

JACK KEMP  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with  
RUSSELL (RUSS) GUGINO  
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Interviewer  
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Jack Kemp Foundation  
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Morton Kondracke: This is a [Jack] Kemp Oral History Project interview with Russ Gugino, who was Jack Kemp's district representative from 1978 to 1984. It is July 7, 2011, and we're in Hamburg, New York, at Russ Gugino's home.

When you think about Jack Kemp, what thoughts come to your mind?

Russell Gugino: Well, I remember the first time that I met him. It was a Farewell to Football event. He'd decided to run for Congress, but he hadn't declared yet. I mean he hadn't declared formally. It was an event at the Heartstone Manor in Cheektowaga, a very Democratic town, but a very big banquet hall. They had a bunch of people there, former football players, some people that you may have met. Paul [L.] Maguire was there. [Louis H.] Lou Saban, the former coach; Daryle Lamonica; [Carlton C.] "Cookie" Gilchrist; a number of them. Everyone had wonderful things to say about him, about how he was more involved in politics, it seemed to be, than football sometimes.

But when he got up to speak, he spoke about a wake that he had just gone to, and it was the wake funeral of Ralph [C.] Wilson's father, and it was very moving. He didn't talk about himself at all. He talked about how this man was in the coffin with a Buffalo Bills

championship ring on his finger, which he as the quarterback was very proud of, winning not only for himself but certainly for his team. Jack was very, very team oriented. He might have been the quarterback in terms of calling the plays, but he was very protective of his teammates. This very emotional speech, everyone was crying. It was unbelievable. I thought to myself, "Oh, my goodness. Who *is* this guy? Who is this guy?" He didn't speak like an athlete. He didn't speak like a pro football player. He just spoke as a guy who had his heart right on his arm and was letting people know how he—and he was bawling too. I mean he was crying. I said, "This guy's special. This guy's special."

I think that trademark of his, which was to be personal, personal with his notes—I know by reputation George [H. W.] Bush senior has probably written more notes than anybody in the western hemisphere in the history of the hemisphere, he's noted for that, and Jack may not have written as many, but handwritten notes that I've received, things that I know thousands of people have received, meant an awful lot to them at a particular point in their lives. So he was personal and he took his responsibilities so personally, and I think that he demanded that of his staff. I know he demanded it of me. He was a great influence to me in caring. There's no such thing as caring too much.

He also had this almost religious devotion to public service. To him it was almost like he was a priest, like he was a minister of the gospel. The gospel of the good news was, "You know what? America's here." He was an evangelist for America and the values of America, and that's what set him apart from anybody else. You know, in all the years that I worked with him, we never did a negative ad, ever. I never even thought about it until [Edward J.] Eddie Rutkowski and I were talking about it one day. We would go through some of these commercials, which were almost funny, because he wanted to talk about the gold standard. I mean, in western New York nobody really cares about the gold standard. Believe me. You couldn't convince Jack of that. "Oh, yes, they do. They want the gold. Once they realize what that means—."

"Okay, fine. We'll do a commercial on the gold standard. Go ahead." We never used it.

He did one on enterprise zones. We represented a suburban district. I mean, we weren't getting any votes in the city of Buffalo, but we did it anyway, and that went out. That did go out. He was really committed to enterprise zones. But he was committed to ideas, and, man, it was contagious.

So when I started working for him, he made it clear that, "This is not an employment situation. This is a cause. I'm part of a cause. You want to be part of a cause?"

"Absolutely, sir. Yes, sir."

And that's what drove people to him, both from a staff point of view as well as a supporters' point of view. They wanted to be part of that cause. I haven't seen anything quite that compelling since.

Kondracke: This dinner that you were at, was this a Farewell to Football to his football career?

Gugino: To him, yes. He was about to retire. He was hosted by [Robert] Bob King. He was the president and general manager of WKBW Radio and Television, which was at the time owned by Capital Cities Broadcasting. Capital Cities later bought ABC, and then ABC was bought by Disney.

Jack had a radio show on WKBW radio. It was called "Signal Calling with Jack Kemp," and he would read fan mail on a Monday. The show was taped. But in any case, fans would call in, "How come you passed on third and five when you should have run the ball?" Or vice versa, as the case may be. Jack took all criticism personally, but he took it and he didn't shy away from it.

Bob King was a big part of his life because of his role with Capital Cities, and he hosted this dinner and it was jammed. There must have been five hundred people, six hundred people there, maybe more.

Kondracke: What year?

Gugino: That would be summer of 1970. Summer of 1970.

Kondracke: But he hadn't announced yet?

Gugino: It might have even been the summer of 1969. Maybe so. He was close to announcing, if he hadn't announced. Eddie could check me on the date, but it was months before the election and a tremendous tribute to him.

Kondracke: So you met him there at the dinner?

Gugino: Yes. Yes, I met him. Actually, I'd heard about him. I met him there, was introduced to him by a good friend, mutual friend of ours by the name of Warren Potash. He was a salesman at WKBW

Radio, later became a general manager of a number of their properties, and is now retired and he's now living in Wyoming.

Kondracke: What were you doing there?

Gugino: Warren lived upstairs from us in north Buffalo, good friend of mine, and he said, "Hey, you want to meet Jack Kemp?"

And I said, "Yeah, I'd like to meet him. I've heard a lot about him." And I liked him as a quarterback. I also liked Daryle Lamonica a lot. He was his rival. But Jack was a winner, and I liked the way he played.

We met. I worked on his very first campaign, not doing anything terribly important, handing out pizzas and literature and going door to door and all of that stuff. He won his very first race in 1970 by a very small margin, very small margin. In fact, he won it on the conservative line. Had he not had the conservative line, he would have lost it. I'm trying to remember the district. It was the McCarthy District, I think it was.

Kondracke: It was the McCarthy District, yes.

Gugino: I was a kid.

Kondracke: Thirty-nine.

Gugino: I was in college at the time. He said, "You got to write to me." So I would write to him. He'd write back. We'd have a dialogue in college and I really enjoyed conversing with him and pen-palling with him. This went on for a few years.

In '78, my wife decided that I needed to go to Washington to visit with my brother. I have a brother and a sister there. I went down to spend the weekend, and I told Jack I was coming. He said, "Well, come on by. Come on by and we'll go to lunch." Okay, fine, we'll go to lunch.

I'll never forget. It was August of '78, and he invited me to lunch. He was speaking at the Washington Press Club. Not the National Press Club, but the Washington Press Club, which was, I think, primarily local people, but I know there were some people nationally. [Douglas] Doug Turner was there. You may remember Doug Turner. Doug is with the *Buffalo News*, has been for a long, long time. I happened to know a bunch of the reporters there, and Jack was kind of surprised that I knew a number of them.

We came back to his office after he spoke, and we started talking about supply-side economics, and he gave me a book, which

he autographed. I have it here someplace if you'd like to see it. It's the Jude [T.] Wanniski book, *The Way the World Works*. He got it out and he said, "I want you to have this." "To Russ Gugino, my comrade-in-arms in the battle of ideas," I remember, which I'm sure he wrote to a lot of people.

He gave me that book, I read the book, and I said, "Wow, this guy is pretty heavy-duty." Not only Wanniski, but also Kemp was more than just a politician. He was a thinker, and I liked the idea.

That was August of '78, and I had not heard from him until January of '79, and in January of '79 I got a call from Sharon Zelaska, who told me that Jack was on his way to Buffalo but he had to speak to me right away. When he spoke to me, he told me he was on his way to Buffalo. I was actually working for the State University of New York. I was doing labor relations for them. I was on the state negotiating team for management. I'd developed a reputation of being a pretty good negotiator, so I was on the management team with CSEA [Civil Service Employee Association], one of their larger units, about 70,000 or 80,000 members. They called me out of negotiation. They said, "You've got a call from a Kemp."

