracke: Right, that's true. So, Irving Kristol.

Zelaska: Okay. Irving Kristol was one of the people who urged me to go work for Jack, for one thing. Because Irving was at AEI at the time, and I remember going down in the elevator with him right after I'd accepted the job with Jack, and I said something to him about it, and I didn't know that he was close to Jack or whatever. And he goes, "He's a good man. You're making the right decision." So he had a very close, almost a father-son kind of a relationship with Kristol. Jude was more the guru-type person but Kristol was a fatherly figure to him. He was very impressed with him, and reverent.

Kondracke: [Lewis E.] Lew Lehrman?

Zelaska: I remember them being pretty close, but he just never talked to him again after a while. John would be the person who would know more about that. I remember Lew Lehrman. He ran for the Senate, didn't he?

Kondracke: Governor.

Zelaska: Governor, rather. And Jack was supportive of that. But then all of a sudden he just sort of dropped off my radar screen, because my radar screen was who was making the calls and who he was calling and all that, and then all of a sudden he wasn't calling Lew

Lehrman anymore. But that could be that John was doing the communicating with him too.

Kondracke: Mike Novak?

Zelaska: He was very close to Michael. He had a lot of respect for Michael.

Kondracke: What did they do together?

Zelaska: He would call him just to get advice from him on things. He just had a lot of respect. He and Joanne would socialize with them, with he and Karen [Laub-Novak]. He was always promoting his books—he would immediately read any of Michael's books and was always talking about them to people, "You've got to read this." He'd invite him into the office and have people come in and sit down and talk, at the Super Bowls and things like that.

Kondracke: How close was he to his minister at Fourth Pres[byterian Church, Bethesda, Maryland]? [Richard C.] Halverson?

Zelaska: Well I know they talked a lot. He never came into the office or anything like that. I don't know what they were doing on Sundays.

Kondracke: Did you put through his phone calls?

Zelaska: Yes.

Kondracke: So you knew who he talked to every day.

Zelaska: Yes. Halverson, he did Jeff's wedding, I think, and I think he flew out on the plane with us for the wedding. I'm pretty sure he did.

Kondracke: Okay, members of Congress. Dave Hoppe sort of thought that [C.] Trent Lott was his best friend in Congress.

Zelaska: I think at the time, yes. He was very close to Trent and [Newton L.] Newt [Gingrich], [Cornelius H. M.] Connie Mack [III] and [John V.] Vin Weber. Those were the Amigos, because they always went to a Mexican restaurant. That's why we called them the Amigos—the secretaries who would make the—again, we didn't have email in those days.

Kondracke: Was it a certain Mexican restaurant?

Zelaska: Yes, there was one up on Capitol Hill.

Kondracke: Do you remember the name of it?

Zelaska: I don't remember the name. It was on the Senate side. There's one on the House side, but this one was on the Senate side. A little place, I think it's still there but I don't remember the name of it. We would call each other and say, "Do you have this night open? Do you have this night?" Multiple phone calls trying to get everyone to agree on a night.

Kondracke: So it was dinner and not lunch.

Zelaska: It was always dinner, yes. And they had to be someplace where they could get back real quick for a vote if they were still in session or something.

Kondracke: What happened when Trent Lott got into trouble in the Senate, Jack was not on his side. Jack said that he ought to apologize for the [James] Strom Thurmond remark?

Zelaska: I wasn't working for him at that time.

Kondracke: You were working for the Senate weren't you?

Zelaska: No, I'd already retired when that happened. So I don't know exactly. I just know that he did have a falling-out with Trent about that. And I remember saying something to Jack about it. I said, "You can't let that happen. You two have been friends too long." But he stuck by his guns. And Trent was hurt. Because Trent was there for him for so many things, you know, in '88, and of course '96. These guys, they all were there for him during those times, and they didn't have to be, because Jack in '88, I don't know that he had as much chance as Bush did back in those days, so it was quite something for them to support him. Of course, in '96 it was an easier thing because Dole was the nominee, but he [Lott-SZ] was just hurt.

Kondracke: So did Jack do it because he thought the principle, the race issue was so important?

Zelaska: I don't know, I don't know. I know Dave talked to him a lot about that during that time period, because, of course Dave worked for Trent for so long. Dave was a go-between for a while there.

Kondracke: It sounds like your relationship with Jack was that you could call him up and sort of tell him anything. If you had an opinion about something.