Oh. He calls me. I get on the phone and I say, "Hey, Jack, are you coming to town?" Because usually that's what would happen. He'd come into town and he'd want me to pick him up at the airport,

save a couple of bucks on cabs or whatever, and we'd have a chance to chat.

He says, "No, I'm on my way to Buffalo."

I said, "Oh."

"Ed Rutkowski's going to be the new county executive, my assistant. You remember Eddie."

"Oh, sure, Notre Dame, number 40. Yeah, nice guy."

"Well, I've got to get a new administrative assistant."

I said, "Well, great."

He said, "A lot of people want that job."

I said, "Great. I imagine you're going to have a tough time filling the job."

"Yeah. Well, yeah. So what do you think?"

"What do I think of what?"

"You want it?"

I said, "Do I want it? The job? Are you kidding me?"

"No, I'm not." And that was the offer. I mean, this is absolutely true, I hadn't talked to him since August, not talked to him or gotten anything from him. I may have told you this on the phone, but it's absolutely true.

There was a lot of speculation that he was going to run against [Jacob K.] Javits in 1980, and I thought, "Jeez, if he runs against

Javits, he'll need a guy in Albany. Maybe I could work for him in Albany, and then who knows where that'll go. Who knows where that'll go."

Well, in '79 when he called me, I thought that's kind of what was going to happen. Then obviously he changed the subject.

From when I saw him in August of '78 all the way through, I prayed incessantly about, "God, give me a sign. Give me a sign. Am I supposed to be in labor relations? Is this the career path? Or am I supposed to be in politics?"

After Jack had hired me and I started in April of '79, I said, "Jack, you've got to answer a question for me."

"What's that?"

"You know me, but you really don't know me that well. In all fairness, you really don't. Why would you pick me for this job, with all the other people you could have had in Buffalo? I mean, I'm from Buffalo and I'd love to get back to Buffalo, but I'm in Albany."

"If I tell you, you've got to promise not to laugh."

"Okay, I promise not to laugh."

"Really, I don't want you to laugh."

"Jack, I promise you I will not laugh."

"Well, I'm going through these résumés, and I get bank vice presidents that want to resign to take a job with me."

I said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, come on, come on, come on."

"As I'm going through these résumés, a voice, I hear a voice, and the voice says to me, 'Call Russ Gugino. Call Russ Gugino.' So I called you. Now, you're not going to laugh."

I said, "No, no, I'm not going to laugh. Jack, I've been praying, not for that call, but for the sign, and that's a pretty good sign. That's a pretty good sign."

Now, the reason I tell you that isn't so much because of Russ Gugino, but because that Jack was so intuitive, he did a lot of things that way. More often than not, at least what I saw, it was to his benefit. He was a very intuitive guy, and so his political instincts were very, very good. That doesn't mean he didn't make mistakes. I'm sure he did. But on people, on staff, and ideas, he didn't need polling. In fact, polling was okay. "I know what I need. I know what they want." I was a much bigger believer in polling, because when you run for class president, you never meet anybody who didn't vote for you. I mean, I told him exactly that. I said, "Jack, everyone's going to tell you what you want to hear. No one's going to say you're a jerk." Somebody might, but generally speaking, they're either going to be deferential or they're going to be a little bit duplicitous. But in any case, he was not that big of a believer in the polls. I was.

Kondracke: What connection had you had with him between 1970 and 1978?

Gugino: Correspondence. I kept a lot of the letters that he wrote to me. He was interested in what was happening on the college campuses. The unrest that was happening, he was concerned about it, and we chatted about it a lot, about the need to involve students in all aspects of their lives and the decision-making process of the institutions that were affecting them. I was active as a student leader at SUNY Binghamton, where I went to my undergraduate. I did my graduate work at SUNY Albany. I have a master's from Albany and a B.A. from SUNY Binghamton.

He liked to know what was happening on the campuses with student leaders, and he was always very solicitous of opportunities to speak on a college campus, to see what the minds of America, the young minds of America, were all about. I was one of those minds. I'm sure, I'm sure, that he kept in touch with a lot of others, but he was all about ideas and he wanted to know. "I've got an idea. What do you think about this idea? Tell me about your idea." Then he would comment on my idea. It was a dialogue that I enjoyed, and I considered that a development of a friendship.

Kondracke: This is over an eight-year period. How frequent was your contact?

Gugino: In terms of writing, I would say, oh, half a dozen times a year, easily, half a dozen times a year, always with a personal note, always with a personal, "Stay in touch. When you're in the Washington area, give me a buzz," type of thing.

As I said, I didn't consider myself a Kemp confidante. Even when he asked me to join his staff, I didn't feel that he knew me well enough. That's what floored me, really. I hadn't earned it, so to speak, by something that I did for him that he said, "Well, I've got to get Gugino."

He told me later, though, that he did not want to have anybody working for him that was accountable to anybody other than him, and that was very much like Jack Kemp. He was very loyal but he demanded loyalty. He didn't want somebody out of Republican Headquarters who was going to be doing one foot into the Republican Headquarters and one foot into the Kemp office. It was going to be both feet into the Kemp office or no feet in the Kemp office. So he wanted to have somebody who was a wholly owned exclusive subsidiary of Team Kemp, so to speak, and that made sense to me.

Kondracke: Had you worked on his campaigns?

Gugino: Yes, I worked on his campaigns, but not at a high level. Not at a high level. I mean, I'd give him some money, but not a lot, 100 bucks or something like that, and had worked on his campaigns previously as a volunteer, but not a volunteer with any great distinction, to be honest with you. Nothing where they'd say, "Oh, my god, we've got to go to Gugino with this," no, no.

Kondracke: So when you got the job, what were your marching orders, basically?

Gugino: Well, first of all, with Jack, he wanted me to be very self-motivated, which wasn't really a problem for me, but he wanted me to be his eyes and ears in the district and also, as I found out, a spokesman for him. Jack did not like to come back to Buffalo during the wintertime, so I spoke a lot for Jack Kemp, so I got into his voice a lot. I read everything that he wrote or was written for him or every speech, and I got to know the Kemp-isms, the comrade-in-arms thing, the battle-of-ideas thing, the talk about supply-side economics and some of the clichés that he would use, that people don't work to pay taxes; they work for what they can buy after taxes.

I wound up, when hearing Jack, completing his sentences after a while, and that helped me when he wasn't around and I had to speak on his behalf. I felt very confident that I could speak on his behalf, and accurately and enthusiastically represent what he was all about. In fact, it got to the point where that article that you're talking about with *The New York Times*, the [Martin] Marty Tolchin article, I mean, I can't believe they let me do it, but I represented Jack at the endorsement meetings when Jack knew he was just going to get pummeled, so he sent me. They pummeled me.

Kondracke: What endorsement meetings?

Gugino: For Local 2602, 2603, 2604, that would be the Bethlehem Steel.

Kondracke: The unions.

Gugino: The unions. The postal unions, I went to a lot of union endorsement meetings, knowing that I was going to get killed from an endorsement point of view, but it didn't make any difference, because he got a tremendous amount of union votes. He realized that there

was a distinction between union leaders and rank-and-file, so he never took it personally.

There's one particular event I remember so well. We had a meeting in Buffalo of the union leaders Art Zambucci, Walter Janszak—I think they're passed away now—in Bethlehem Steel union, Republic Steel, and a few other steel union people. There must have been twenty people in the room.

Kondracke: This was United Steelworkers?

Gugino: United Steelworkers locals, yes, and there might have been a few other people from the building trades, Leo Hopkins, Tommy Hopkins. I remember the names. Operating engineers, stationary engineers, carpenters, Buddy Bodowes, I remember them so well.

Kondracke: This is all in one big meeting?

Gugino: In a big meeting.

Kondracke: So this is like a local AFL-CIO?

Gugino: Oh, yes. And they were *really* upset at Kemp for the free-trade business, and they were pushing legislation for Buy America steel. Jack wouldn't have anything of it. They were upset, pissed, really upset, and they came in the office, and Jack would not budge. He wouldn't budge, not this much. "I'll help you guys any way I can, but this is the wrong thing. If you don't believe in free trade, you're losing confidence in America. America can win if it's free trade, fair trade. I know that there are countries out there that are not trading fairly, and that's another issue, but this protectionist stuff is going to hurt us in the long run, because you're subsidizing bad management." We went on and on, and it was vocal. It was vocal. He didn't back down.

At the end of the meeting, typical, because I can tell you every one of those guys we did favors for. When they needed their kids getting into college, I mean, we busted our hineys to get those kids into college, whatever it happened to be, and nobody worked harder on constituent relations than Kemp's people did. It was legendary. If you got a "no" from some other office, you'd come to Kemp's office, and if you got a "no" from them, then definitely it can't happen. We pulled a lot of big rabbits out of a lot of small hats.

Kondracke: What's your favorite rabbits?

Gugino: Well, one of the rabbits was this, by the way, the Santa Maria Towers, which I'll tell you about. But let me complete the story about the union. At the end of the meeting, they said, "Okay, that's the way he's going to be. That's the way he's going to be. All right, let's go. But, listen, Jack, mind if we take a picture with you?" Now, they'd just raked him over the coals, right?

And Jack was cool as can be. "Oh, sure, no problem. No problem."

We'd get together, and I forget who it was. I'm trying to remember if it was Hopkins. I think it was Walter Janszak from the 2603, taking the picture, and Jack says to Walter, "Hey, Walter, what kind of camera is that?"

"It's a Minolta."

"Minolta. Where's that made?"

"Uh, Japan."

"Well, why didn't you buy Kodak? They're made in Rochester."

"Well, because, Jack, this has got the different features. Oh, the hell with you." And everybody started to laugh. But he had made his point in a nice way, in a non-threatening way, in a way that educating everybody, and when you left, it was [Ronald] Reaganesque in the sense that you can disagree with the guy all you want, but you

couldn't help but like the guy. And that's what Jack was about. He had a Reagan kind of a quality to him.

Reagan, personally, in my opinion, was the ultimate. He was unbelievable in terms of likeability. I had the privilege of being with him on a couple of occasions where he campaigned, came to Buffalo, and they wanted us to set up something with the Polish community. In any case, he was just your favorite uncle. He was your favorite uncle. I mean, you could not be mad at the guy.

Jack was the guy that you may not have got cuddled around him, but you respected him. You know what? That's the way he feels.

Another labor event, that was in '81, '82, I remember when Reagan was running for—I'm trying to remember now. Was it the first one? I'm trying to remember. It must have been '80. Yes, it was '80. We had a meeting not too far from where we are right now, at a place called Armando's [Restaurant, Blasdell, NY], and [Thomas W.] Teddy Gleason came in. I don't know if you know Teddy Gleason. He was the head of the Longshoremen Union, national chairman, though, not just the local guy. He was the national chairman. Loved Jack. Teddy Gleason had to be in his eighties, maybe mid eighties. I'm sure he's gone by now, I would think.

But we had a huge event here for Reagan in 1980 at this breakfast for longshoremen, and we were being picketed by the AFL-

CIO. We were being picketed. George Wessel, who was in that article, that Marty Tolchin article, was the head of the AFL-CIO in Buffalo. They were picketing. As we're going in, I'm saying, "George, how the hell are you picketing a union? We're meeting with unions."

"You do your thing. I do my thing."

Well, George Wessel was the head of the AFL-CIO. George Wessel and Jack—I remember when his wife was ill and she passed away, and George Wessel has passed away, but there were many back-channel things with George Wessel and Jack. Jack never said no to him if he needed something, never took the criticism publicly. In that article they talked about there was some quotes from George Wessel that were very critical of Jack. You never heard Jack saying, "Wessel's full of crap." He never would ever say that. I never heard Jack say a negative thing about anybody. It was all about ideas.

Kondracke: Just stop there. Was this the event where Jack would not cross a picket line?

Gugino: This wasn't. What I'm telling you about, no. That's a different one. That was at the Statler. That was at the Statler Hotel for his endorsement meeting. They were going to endorse him, and

they had an informational picket out, and he said, "I'm not crossing that picket line."

The union people said, "You know what? Thank you, Mr. Kemp, appreciate it." They had nothing to do with Kemp, had everything about the people who owned the Statler Hotel were—I don't know if they were trying to discourage people from joining a union. Whatever it was, I forget the particulars. Maybe Eddie would know. But he wouldn't cross the picket line, even though it seemed innocent enough.

Kondracke: So this longshoremen meeting, the local AFL-CIO is picketing against Reagan?

Gugino: Yes. Against Reagan and against the longshoremen, and the longshoremen are part of the AFL-CIO. I mean, Jack was just shaking his head, saying, "I've never seen a union picket a union." It was crazy. And Reagan was in there. I mean, Reagan, he laughed about it. He laughed about everything, but just such a wonderful guy.

I don't know if you heard this story, but I've got to tell you real quick. It's sort of a Kemp story. Reagan was in New Hampshire and he told a Polish joke, and John Lawrence from NBC News reported it. He didn't report the joke; he said ethnic joke, and then people are

upset and about Reagan saying things on the bus. Reagan told jokes all the time.

So they do damage control. Edwin] Ed Meese [III] and [Michael K.] Deaver decided they were going to take Reagan to three places and meet with Polish and Italian leaders in three places, Chicago, Buffalo, and Philadelphia, where they have a pretty high concentration of Polish and Italian.

Long story short, he comes in, and Reagan was with Kemp, and they said [imitating Reagan], "I'm just here to let you know that I told a joke that shouldn't have been told. I told it as an example of jokes that shouldn't be told."

And some guy in the back says, "What's the joke?"

"Well, it's an example of we shouldn't say things."

"Just tell us the joke."

So he says, "Okay, I'll tell you the joke. But this is—."

"We know, we know, we know you shouldn't do that. Just tell us the joke."

"How do you tell there's a Polack at the cock fight? He brings the duck. How do you tell there's an Italian at the cockfight? He bets on the duck. How do you tell the Mafia is at the cockfight? The duck wins." He told the joke, everyone laughs, Kemp laughs, everyone laughs.

They say, "That's it? All right. Goodbye. We don't need it anymore. You're fine." Boom.

That disarming charm was Reagan, and in a lot of respects, people saw that as Kemp. He didn't quite have the charm and the storytelling ability of Reagan, nobody did, but the likeability factor was that in this heavily ethnic town where everyone's got their own little part of the community, Jack was as honed into that as anything, not because he tried to be solicitous or in some way phony about it. Just the opposite. Everybody liked to hear the speech about America. Everybody liked it. He gave it as well as anybody.

Kondracke: I mean, he was pretty WASP-y.

Gugino: Oh, absolutely.

Kondracke: Yet he appealed to ethnics.

Gugino: Oh, yes. This particular project was on the west side of Buffalo, Santa Maria Towers, and this is a project that was built with HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] funds, 202, which is not-for-profit. The bishop of Buffalo, Edward Head, is in this picture, because we got the Catholic diocese to be the sponsor.

Kondracke: This is what year?

Gugino: This was actually dedicated September 1984. As a result of this project, which we got passed with a lot of help—this project was not in our district. It's in Buffalo. Jack said, "Why are we supporting this district? It's in Henry Nowak's district."

I said, "Jack, the Italian community is not just the city of Buffalo. The Italian community is all over the place. They've been trying to have a senior citizen home in what used to be the old west side, the old Italian section, for years and years. John [J.] LaFalce couldn't do it. Henry Nowak couldn't do it. You can do it."

"All right. Do what you have to do." He gave me carte blanche. He gave everybody carte blanche on that staff. It was thrilling. A little scary because there was no net. "You can go as far as you want, but you'd better be careful."