Zelaska: I didn't abuse it, but yes. When he got sick, Joanne told me that I was the only female that he would let into the house to see him, when he got really sick after, he'd lost his hair and everything.

Kondracke: And how often did you visit him?

Zelaska: Oh, from the time I heard that he was sick I probably went over there maybe three times. He asked me to witness some legal documents, and I had to meet him at the hospital where he was going to be getting his treatment. Oh, it was so sad. And then I did go to see him at the house, and that was the last time I saw him before he died.

Kondracke: How long before he died did you see him?

Zelaska: Oh, gosh. Just maybe a couple of months before. I was one of the first people he told after he found out. He called me and told me. It was right after Thanksgiving, right after he had found out that he had cancer.

Kondracke: My understanding was that he was in so much pain sitting at Thanksgiving dinner that he then went and had it checked out.

Zelaska: Yes. It was right after Thanksgiving that he found out that that's what was causing it, yes.

Kondracke: So what did he say to you?

Zelaska: He just said that he had some news, that he was diagnosed with cancer in his hip. And I started to cry immediately on the phone, because I had witnessed somebody who had cancer of the hip and I knew how fast they went. I didn't say that to him, but I knew how fast it had happened. And I just started to cry, and he said, "Now you're going to make me cry." And I said, "Well, I don't want you to do that." But we just chatted for a while and he said, "I'll be all right. Don't worry about it." The first time I went to visit him after that we went over a lot of stuff—legal things and where some of his things were. He was always worried about where his stuff was.

Kondracke: His papers?

Zelaska: Yes, his papers, where everything was. He was very calm about the whole thing, which I was impressed with quite honestly, because I didn't know how he was going to react to it. But he said, "I'm at peace." I think he used the word, is the word sanguine appropriate? He said, "I'm very sanguine." I had to look it up, to tell you the truth, because I didn't know what it meant.

[interruption]

Zelaska: He says, "I'm very sanguine about it." It just broke my heart, I mean it just broke my heart, because he was always so full of life, and he was bigger than life. I think you'll get that out of just about anybody. He was bigger than life. And he just never thought anything was going to happen to him. I always thought that if he ever went he was going to go in an airplane, or on the ski slope, or something like that. More in an airplane because of all the planes that he was on all of his life, private planes, helicopters, all of that. But I just didn't think he was going to go this way. Anyway, he was a great guy.

Kondracke: So back to the list of people here. So who were the guys who came to see him when he was sick? You said you were the only woman.

Zelaska: I'm told not many. A couple people asked and he didn't want them to come, like I don't know if Trent went. I know his former, [James E.] Jim Mora, there was a time one day when Jim Mora and, I'm so bad at names now—

Kondracke: The roommate from Occidental? I forget his name.
[Ronald L. "Ron" Botchan]

Zelaska: Yes, him. They both went to see him, and somebody sent me a picture. They took a picture and they sent it to me over the Internet and I got to see the three of them together, which was kind of nice. They all three had great big smiles on their face. He looked pretty good. I mean, he had lost his hair, but—there weren't very many people. I know one of his neighbors, Chuck and Carol Marck live

right down the street, and one time when I went to visit Jack I went to see Chuck and Carol. I'd know them through the years, Super Bowl and everything else. So I went down to see them. Carol wasn't there but I spent some time with Chuck. He says, "I've tried to go over there but they don't seem to want a lot of visitors." And I just think he wasn't up to it a lot of times. But he was concerned about his legacy and where things were. That's why I hope wherever he is he knows about the Library of Congress, I really do. Because he'd be so proud to know that his stuff is there, after all that we went through, the Buffalo stuff and the Pepperdine, he would be very happy to know it's there and safe.

Kondracke: There's a lot of it.

Zelaska: And there's a lot of it. I packed all those boxes, I know.

Kondracke: Okay. Tell me about his relationship with Newt Gingrich.

Zelaska: Well again, he was just another one of the guys, the Amigos, and I don't know what was always going on on the floor. Because he spent so much time on the floor with these people. They didn't always come to our office, there wasn't a lot of interaction there. The only time you saw members come to visit him was when he personally hosted Chowder and Marching Society. When it was his time to host it then they would all show up, and I don't know if Newt was a part of Chowder and Marching to tell you the truth. Not everybody was; I know Trent was. I don't always know what was going on on the floor, but they got along great. He campaigned for him. And that was one

thing. Everybody always wanted him for a fundraiser every election year, that was for sure, all his colleagues.