When we got that done, Reagan comes in and dedicates this thing, and it became a big *cause célèbre* for Jack, so much so that later that year he was named the first and only non-Italian Man of the Year by the Italian American community. That was unheard of. It would always go to an Italian, no matter who it was. They even actually put it on television. They put that dinner on television. They

brought in [Andrew] Andy Robustelli from the New York Giants. They brought in [Nicholas A.] Nick Buoniconti from the Miami Dolphins. All good friends of Jack's. Daryle Lamonica. [Benjamin] Ben Scotti, who played for the Washington Redskins.

And all of these people, all these Italians were just cheering wildly for Jack. Why? Because he listened to them and he wasn't looking down on them. If anything, he was trying to lift everybody up.

He used to say the old thing, "Rising tides lift all boats," about tax policy. Jack was like that just in terms of the American dream. People liked to hear that. The Greeks loved him. I can tell you Greek leaders. The Ukrainians. The Ukrainians here, we used to do a big thing with Captive Nations Week. They don't have it anymore. But Ukrainians wouldn't come to LaFalce and Nowak. Not to say that they didn't, because that was a big deal. Freedom was a big thing for Jack. "Freedom. We're going to be free." [Eliezer] Elie Wiesel with the Holocaust, the Jews, he did a lot of things with the Jewish community. For a non-ethnic politician, he got a tremendous amount of support.

The problem that he had was, he wasn't able to generate that outside of western New York. When he went to Iowa and other places to run for president, I don't know why, but it just didn't catch on. But nevertheless, while he was here as a congressman, he was revered. Revered. He'd get off a plane and he'd be talking to the guy who was

shining shoes at the airport and talk to him for ten minutes about his family and about what's going on in his life, because he was really interested in it. He didn't just deal with the fat cats. He was a commoner, a real commoner, really related to people at the street level.

Kondracke: How big a staff did you have?

Gugino: In the district I had two people in Buffalo and one person in Geneva, New York, so I had a staff of three, four including myself.

Kondracke: Most doing constituent work?

Gugino: All doing constituent work, yes. Most congressional offices, the district is the district and the Washington is the Washington office. I always used to get a kick out of it, because whether it was with [Randal C.] Randy Teague or whether it was [David M.] Dave Smick, who was another AA, who I think you know, they thought the world revolved around Washington. Guess what? Washington doesn't elect diddly. The rubber meets the road right here. Yes, you know, we have toilets and everything here. We don't have to go outside. We actually read the newspapers. We know what the issues are here.

The issues, if Jack wanted to know, and this is the great thing about him, "Let me know what I need to know." Anytime I said, "This is important," it got his attention. If I didn't think that he didn't need to do something, I just did it, let him know. But he gave me wide berth, wide berth, and that was thrilling.

That's one of the things that helped build me personally, because I had so many speaking engagements, two and three a night. I mean, a lot. He never heard me speak, but that's okay. In fact, at my retirement dinner, which I know this is an oral history, but at my retirement dinner—I've got it here somewhere. This is talking about the uniform. This is Jack, this is Eddie, this is me, and this is the guy who replaced me. There's a similarity of dress, would you say?

Kondracke: [laughs] Red ties.

Gugino: They're all wearing the red ties and the dark suit.

Kondracke: Same red tie.

Gugino: Absolutely.

Kondracke: Collar pin?

Gugino: Collar pin. It was required, required.

Kondracke: Who replaced you?

Gugino: [Robert] Bob Blaney, who's in Arizona now. He worked for the SBA [Small Business Administration] for a couple years.

Kondracke: So on a project like the Italian American old folks' home, did you basically deliver that project yourself with using Jack's influence?

Gugino: Yes. I had meetings every week in the office with Frank Ciminelli, who was the developer. This is Frank Ciminelli here and here with Reagan. This is his wife, Rosalie. He was the developer. [Anthony] Tony Colucci was the attorney. Dick Anastasi, did the site work. Are you getting the impression we've taken care of some of our Italian friends?

Kondracke: Yes.

Gugino: George Lukaszewicz was the architect. We met Monsignor Henry Gugino, no relation to me, but he was the representative of the Catholic diocese. We met every week until this thing got done.

Kondracke: So you intervened with HUD. Did Jack make calls?

Gugino: Absolutely, absolutely, Jack made calls. [Alfonse M.] Al D'Amato made calls. They all took credit for it, but Jack had the biggest credit because everybody knew it wouldn't have happened without Jack. We knew that if ever this was going to get built, it was going to get built with Jack Kemp working with the Republican President, and the political advantages for Jack were enormous. I mean, here's Reagan coming to dedicate it. Not that we had that planned, but he dedicated it. Reagan was actually older than some of the people that were there, because you had to sixty-two to be eligible to be in subsidized housing.

Kondracke: So what are your all-time favorite constituent delivery stories besides this one?

Gugino: Oh, my goodness. Well, that one was huge because it had such a huge impact on Jack's persona. He was delivering something

rather big. This project was about 8 million dollars. Delivering for the constituents, the Ellicott Creek Flood Control Project, that was huge in Amherst, by the way, north of here.

Jack really didn't like a lot of constituent stuff, because, in his own words, he was an economic determinist. He felt as though jobs, economic growth was everything. Once economic growth took off, this other stuff just sort of took care of itself. I mean, not that the state would wither away, because it obviously wouldn't, but a lot of the stuff that would be called social services wouldn't be necessary.

Now, flood control projects actually would be, and that was another one that was very important. There are a number of creeks here in the western New York area that overflow, that they need to be reengineered or managed by Army Corps of Engineers. Ellicott Creek or Cattaraugus Creek, a number of creeks that we worked on, not real sexy things, not stuff that people say, "Oh, great! We don't have to worry about flooding anymore on Cazenovia Creek." Well, you don't get that kind of applause with constituent services.

But I can tell you that the Ukrainians, for example, the most important thing to them was Captive Nations Week, and nobody gave them more attention and respect than Jack Kemp did. Now, that was a constituent service, but Jack elevated it, I mean, in terms of insertions in the *Congressional Record*, that kind of thing.

I'm trying to think of several other projects. We were involved in the projects that basically renovated downtown Buffalo. Downtown Buffalo, which was not our district, the Hyatt Hotel, the Gold Dome Bank complex, the Key Bank complex, all of those facilities that are big parts of the downtown Buffalo area were supported and could not have been built without the intervention of Jack Kemp and his staff. I worked with the people on our Washington staff on all of that stuff.

Also mass-transit aid. Jack wanted to make sure that the NFTA, the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority, that they got enough support to manage and operate the rapid rail transit system that runs downtown. Unfortunately, they didn't have enough money to take the system and move it out to Amherst. It was originally supposed to go from downtown Buffalo out to the U.B. campus, U.B.-Amherst. I don't know if you're familiar with U.B., University of Buffalo. But they didn't have the money for it. So as a result, they only have basically a trolley system that takes people from one part of downtown to another part of downtown, which was not exactly what this purpose was. The purpose was to get people from the suburbs into downtown Buffalo without having to use cars. So they cut the system in half, but it still needed subsidies, and we were able to get that.

[Andrew L.] Drew Lewis [Jr.] was the Secretary of Transportation at the time under Reagan, and we worked with him and

UMTA. I don't even know if they have UMTA anymore. Urban Mass Transportation Authority. We worked with them. So a lot of the downtown projects that got built were built with Jack Kemp's fingerprints.

Kondracke: Wasn't there a conflict between Jack and LaFalce as to where that rail line was supposed to go?

Gugino: Yes.

Kondracke: Tell me about that.

Gugino: Well, it was a moot point only because LaFalce wanted it to go to Tonawanda, which is in LaFalce's district. The originators of the plan wanted it to go to Amherst because that's where there the greatest economic development was. So the idea was if you'd take this train for sheer ridership, you'd want to go to Tonawanda, and there was a rail line that could have been accessed, that could have been used to bring the system into Tonawanda, but there wasn't any money for either one of them. That's the problem. So we're not going to do either.

So the rail line never really has approached its potential for Buffalo, even though there's very few spots in this area where you can't get to in twenty minutes by car. I mean, it's not like Washington where, depending on the time of day, it may take you a while to get from Bethesda to Reston or even Washington because of the traffic and so on.

This area, as I've said, is not a growing area economically, hasn't been for years, ever since Bethlehem Steel shut down back in the late seventies, early eighties, and nothing's really replaced it. I mean, it's not like another steel company came in and, "Okay, we'll take over." No, it's still vacant. Bethlehem Steel is a huge ghost town on the lake.

Kondracke: Jack tried to keep it open?

Gugino: No, no. He didn't try to keep it open. He tried to keep it open in the sense of trying to find ways of promoting trade, but he realized that Bethlehem Steel had some huge problems that weren't going to be solved with the Buy America, and that they had huge management problems. As it turned out, after Bethlehem Steel closed here, they also closed their facilities in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, some of them in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and also in other parts of the

United States. They had some aging plants that they refused to or maybe weren't able to modernize.

SteelCo, which was a company across the lake in Canada, had just been built, and Jack was upset that SteelCo was able to build a huge plant. The Canadian government, the Ontario provincial government, was able to build a huge plant and have them be depreciated over the course of one or two years, everything that was there, where depreciation schedules for all manufacturing, at that time anyway, were nowhere near as beneficial as they were in other countries. So Jack's focus was on, "Well, let's make it so that if Bethlehem Steel decides that they're going to reinvest, if they have the money, that they be able to write it off in the very year that they spent the money," or within a year or two, as the case may be. That's where he came from. He didn't come from the idea where he was protectionist. Never was. And that's where he caught a lot of grief.

But as I said, he was more worried about rank-and-file votes from union members than he was about votes from union leaders. As [Christopher J.] Chris Christie and other people are seeing in some parts of the United States, if you do the right thing and you have the right results, you'll get the votes. The votes will follow. If it doesn't work, you're in bad shape.

Kondracke: So even though he's a conservative Republican, he does believe in public works and government intervention and all that stuff.

Gugino: Yes. He made a very strong point during the recession period where there was a scaling-back in the Reagan administration, that government programs were not going to be eliminated entirely. They might be cut back a little bit here and there, but the subsidies for college education and that kind of stuff, Jack fought for that. But that wasn't really his main theme. He felt that the infrastructure, the safety net, he would call it, the safety net to catch people that had fallen off the economic ladder for one reason and in many cases through no fault of their own, that that net could not be taken away.

He got into a big match with Mario [M.] Cuomo, who I've met on a number of occasions, a very nice guy. But Mario Cuomo was your classic liberal if ever there was one, and he would write and speak very eloquently about the need to expand that net. "Yes, you've got to keep that net strong."

And Jack would say, "You know what? You're defining compassion as how many people we can catch in the net, and I'll define compassion as how many people don't need to be caught in the net because they can fend for themselves. A job, a good-paying job, does an awful lot for a person's self-esteem and their ability to fend for

themselves, that it is as, if not more, compassionate than a government program that is basically built on handouts.” And I remember he and Mario Cuomo going at it, literally.

Kondracke: They debated?

Gugino: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. In fact, I think I’ve got—some of the material I’ve got. I thought I had point-counterpoint between Jack and Mario Cuomo on exactly that point, about how Jack felt compassion was being misinterpreted by some of his liberal friends as being the more largesse of government you could provide, the better it would be, and Jack would say how silly that is; that compassion should be measured by how many people are in a situation where they can fend for themselves and don’t need to call on others.

Kondracke: Was the issue here welfare reform or what?

Gugino: Combination of western New York distress. Western New York has always been looking for help for economic development for the longest time, and, as I say, Bethlehem Steel closed back in the late seventies, early eighties, and here we are 2011, so you’re talking about thirty years. There’s nothing that’s replaced it. I shouldn’t say

there's nothing. I'd say there's small businesses that have cropped up here and there, some in the biomedical field. If you go to U.B. and see some of the things that their medical school has spun off, there's some stuff, but they're not talking about mega manufacturing companies. I think that they see that in the future. I think that that's very possible, but nothing to the point of—you're talking about people working at Bethlehem Steel, 20,000 people. That was a lot of people. That's a lot of jobs, and the secondary and tertiary jobs that come out of that are amazing.

So everyone's looking for the silver bullet. Everyone's looking for the big get. Well, have you looked lately? Where's the big gets in the United States today? How many factories are being built today anywhere? Anywhere. They're being built in Singapore.

Kondracke: Well, they're being built in non-union states.

Gugino: And non-union states.

Kondracke: Which raises the issue with Jack.

Gugino: Yes.

Kondracke: Did he see unions as an impediment to employment?

Gugino: No. No. Don't forget, Jack was president of the American Football League Players Association. He helped to engineer the merger between the AFL Players Association and the NFL Players Association. John Mackey, who is still with us, is unfortunately suffering from Alzheimer's and dementia, the great, great tight end for the Baltimore Colts, the two of them were very good friends. Jack had that kind of experience, not unlike Reagan with the Screen Actors Guild.

Jack's feeling was that labor was capital and capital was labor. Capital, meaning the tools of production, were either people or machines, and that union people had to recognize that they were in partnership with capital, not just a capitalist, but the capital itself, that they were capital, they were investment. They needed to be protected and they needed to be retooled, and sometimes that retooling was heartbreaking and sometimes not probable, especially when you're fifty-five years old, you got laid off by Bethlehem Steel. Where are you going? When's the next steel company coming in town? Don't wait for the phone to ring. So a lot of those people had to be retooled and reeducated.

But, nevertheless, it never hurt Jack at the polls. It never really hurt him at the polls when I was there, because what he was talking about was stuff that made sense. Nobody wanted their taxes increased. I mean, Jack was not a redistributist. He was not one of those guys. He was everybody should grow, and if the millionaires want to grow, let them grow, and some day you become a millionaire.

Kondracke: Let's talk about the district a little bit. The '81 redistricting happened on your watch.

Gugino: Right.

Kondracke: So what did that do to the district?

Gugino: This was the district in '81. What basically happened was that the district moved rather significantly eastward from essentially a Buffalo suburban district to a Buffalo suburban district and then Wyoming County, which was rural, and when I saw rural, there are more cows than there are people in Wyoming County. But it became a farming district within Wyoming County, then moved further east to Livingston County, where there's Geneseo and University of Geneseo, so it's south and east of Rochester, and then further east to

Canandaigua and Geneva. Geneva is the furthest-most part of that district.

So that made the district, from a political point of view, a two-media market center, which not only was good in terms of enrollment, we had an enrollment advantage, not a huge enrollment advantage, but a significant enrollment advantage, but anybody who wanted to want to run against Jack had to be able to advertise in two media markets, the Rochester media market and the Buffalo media market. That was difficult for anybody to really—and, plus, Jack was a superstar, and going after him, you needed an issue, and the issues that people threw against him weren't sticking. Not that he didn't have opposition, but when I was around, we were getting 70 percent of the vote.

Kondracke: Was the redistricting done by the New York State legislature done to advantage Jack or disadvantage Jack?

Gugino: To advantage him, yes.

Kondracke: It was a Republican—

Gugino: The way it is in this state, I don't know how familiar you are, but the State Senate has been Republican for a long time. Two years ago, they were not, but thankfully they went back and have the control of the State Senate. The State Senate draws their own districts, the State Assembly, heavily Democrat, draws their own districts, and then they get together in the middle and figure out, "Okay, what are we going to do with the congressional districts."