Kondracke: But Newt and he had a falling-out?

Zelaska: But they had a falling-out, and again, I don't know what that was about. None of us can remember what it was about, because I did ask Dave if he remembered and he said he didn't. But it was probably just over some issue on the floor.

Kondracke: As Newt's career went on and he became Speaker and all that, how did Jack—

Zelaska: They did keep in touch, I know that, because when we were at Empower America, Newt had just become Speaker, and he came to our office and of course the whole staff was ecstatic that the new Speaker of the House had just walked in our office, you know. We were all proud of him, as was Jack. I just remember him being very gracious to all of us and he waved to me, he remembered name, which I couldn't believe. He was just very gracious to all of us. And they kept in touch on the phone. Sometimes I think Jack would call him, kind of to prove that he could get on the phone with him, but still. That he would take his call.

Kondracke: When Newt got in trouble then was Jack supportive of him, do you know?

Zelaska: That I don't know. Again, I was not there so I don't know. Newt left and then [Robert L. "Bob"] Livingston became Speaker and

then he had to leave as I recall, and I was already in the Senate so I wasn't really paying a whole lot of attention to all of that.

Kondracke: Okay. What about [Robert J.] Bob Dole, did Jack ever talk about Bob Dole at all?

Zelaska: I don't remember too much about him at all.

Kondracke: Okay. What about the campaign people? John Sears is somebody who doesn't come up a lot, but apparently he was really in the office all the time?

Zelaska: He did come in pretty often, yes. Jack was very respectful of John because of his relationship with Reagan, and that's where that went back to the Reagan days when he was running for governor and then his first race. So Jack knew of Sears' reputation and was always very respectful of him and looked to him for his advice, sage advice. Sort of the same with [Edward J.] Ed Rollins. They were about the same.

Kondracke: And John was involved in the '88 campaign?

Zelaska: Yes, but more on the periphery, just to be there. He wasn't paid, or anything like that. And of course Charlie was close to him too and would defer to him sometimes, ask him questions, I think. I don't know the intimacies of that.

Kondracke: And [Thomas P.] Tom Kemp was the finance guy.

Zelaska: Yes. Tom wanted to be a part of '88 really bad, and he and his daughter Nancy came to Washington to be a part of that, and Tom, I guess he was already gone from Coca Cola at that time. He had gotten a nice big golden parachute I think and he was able to help out. Incredible background, and Jack wanted him to kind of oversee to make sure that he didn't get in trouble financially.

Kondracke: Which he did, he ran up a huge debt.

Zelaska: Which he did, through no fault of Tom's. It happens. You just start throwing money out there. I'm not trying to be critical of anybody but somebody didn't put enough money in the bank account, people didn't realize that it wasn't just what you were spending on a daily basis. After it closed down there were all these other expenses that you had to worry about, the accounting fees, the legal fees to close down the FEC accounts, and all of that. And nobody put any money aside for that, and that was a big, big chunk of money, and there was nothing to pay for all of that. And we, all of his loyal staff, were very upset at that, very upset. And there was nothing we could do about it because we were at HUD at that point, and we could not pick up that phone and make a phone call to anybody, we couldn't have fundraisers, we couldn't do anything to retire that debt. And it just kept building up because every month went by and the legal fees kept building up and the accounting fees, it was—

Kondracke: So, did you have to get a bridge loan in order to finance them, to pay these people off? You must have been involved in this because you were the numbers lady.

Zelaska: Again, I was at HUD, so I couldn't do a lot. There were two guys out in California who were kind of taking care of that for us [Sal Russo and Steve Merkesemer-SZ]. But they were keeping track of that. We had a little bit of money to keep things going but we did go into debt and then they were able to negotiate some things, but as soon as we got out of HUD we started to really hunker down, and I started making phone calls and Jack started making phone calls and we started bringing in some money. I remember the day we closed it down. The fax machine was right outside my office and the fax machine was just pouring out sheets of paper, and I went, "What the heck is going on out there?" So, there was a stack of paper like that and I turned it over and each page had one word on it. It was the guys in California telling me that the debt was finally closed down and we were free at last, free at last. But they only put one word on each piece of paper and it kept coming through; it was hysterical. But we were so happy, so happy that it was finally taken care of. But it was a long time, because that would have been from '88 to '95, something like that. It was a long time to have that weight over your head.