And that is determined to some degree on the census data, to a great degree on the census data, in terms of if you lose a district—in this particular case, I'll give you an example. New York's going to lose two districts in this coming 2012. The feeling was that if [Christopher J.] Chris Lee had won, and if he didn't have his issues and won, that that district might have been targeted for extinction. Now that [Kathleen C.] Kathy Hochul, the Democrat, won, the feeling is that they've got to do whatever they can do to save her, because the three congressional people in western New York, Louise [M.] Slaughter, Brian Higgins, Kathy Hochul, are all Democrats. So they don't want to have an in-house fight there. So with [Anthony D.] Weiner's district probably going, probably, there's a feeling that the other district will probably be from central New York.

Kondracke: How much did Jack or you get involved in redistricting politics?

Gugino: Not a lot. Not a lot.

Kondracke: No lobbying?

Gugino: Very little, very little. I'm not saying that there wasn't lobbying, but the lobbying, if there was any, it was in Washington, Smick or Randy Teague, as the case may be.

Kondracke: What exactly are the demographics of the district that Jack ran in? You don't have Buffalo in it, so you don't have any blacks, right?

Gugino: No, very few.

Kondracke: Is it all-white ethnic or what's the—

Gugino: I have a poll, a survey, and I might be able to answer that question for you, the 31<sup>st</sup> Congressional District 1982. In fact, wait a

minute. That's everything you wanted to know and then some. That's age, population, income, race, religion. You can take that if you want.

Kondracke: So the largest group is German, then the second largest group is Italian, and the third largest group is Polish, but it doesn't look like there's—they're not big percentages.

Gugino: No.

Kondracke: Ninety-seven percent white.

Gugino: You want that, Mort?

Kondracke: I'll keep it. I'll keep it.

Gugino: That'll tell you everything you want to know and then some.

Kondracke: Good.

Gugino: This is a survey that was done in preparation for the '82 election, and I won't go into it, but it talks about Ronald Reagan's

handling of the economy. In fact, here, take a look. Barry Zeplowitz did this for us.

Kondracke: So was the district in a presidential year normally Republican or Democrat?

Gugino: Republican. Reagan carried New York twice. Not many people realize that, but he carried it twice. It's a different state than it was back in 1980 and 1984, to be sure. I mean, the disparity between the Republican Party in terms of its membership is way more Democrats. There's two million more Democrats in this state than there are Republicans, so when you run statewide, you have to get a lot of Democratic votes, and that can happen. D'Amato showed that it could happen. [George E.] Pataki showed that it could happen. Reagan showed it could happen. It almost happened with Harry Wilson, with the controller's race this past time around. But generally speaking, this is as blue state as blue gets. The congressional district that Kathy Hochul won in had an overlay of about 26,000 Republicans, which should have been enough to beat her.

Kondracke: Which is the Kemp district?

Gugino: The remnants of the old Kemp district. Right.

Kondracke: Because Max McCarthy had the district in the beginning, so in those days was it more Democratic?

Gugino: Yes. Jack won that district by—I think it was 51-49. I think it was 5,000 votes or something like that, something like 6,000 or 7,000 votes. It was very little his first time around. The next time around, it was different.

Kondracke: But in elections like '76, '76 would have been the key determinant, I guess, when Carter won. Would that have gone Democratic or Republican?

Gugino: I don't remember if the district went Democratic. I mean, around here there's a lot of ticket splitting, a lot of ticket splitting. The exception is in the black community in the city of Buffalo, they pretty much press one lever, but everywhere else. As I said, when we were involved in Cheektowaga, I really could care less that there was two-to-one, three-to-one Democrat. It didn't make any difference, because we worked that area really a lot, and Jack was familiar with Cheektowaga and we had town meetings Cheektowaga. He was

accessible. Jack was accessible and people felt that they could talk to him and bring their issues to him. So, constituent relations I'd like to think was a big part of what he did. That didn't get a lot of publicity, didn't get a lot of play, but it was very much part of his persona. As I say, he was able to do a lot.

Kondracke: During your time, Jack is a major national figure, he's a congressional leader, so how often did he get to the district?

Gugino: In the wintertime, not a lot. In the wintertime, not a lot. I hate to say it, but it's true, there would be sometimes months that would go by and they wouldn't see him.

Kondracke: Did anybody gripe about that?

Gugino: Yes, they griped about it.

Kondracke: Who?

Gugino: Some people that wanted to know how come he couldn't speak before the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce or whatever, or the Lakawana Lions Club or whatever. He came back, and when he would

come back, he would usually come back maybe on a weekend, do something on a Saturday, fly back on a Saturday.

So, during the week there was—I mean, I was given the opportunity, as I'm sure Eddie was, too, Rutkowski, to meet with, to be a sort of a surrogate for him in more ways than one. When we would go into an event and there'd be a couple hundred people, I would know that they would crowd him like a rock star. "Jack, I got a thing. I got to talk to you."

"Talk to Russ. Talk to Russ." And I knew that would happen, and I dealt with it very carefully, because when you're given that kind of responsibility, you hold it very, very carefully.

Jack was busy, in his words, saving the western hemisphere for democracy and supply-side economics. So rather than go do a lot of things in western New York, he was going to Louisiana, California, Florida, speaking before major groups. That's all right, and particularly in the wintertime.

Kondracke: He didn't like to travel in the winter up here?

Gugino: He didn't like to. He didn't like the cold weather. That was one thing about being from southern California that stayed with him, although he loved to ski. He'd go to Aspen to ski. He wouldn't come

back here to ski. Might as well go to Aspen to ski. "If I'm going to ski, I'm going to ski someplace that's really going to be okay."

But this is a thing called "The Kemp Style." I'm going to give this to you. This is something that was produced by the *Buffalo News*. In the 1984 convention, I made up about five thousand of these things and gave them to every delegate and so on, because—well, just because. This tells you a lot about his style, but there's one sequence in here that I was reading through that I just thought is indicative of Kemp.

This is a quote from him. "I came to Congress with the idea that I was a quarterback and I was supposed to lead, and leadership was dragging people where you wanted to go. The biggest challenge of my political career was that after Town Hall meetings, listening to the people in Buffalo and western New York, I was democratized—small 'd'—and I finally had the sense that basically people want the same things for their families that my mother and dad wanted for their family and I want for my four children: bread-and-butter jobs, a chance to send your kids to college, let them live a higher life and get on the ladder, economic ladder, that we in turn lived. We were standing on our parents' shoulders." That's another favorite expression of his, "standing on the shoulders of the previous generation." "That's a pretty universal dream. So leadership is not

taking people where they don't want to go; it's figuring out where they want to go and finding a way to get them there." This is yours.

Kondracke: So, just to be clear here, so he would come during the spring, I guess, and the fall.

Gugino: He might be up here maybe once or twice during the winter, once or twice, in and out, boom, boom, out. No constituent—I mean, the constituent meetings were usually in late spring or in early fall.

Kondracke: Town meetings?

Gugino: Town meetings. Now, that was interesting. When I first started with Jack, he had a very interesting and, I thought, unusual way of having a town meeting. People would come in. We'd send out the flyers. "Jack Kemp is going to be at the Hamburg Town Hall between twelve and two. Come and see him." And people would come in, and we'd take down their name and number, like they were going to the market, and they'd get called in to meet with Jack.

Kondracke: They'd sit out and wait in the waiting room.

Gugino: That's right. That's right. I'm looking at this thing and I'm seeing a hundred, two hundred people. I don't know what your religious tradition is, but mine's Catholic. It was like going to confession. People would go in there, and Jack would sit there, you know, "What's the problem?"

"Oh, I got a this and that," and they'd spend five minutes, yap, yap, yap, yap, yap. I mean, okay, but I said, "Jack, you're only going to be able to see about twenty people doing this. This is crazy."

"Well, what do you think we should do?"

"Go out there and talk to them. Take their questions. If they think it's personal and don't want everybody to know that, 'Hey, I'm broke, I need a job. I've got to talk to you personally,' then fine. But after that, fine."

So we changed the whole thing, and we were able to do a whole bunch of constituent meetings in this district just by doing that kind of thing. So that this particular photo here, the reason I brought it was that we used a helicopter to get from one end of the district to the other. Here it is. This is in a helicopter. That's the pilot over there, obviously. But we were able to do Town Hall meetings in Canandaigua.

Kondracke: You're a kid here.

Gugino: Yes. Oh, yes, I was a kid. We could do three or four in a day, four appearances in one day. "You're going to be seeing a thousand people." And that's how we did it, and they became events. Then they got to the point where the media would show up. I didn't have to call the media, because the media knew when if Jack was in town, they wanted to cover him anyway. But the bottom line is that was a much more helpful interchange for him to hear and smell the sounds and sights of the district, and to have that. I mean, I was getting it all the time at the office, but after a while when you're in Washington, you need to be reenergized. You need to be re-associated with that stuff, with that smell, and I don't mean it in a bad way. It was a contribution I think I made which I think helped him a lot.

Being personalized, we did 25,000 to 30,000 Christmas cards a year. He wanted them all hand-addressed. Man, 25,000, 30,000, that's a lot of people, man, a lot of people. So we had to pay people. After a while, then I said, "You know, Jack, this is crazy. I'm just going to get friggin' labels, get labels."

"No, I don't want labels on my Christmas card." So, I mean, he eventually went to labels, by the way. I don't know if you saw a typical Christmas card. Well, this isn't typical because this is—

Kondracke: Wedding.

Gugino: There's always a Bible verse.

Kondracke: Look at Jimmy [Kemp]. [laughs] That's funny.

Gugino: Did I tell you the [Richard] Rick James story?

Kondracke: No.

Gugino: I've got to tell you this. Jack and I were going to Orchard Park. Orchard Park is the next town over from here. It's a bedroom community, primarily Republican, pretty heavily Republican. I think it was a fall event for the Republican Committee. We get out of the car, we're walking into the VFW Hall, and before we get to the VFW Hall we see this Stutz Bearcat in the parking lot, and there's people all around it, looking and gawking at it. He says, "God, what's that?"

"A Stutz."

"I know it's a Stutz Bearcat, but I mean, what's a Stutz Bearcat doing in Orchard Park?"

I said, "I don't know."

So we go in, and I look around and I see Rick James. Do you know who Rick James was? Well, Rick James, black guy from Buffalo, long dreadlocks, very, very, very popular rap music kind of a guy, multimillionaire, also did stuff up the nose, and was well known in Buffalo but also was known particularly in the black community for rap songs. So I said, "Jack, it's Rick James."

He goes, "Rick James? Where?"

"At the table, it's Rick James."

He says, "That's Rick James?"

I said, "Yeah."

He said, "Who the fuck is Rick James?" [laughs] He had no idea, no idea who it was.

Kondracke: Jack was not up on popular culture?

Gugino: No way. No way. I've got a picture of him somewhere with Rick James. Rick James, "Oh, Jack, I remember when you were at the Rock Pile," the old War Memorial Stadium. "I used to go see you. Jeez, you're my favorite. I liked you way more than I liked Lamonica."

And Jack is soaking it in, and "Yeah, yeah, yeah, I follow you." He didn't know from shit about Rick James, but he was gracious. He wouldn't let him know that, obviously. He didn't want to let him know.

But Jack, he got admiration from—it was funny. When we would go to the airport, the sky marshals who were checking the bags, “Hey, Mr. Kemp. How ya doing, Mr. Kemp? Hi, Mr. Kemp.”

Jack would come over and start talking to them, and, “How’s everything going with you? What’s going on? How are your taxes?” Wherever he could evangelize, he would evangelize.

Kondracke: Okay. Driving stories. Give me your five favorite or most terrifying driving stories.

Gugino: Well, the one that I may have told you about, but I will tell you for the purposes of this discussion, we were going to Rochester. This was kind of crazy. And we were late getting to Rochester. We were speaking in front of the American Legion in Rochester. This is the national American Legion. [Michael] Mike Koguttek, who was from Buffalo, was the national commander of the American Legion, so it was a special thing, not only the American Legion, but a guy from Buffalo is the national commander, and we’re late. Jack, he said, “Let me drive. Let me drive. I’ll drive.”

“Okay, fine. You drive.” And we tore ass, came out of Buffalo, the airport, and I think we got to Rochester in forty-five minutes. I mean, it’s about an hour and a half. I mean, he was going 100 miles

an hour, and he would be going 100 miles an hour, and my car—this was my car—could barely go 100 miles an hour.

Then on the thruway he slams on the brakes. Slams on the brakes. I said, "What are you doing?"

"I felt radar. I felt radar."

I said, "Are you crazy?"

He said, "It's okay now. It's all right. It's all right." And whoooooosh, then back. And he would periodically slam the brakes when he felt that there was radar around. I mean, how do you explain that? I laughed my ass off.

We had so many of those kind of things where he didn't drive very much, but that one was particularly crazy. We got there actually about ten minutes late. I thought we were going to be like a half an hour late, maybe an hour late. But that was one.

Another one in terms of driving, we were going to an event. I'm trying to remember now the name of the event. As I say, I drove most of the time, but a couple of times when he drove, he did not think stop signs were made for him, so he went through, and we never got stopped on those. But I will tell you that an awful lot of people must have seen us rolling through the stop signs.

Well, one day we get a call from [Kenneth] Ken Lipke. Ken Lipke was the president of Gibraltar Steel. Gibraltar Steel's still around here.

It's a pretty big company. His sons, the Lipkes, Brian Lipke is now the president of Gibraltar Steel. They make, among other things, snowplows for municipalities, on the trucks, the big things, as well as the steel that is like the separators in highways, bumpers, whatever you want to call it, and specialty steel.

Anyway, Ken Lipke calls for Jack to come to his office. We were going to an NFTA function where they were going to be cutting a ribbon for a new rail station in downtown Buffalo, but it was an opportunity to thank all of the politicians for their help in getting federal aid for the thing. Okay, fine.

So Sharon Zelaska calls me and says, "Jack is flying in."

I said, "Fine. I'll pick him up."

"No, you don't want to pick him up. You pick him up at Gibraltar Steel. Ken Lipke is sending a car for him."

"Well, that's *my* job, Sharon."

"I understand that, but he's sending a car."

"Okay. I'll meet him at Gibraltar Steel," which is not too far from the airport, not that far.

I'm waiting for him. Ken Lipke is a car buff, and he has a Cadillac that had to be from the sixties, with the big fins, the real big fins. Might have been '62, '63, all restored, white. He sends his secretary to pick up Jack, beautiful woman, and she was, with the top

down, and they drive from the airport. Here's Jack Kemp the congressman. I mean, you could not miss this thing five miles away.

And I'm looking at him, and he goes, "Do you believe he did this? Do you believe he did this?" And Jack is sort of hunched over like this, trying to hide himself from being seen at every red light, because she wasn't taking the expressway. She's taking all local traffic.

Kondracke: She's driving or he's driving?

Gugino: She's driving. She's driving, which is even worse. "Don't look at me. Don't look at me."

She says, "Well, look. I'm going to be here for thirty seconds with Ken, and then we're going to leave because we're late to go to the thing."

"Okay, fine."

So Ken Lipke had a big presentation that he wanted to make to Jack. Jack said, "I've got to leave, got to leave, got to leave." He comes out of the meeting with Ken Lipke, he says, "Get the car. Get the car. Hurry up. Get the car started. Hurry up. Bring it over now."

Okay, fine.

He's, "I've got to go, Ken."

"No, you can't go. I sent a plane for you. What are you talking about?"

"Ken, I've got to go, I've got to go, I've got to go."

And Jack comes running out of the office like he was on fire. I'm there with the car, and as I'm pulling out, Ken Lipke is running alongside of the car. He's grabbed the handle of the car, talking to Jack. I mean, it was so friggin' farcical that it was—, "You can't do this. We gotta do this. You gotta—."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah." And I'm waiting, and I'm stopped, because I'm waiting for the traffic to clear, and it's a very, very busy intersection on Waldon Avenue, and you just can't pull out. So here he is haranguing Jack, haranguing Jack, and I'm thinking I hope to God nobody's taking film of this. This is just unbelievable.