Kondracke: Did he have to raise it largely by himself, you and he?
Just asking—

Zelaska: Yes, just asking friends and old contributors and people like that. He'd have to make phone calls to people and ask. "Can you help me out? I've got to close this thing down." I'm trying to think if we actually had a fundraiser of sorts, some dinner or something. I can't remember that.

Kondracke: You said that when he was running he hated to make—

Zelaska: Oh he hated to make phone calls. He did it, but then, he wanted it off his back. He did, it was still hard. It was like pulling teeth to get him to do it but he did eventually do it. Yes, he hated it. We put him in a room sometimes, and we'd have to take him to Rosslyn [Virginia], which is where our office was, because he couldn't do it in the Congressional office. We tried to obey all the rules. So we'd take him to Rosslyn and we'd say, "Okay, you're going to have to sit in this room and make these phone calls." And Tom would stand over him and say, "Make this call." Hated it. He'd maybe get through three or four calls and then he'd hang it up, he couldn't stand it anymore. And Tom would make the calls, and I can remember Tom saying, "This is a very humbling experience. This is my punishment for all the times when people called me asking for money when he was in the corporate world, and he said, "This is my punishment." Because it's a tough world out there. I don't know how these guys are doing it.

Kondracke: Let's just go through some other highlights of his experience, maybe do it backwards. You were not there for Kemp Partners, right?

Zelaska: No.

Kondracke: So the '96 campaign, you told us all about the fun of finding out that he was going to be the candidate and all that. You were the first to know, right? What are your memories of that '96 campaign?

Zelaska: From a personal standpoint I made the worst decision of my life, which was not to go on the campaign trail with him. When he was selected I went out to San Diego with him and he says, "Do you want to go on the road with me or do you want to be with me back in Washington?" Be with me back in Washington. There was no back in Washington with him. He was on the road, from San Diego until election night. He came back I think one or two days and he was in the office. But I didn't know. I'd never been a part of that before. I said, "Well, my role has always been in DC. I'll be there for you." Well I think that was a big mistake on my part, because that's where all the action was on the plane, and traveling all over, and I missed out on all of that. But, having said that, it's really a good thing that I was in Washington, because I was the one that had to pull all that stuff together for the lawyers. Putting everything in a blind trust, and working with all the accountants and the legal team and all of that to make sure that everything was clean to present it to the press. Nobody else could have done that, and if I had been on the road trying to maneuver all that I would have gone stark raving mad. I couldn't handle all that. But all the action was on the road.

Kondracke: It sounds as though there was not a lot of pre-vetting. You know the way they do it now you have to file all these kind of papers that take forever.

Zelaska: That's exactly right, that's exactly right. And that's why I said I had to put all—

Kondracke: This was after the fact, after he was on the ticket.

Zelaska: I did the income tax stuff before the fact, but after the fact we had to fill out the disclosure reports, special disclosure reports, we had to put everything in a blind trust, which I think is ridiculous. Until you get to be that person, why do you have to go to all that expense? He spent thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars out of his own pocket for all these legal things. He had to pay for it himself. It never came out of the campaign fund. I don't understand why they make any candidate do all that before the fact. But the night that he was selected, the night before it was announced, I had to take all of his income tax over to the accountants. Now, what they could have done in that short period of time was ridiculous. There's no way they could have looked it over unless, as I said before, they looked at, "Oh, there were put together by Price Waterhouse," and that's when I said to Jack, "Remember how I told you you should stick with Price Waterhouse? This paid off!" I don't know what they did in that short period of time. As for action on the road, I don't think he was himself on the road. They wouldn't let his regular people around him to prepare him for the debate and all that sort of stuff.

Kondracke: Were you there for the debate?

Zelaska: Yes.

Kondracke: And you said that he played tennis all day.

Zelaska: Yes, that's what I was told, because I didn't really have access to him. That was the other thing. I wasn't able to get to him during those time periods. They kept me far away from him. I don't know if it's because I had a reputation for being close to him and

telling him what I thought about certain people. They might have said, "Keep her away." But I got really hurt and upset about the fact that I wasn't able to get to him. And I told one of the campaign people. I said, "You know, I've been with him for a lot of years." At that point it was 20 years, or 19 years, whatever. And I said, "And I can't even get to talk to him now?" That really bothered me, but that's the way those campaigns handle it.

Kondracke: Who was his handler?

Zelaska: Wayne [L.] Berman.

Kondracke: Was with him all the time, he was the Dole guy who was with him.

Zelaska: Was on the plane with him and all that.

Kondracke: And he couldn't call John or he couldn't call any of his buddies? Or his staff?

Zelaska: Well, he could, but they kept him so busy. What's the guy at Heritage?

Kondracke: [Edwin J.] Ed Feulner [Jr.].

Zelaska: Ed Feulner took a leave of absence to help out. Who doesn't take advice from Ed Feulner? But Ed Feulner, eventually he got to ride on the plane with him for one or two days, you know. They placated him by letting him be on the plane. But they tried to keep Jack at

arm's length from a lot of his people, which was so sad, because those are the people he felt comfortable around.

Kondracke: When you did talk to him about the '96 campaign, did he feel used, or how did he feel about the whole '96 experience?

Zelaska: All I know is what they said to me the day after they lost, which was, "We would do this again in a heartbeat." They loved it. They loved being on that campaign. Even Joanne. She was thrilled, she was absolutely thrilled. They loved the excitement of it, and they had a great time, they really did.

Kondracke: And how did he feel after the debate with Gore?

Zelaska: Well, I remember seeing him after that and I went up to him, and what was I going to say? "You did a lousy job," you know? I said, "Good job, Jack." And he goes, "No it wasn't. I was terrible." He knew he had flubbed it, and I wasn't going to say anything to him about it. How do you criticize, not having been through something like that yourself, how do you criticize somebody?

Kondracke: Empower America, how exactly was it organized?

Zelaska: That's a really good point. All I know is that we got out of HUD, and I'm wondering, 'Where the heck are we going to go next?' I thought we were going to go back to Heritage, which is where we had almost gone, between, and next thing I know this whole thing came together with Empower America. I honestly don't remember how it got started. [Charles M.] Charlie Kupperman was put in charge of

putting this all together; next thing I know we had an office, we had desks, we had phones, we had people, and the whole [William J. "Bill"] Bennett, [Jeane J.] Kirkpatrick, [John V. "Vin"] Weber, Kemp thing was put together. I was so busy closing HUD down, and that was a lot of work, just helping people to find jobs and packing up all that stuff again. It was like every four years I'm doing all this packing and trying to find a place that was going to take it and all of that, so I was so busy doing all of that I didn't really know how that all happened. But there it was, and we just showed up one day at 18th and I Street.

Kondracke: What was it all about? What did Jack do while he was there?

Zelaska: They were, I'm not even quite sure. We basically all did our own little thing. Bennett did his thing; Kirkpatrick never showed up. She had staff there but they never did anything. I think she came into the office once. Vin Weber was there once or twice and then he never really came back to the office. So it was just a place for Bennett and Kemp to actually have their little staffs and we raised money and we got brochures out and we had mailing lists and got issues out, but it was also a place to put some staff. We still had some staff over at Heritage that was on their payroll.

Kondracke: Who were your staff at Empower?

Zelaska: Rick Ahearn, Bill Dal Col, me, Leah Levy, she was with us at HUD, Karen Olson was there for a while. They were not there at the same time. That was it.

Kondracke: Was this basically just a base for him to go out and make speeches for Washington Speakers Bureau?

Zelaska: Yes, but he did things for Empower America under that name, and we had meetings and symposia and stuff like that, and like I said, we got issues out. But yes, he did work out of that office to do his speaking engagements because that's basically all he did. We resurrected that contract with Washington Speakers Bureau immediately.

Kondracke: How much was he getting a speech?

Zelaska: I think it was like \$50,000. First it was \$35,000 plus expenses, which was two first-class airline tickets. And then we decided that that wasn't working really well, because the airline ticket thing wasn't working really well, so we upped it to \$50,000 and then we took care of the—

Kondracke: That was a better deal. How seriously did he think about running in '96?

Zelaska: I don't think very seriously at all. Again, people were always throwing out the fishing line to see what could happen, but I don't think he personally thought it was a big deal. He was really starting to make some money, and he was liking it, and he was getting on boards, and things like that. And I think enough time had gone by that that excitement was gone. I think he knew that he really didn't want to get back into all that again.

Kondracke: What were his principal boards? Was he on AOL [America Online]?

Zelaska: No, he was on Oracle.

Kondracke: Oracle.

Zelaska: Oracle was the big one.

Kondracke: How did he get on that board?

Zelaska: Through, who's the big Oracle guy? [Lawrence J. "Larry" Ellison-SZ]

Kondracke: And how did he get on that board?

Zelaska: They met somewhere, and he asked him to be on the board. People were seeking him out. Here he was a former VP candidate. People sought him out. He never had to go out and ask for anything. People were after him. He was on a lot of boards then, and then after I left, because I was only there a few months after '96. I left him in February and the campaign was in November. After I left it just blew up. He didn't say no to anybody. He was on every board he could get his hands on, to the point where I even said something to him even though I wasn't working for him. I said, "How can you keep up with all these boards? You have to attend these things." He was on Land Air when I was there. I couldn't even keep up with all the paperwork that was just pouring in, and things that you had to fill out and sign

this and sign that. It was overwhelming for just when I was there, so I can't even imagine what went on after. I understand later on he became very good at it. He was very sought-after to be on boards and he did do due diligence, and he worked hard to be a good board member. Some of them were in name only, but some of them were not, and he was there for them and did a good job.

Kondracke: Do you know which boards he really worked on?

Zelaska: I know Oracle was one, and I know he worked hard for, what was the original name for Raul's company? I can't think of the name of that now either.

Kondracke: Raul [J.] Fernandez's?

Zelaska: Yes, the one that he sold and made all his money on [Proxicom]. Anyway, he did a good job on a lot of them. He worked hard on Land Air too.

Kondracke: Going backwards, we've talked about HUD. How did he take the flop in '88, the fact that the campaign just didn't gain lift-off?

Zelaska: I was in the room when he got the call—

Kondracke: Which call was that?

Zelaska: The Bush call. I was in the room when he got the Bush call saying he wasn't the VP candidate. We really thought he was going to be it, we really, really did. The way Secret Service were surrounding

him, and there's an aura that happens to the VP candidate, and we really thought that he was it and we were so excited. We were tired, a very tired staff, but we were so excited that day, and we really thought that he was going to get it, and the rumors were just surrounding us, oh it was just incredible. And then, I was in his suite, a couple of us were in his suite, and the call came in, and the look on Jack's face, oh, it was just—

Kondracke: Was it deflation?

Zelaska: Yes.

Kondracke: He just said, "Thank you Mr. Vice President."

Zelaska: Yes. I remember we were in New Orleans, remember, and I was just devastated. All these years that we had worked for all this, to have it dashed just like that. I walked out of the room, after a reasonable length of time, I went down to the gift shop, and I bought a mask. I still have the mask. And I just cried. And I walked around with the mask because I was crying, and I didn't want anybody to see me crying. You know, I had a Mardi Gras mask on. It was horrible, and I can't even imagine what he went through to be like that. And then that night we were walking around New Orleans, a couple of us, and all of a sudden we had to come to a stop because the [James Danforth "Dan"] Quayle motorcade was coming through, and we were gritting our teeth as he came through. We didn't want that to happen.

Kondracke: Did anybody ask for financial papers?

Zelaska: Yes, we had to put stuff through that time too. Yes, we had to fill all that out. "We!" I had to fill all that out, sure.

Kondracke: When did you find out that you were under consideration that time?

Zelaska: Well, when they asked for the paperwork.

Kondracke: Which was when? Before New Orleans, obviously.

Zelaska: Oh, yes, way before New Orleans. It was also pretty standard procedure. I don't remember how many were on that list at the time, but I know there's a long list and a short list, but I don't know where we fell in that. But we did get the call that asked for it.

Kondracke: Who else was in the room? Jack, you and who else?

Zelaska: Well, Dave Hoppe probably was in the room, and Marie Shattuck, she was up in Buffalo, from our Buffalo office. There were only a handful of us. Maybe Charlie. I just remember a few of us being in there. I remember Marie and I being there, and Joanne of course, and maybe one or two of the kids might have been there. Small group though.

Kondracke: You know, I think we're just about done. We've been through Kemp-Roth and the Reagan campaign and all that stuff. So just let me ask you, is there anything we've missed here about your experience? Any highlights or low lights?

Zelaska: Well, if you want to go back to the '80 campaign.

Kondracke: Go.

Zelaska: That was a fun time. Again, he wasn't very well known back then, his name started to be thrown around and bantered around when Reagan was going to be the nominee and they started mentioning, but he wasn't really mentioned too much for VP, I guess maybe they mentioned it in an article or something like that, but it wasn't—

Kondracke: There was a floor demonstration in '80.

Zelaska: Yes, there was, but that wasn't until we got to Detroit. I'm talking about up until then. So we get to '80 and we were there for two weeks, the platform week and then the next week, and it was just me and Dave Smick, we went with him. It was just two of us, Dave there for the platform and me to take care of everything else. Jack was in the Ponchatrain Hotel, which was right next to Cobo Hall, and I was at the Renaissance, the RenCen, all the way down the street, they wouldn't let me into the same hotel as him, which made it very awkward for me to do what I had to do. I was constantly taking that little tram up and down the street to get to the hotel to get to him.

Kondracke: What was your job at the Convention?

Zelaska: Just the same thing. Taking care of his schedule and fielding phone calls and things like that. So we're in the second week already, not much going on, and then Convention Week starts on Monday and

there are all these speeches and everything. And then as we go on, Jack's name is getting bantered around a little bit more and a little bit more, and all of a sudden I'm starting to get all these phone calls in my room at two o'clock in the morning. Barbara Walters is calling me and all these people. It was just unbelievable. Then a crew from Buffalo shows up and they're trying to get to him. It was the biggest groundswell that I'd ever seen. And finally I said, "Dave, I have to get more staff up here to help me. I can't do all of this." So we started getting a couple of people. They had to pay for their own way, we had no way of paying for any of this. I think I did end up getting Citizens for Jack Kemp, which is his regular campaign, to pay for it, his Congressional campaign treasurer would pay for some of this stuff. And so I got a couple more staff to come up there.

Kondracke: Who came?

Zelaska: Just a couple of staff, some worker bee kind of people. But one of Jack's neighbors started to show up, those people that I tell you just sort of glom onto you as you get more and more popular, some of his friends from San Diego started to show up. It was amazing how this, it was like a glue ball. And all of a sudden all of these people are coming out of the woodwork, and then suddenly, again, I can't get near him. I call to his room, somebody else would pick up the phone, they wouldn't let me talk to him.

Kondracke: Like who?

Zelaska: Again, this person is still alive and I don't want to mention—

Kondracke: This was a Reagan person?

Zelaska: No, this was a friend of his. Personal friend, who came in. And suddenly I'm not able to get in touch with him. And it just was so frustrating, because I had things I had to ask him about, you know, this person wants you to, and I had to use them as a way of getting information to him. And I was really getting frustrated. Finally I'd just show up at the hotel.

Kondracke: Did you get to Smick?

Zelaska: Yes, I was able to get to him, but it was amazing how these people would just glom onto him. And then of course he doesn't get it. The next day is the day of the VP announcement and suddenly all those people are gone. They're back on a plane, back to wherever they came from, leaving me to take care of him for the next 20 years. And I actually had nightmares about that afterwards. I really did. Because I thought, 'This is the way it is with people as they get popular and they get a big name and everybody wants to have a piece of him.' And I learned after that. That experience taught me to never to put him in a hotel that I wasn't in the same hotel. If not in a room next to his, then right down the hall. Now, I will preface that by saying I was never, I never traveled with him that Joanne wasn't there too. I always made sure I did that too. That was one of my other rules. I didn't want to get any—

Kondracke: Talk?

Zelaska: Talk. I told Joanne that. I said "I will never travel with him anywhere that you're not there too. I just want you to know that up front." That's why we have such a great relationship. Joanne and I were just like that. But I learned, that's what could happen. And then what happens in '96? Same thing happens to me. But that was almost my own doing, because I chose not to go on the road with him. I had nobody to blame but myself on that one.

Kondracke: At the '84 Convention, again, he couldn't have been on the vice presidential ticket because Bush was there, but there was a whole lot of hoopla about '88—

Zelaska: Right, and we had a big staff there in '84. We were in Dallas for two solid weeks of 110 degree weather. It was unbelievably hot there. And we were in this high-rise hotel, and we had a lot of staff. We had two rooms, we had my room, which was an office by day, and then we had the room next to us, which had Xerox machines and faxes and everything. So we had two rooms going. My room was bedroom at night, and during the day it was an office. We had people everywhere for that particular one. We had plenty of staff there. We had books that were being passed out. That was the one that I was telling you about where we passed out those books and we had receptions and things like that to prepare for '88.

Kondracke: There wasn't any kind of demonstrations, obviously, because they weren't on the ticket.

Zelaska: Right.

Kondracke: So in the gearing up to the '88 campaign, you were obviously at the center of that, why do you think it didn't work? Everybody knows that Bush had the leg up because he was vice president and stuff like that, but my impression is that the campaign really was kind of [a] messy operation. It didn't do as well as it could have done. Why do you think that was?

Zelaska: I don't know. I don't know. It certainly wasn't because the staff that were working didn't want it to happen, because they worked really hard. We had one of the best working staffs, these young kids that came in to work for us were so loyal and worked so hard over there, they really did.

Kondracke: This was Rosslyn?

Zelaska: Yes. And to this day, when that group gets together it's like old home week.

Kondracke: Who are you thinking about?

Zelaska: Ed and Michelle Brady, they married after this. We had a lot of marriages during this campaign, a lot of people that worked together on the campaign. I think we had like seven couples from the campaign get married. They were just great young people that cared about Jack. We were all together in New Orleans after that. And when that broke up after those two weeks there was so much crying. Nobody wanted to leave each other, because we had had such a good time together. And that's the way it was when we had that reunion. All those same people came back to that reunion, and I don't think we

ever felt the same way about the '96 campaign as we did about the '88 campaign. '96 was a whole different group of people. They were not—these people were given to us. There were a few of us that were old schoolers, but most of them were given to us. They were nice people and everything, but it wasn't the same. And they weren't together as long, quite honestly. But they adored Jack, don't get me wrong. He was able to get them all to like him and everything. But it wasn't quite the same as the original group in '88. That was a great group of people.

Kondracke: You know, it's kind of strange that, one person I didn't ask you about his relationship with Jack, was Scott Reed, who was Dole's campaign manager, and in effect was responsible for managing. He must have been the guy who suggested that Jack be put on the ticket.

Zelaska: It was, it was.

Kondracke: Yet he was also managing Jack.

Zelaska: Well he was managing Dole basically. I'm sure he was involved. The way I understood it was that Wayne Berman gave a lot of money to the Dole campaign, and he was told that because of that contribution he would be given whoever the VP candidate was to manage. So they honored that. And I don't think Wayne was real happy about it, because I don't think he cared much for Jack. I think they became friends after that, but I don't think at the time he was real thrilled with that. That's just my personal opinion however.

Kondracke: And what about Scott Reed?

Zelaska: Scott's a great guy. I adore Scott. He was so young back in those '88 days. Eighty-eight campaign he took care of Iowa at the time. He worked with Black, Manafort, and Stone. Roger [J.] Stone was the guy that I think sort of trained him. But Scott, oh my gosh, you could set your watch by Scott. He was so meticulous about everything, and still is to this day, I know. He is one of those people that actually writes things down and checks them off. He's just a great guy. He was great during our campaign. You could always trust him, he would always follow up. If he said he was going to do something, you knew you were going to get a call from him. Roger Stone was the same way. If Roger told you he was going to do something, he'd call you and tell you he did it, or why he couldn't do it. And Scott was the same way. And then when we had him at HUD he was just a great chief of staff. And then he went to start his own company. I'm sure he did the same while he was at the Dole campaign, but he was busy managing a presidential campaign that he had to take care of, and it was a tough one. Good guy.

Kondracke: But you didn't do very well in Iowa as I remember.

Zelaska: No. No, in spite of Scott. Luck. I don't know that he was destined to go down that road to tell you the truth.

Kondracke: Did he really want to be president?

Zelaska: I think there was a moment when he did, sure. Yes. But I don't know that it was as hard back in those days as it is today. But yes, I think he did.

Kondracke: There wasn't as much mud in those days, was there?

Zelaska: No, there wasn't. But it was sort of like it was a forgone conclusion that Bush was going to get it. You were kind of spinning your wheels. He had a lot of support but he didn't have the big money that he [Bush-SZ] had, and you need money. Even back in those days you needed the money. That didn't make any difference, because those ads were expensive.

Kondracke: Okay, Sharon. Thank you so much. Any last thoughts about something that we shouldn't miss?

Zelaska: No, I can't think of anything. My brain's tapped out. I'm sorry I can't remember some of these names of people.

Kondracke: That's all right. If you think of them we'll fill them in. Thank you so much.

Zelaska: You're welcome.

[end of interview]