We finally pull out, going downtown, and he looks at me. He goes, "Do you believe it?"

I said, "I don't even want to talk about it. You're the one who wants to get the free ride down to the district. You pay for your thrills, Jack. You pay for your thrills."

"Yes, you know what? You're right. You're right. You're right."

Kondracke: Did he ever have women throwing themselves at him?

Gugino: That might have happened, but not in my presence.

Kondracke: So when he came to Buffalo, where did he stay? There's this issue about his residence. Where did he stay if he stayed overnight?

Gugino: Almost always he stayed at the Executive Hotel, which is now a Radisson Hotel across the street from the airport. They were owned by the Cosentino family, [James] Jimmy and [Patrick] Pat Cosentino. We had a number of events there, and I had the place checked out by the FBI to make sure that there wasn't any funny business. When I say funny business, I mean, the Cosentino family's a well-regarded family, but I wasn't going to take any chances with Jack to stay some place that was connected with anything. So he stayed there.

The Board of Elections, which for most of the time had been run by the Democrats, tried to find out, because Jack did live not too far from here on Idlewood, 50 Idlewood Drive. In fact, when we go to lunch or whatever, if you want, I'll show you the house.

Kondracke: That's the house he owned?

Gugino: That's the house he owned, but they moved right after the election. They moved in '71, right after the election. So from '71 to '88, he didn't have a residence here. Now, according to the Constitution, you don't have to. The Constitution rules, but politically if you don't have a place in the district, you suffer for it politically. A lot of people don't understand the nuances, but I understood it.

So I kept saying to Jack, "We need to get a place for you." He was registered to vote at his lawyer's house, [Malcolm] Mickey Buckley, who lives on North Creek Road not too far from here. Whenever somebody from the Board of Elections would come to see Mickey, they'd say, "Well, is Mr. Kemp here?"

"Oh, you just missed him. You just missed him."

"Oh. Do you know when he'll be back?"

"Well, I don't know, but you just missed him." Well, he didn't live there.

Mickey was the treasurer of our Campaign Committee. I said, "They're going over to see Mickey more and more. We have to get something done here."

"What do you think we should do?"

"You've got to buy a house. The issue isn't so much where you live; do you pay property taxes where you're representing people."

“Okay. You know what? This spring when the snow thaws, we’ll do it.”

I said, “No, I don’t think so. I think we’re going to do that sooner.”

“Well, what do you suggest?”

“Let me buy the house for you.” So I literally bought this house for Jack. He had never seen it. I bought it, which is, to me, kind of a compliment of judgment. I said, “This is what’s going to happen. It’s a two-family house. The rents will zero out. You don’t have to pay anything out of your pocket. I’ll take care of the lawn and all that crap. You don’t even have to worry about it.” And he didn’t have to.

About six months later in the spring after I bought it for him—and he wrote the checks. I didn’t buy the house. When I say bought it, I selected the house. But he bought it. He came by. I said, “You need to come by and see the house.”

“Why? I’m not going to live there.”

I said, “Because the people who are living there will want to know that they saw Jack Kemp, and that will be more than enough to satisfy people that you were living in Hamburg. They can say, ‘Oh, yes, he’s right here. He’s going to be moving back in.’ Regardless, that doesn’t make any difference. You’re paying taxes, your name is

on the house, you were in the house. Trust me, that's all you need."  
And that was enough.

Kondracke: So it was a rental house.

Gugino: It was a two-family house, two-family house, and we rented out both the upstairs and the downstairs, so that he literally, as I said, zeroed out on the rents, so that it basically paid for itself.

Kondracke: So when did you buy the house?

Gugino: I bought the house in 1983.

Kondracke: So from '71 to '83, they used the treasurer's house as the—

Gugino: Yes. That was actually on his license too. Who's going to make a big thing about it? I said, "You're not going to be arrested for driving fraud, but, you know what? You'd better get this taken care of. Then you can register. You can have your license at 45 South Lake Street, so people will say, 'Oh, yeah, that's the house that he bought.' People are not going to knock on the door. Don't worry about that."

Taking care of the little things. I mean, as I found out, politics, whether it's a campaign or running a congressional office, isn't so much two or three big things, it's a zillion little things, which if they're done well, you're fine.

Kondracke: One more driving thing. When you were with him, was he ever arrested?

Gugino: No.

Kondracke: Because Eddie, I think, said, or somebody said that if he got stopped, he would say, "Tell the cop I'll give him an autographed football." You've heard those stories.

Gugino: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. In fact, Eddie has done the autographed football thing a few times, I think for himself. I wasn't with Eddie, but Eddie was driving Jack around as long as I was.

Kondracke: So were there any other examples of what you might call recklessness on Jack's part, impulsiveness, like that?

Gugino: Impulsiveness. I'm trying to think now. When he would speak at a dinner, he would always be in the mood and he would always comment. One thing that I liked so much about him is that almost every dinner starts with an invocation, and Jack invariably would comment on the invocation before he started to speak. It was a real compliment to the person who did the invocation, but it would also draw the audience in a little bit. And if it was something that was very moving, a number of times he would donate to the charity of that particular church through one of his speaking fees, totally unexpected, totally not in script.

The number of times that he read a speech might have been, jeez, in the time I worked for him, might have been three or four times in all of the times I saw him speak. It was always out of his bones, out of his bones, out of the marrow of his bones, as he would say. Sometimes he really got caught up in that, and if it was a cause that he really believed in, then he—

Kondracke: He came with a text but didn't use it?

Gugino: No, he would just speak extemporaneously, almost.

Kondracke: No text.

Gugino: No text, with the exception of places like the American Legion. American Legion, when he was talking about weapon systems, he wanted to make sure he got the right ones down. "Let's see. The SS-15s," whatever, the missiles, whatever they happened to be, they might want to know about missile defense and that kind of stuff. But he was always extemporaneous.

One time when we were at a luncheon of the Kemp Forum, which the Kemp Forum is something that Jimmy [Kemp] talks about, but let me tell you about it. This is Kemp Forum. We formed the Kemp Forum, and I'll show you one of the great events that we ever did.

Kondracke: So this is like a fundraising group.

Gugino: Yes. He brought Henry Kissinger to town to speak before the Kent Forum.

Kondracke: This is while Kissinger is Secretary of State or afterwards?

Gugino: Afterwards, I think.

Kondracke: So that cost some money.

Gugino: Didn't cost us anything.

Kondracke: Really? Kissinger did it gratis?

Gugino: Gratis. Oh, yes.

Kondracke: Because Kemp was against Kissinger in '76.

Gugino: Well, he was very differential to Kissinger on this particular occasion.

This is *American Renaissance*.

Kondracke: Yes, read it, got it.

Gugino: This is Lech Walesa. [laughs] That was in Poland. I gave him a copy of that.

Kondracke: That's great.

Gugino: So Jack said, "What do you think of it?"

I said, "Jack, he has trouble reading Polish, and he's not reading English." I gave it to him because I figured it would be a nice shot, you know.

But in any case I have here—let's see what this is. This is the speech. This is the speech from 1980.

Kondracke: This is his convention speech.

Gugino: Yes. I don't know if you saw that.

Kondracke: Is this in *American Renaissance*? Or it may be in *The American Idea*.

Gugino: Yes, it's in *The American Idea*.

This is one of the things we did for his campaign literature. I kind of liked that one.

Kondracke: Yes, that's good.

Gugino: This is one of the first ones. I didn't do that one. I did this one and this one, the two you already have.

Kondracke: Let me ask you about 1980. Or before we go to that, did he talk to you about his ambitions?

Gugino: Yes.

Kondracke: So what did he envision as his career path over time?

Gugino: Well, one of the things that he told me that he was really never interested in was being governor of the state. He said, "Sewers. Ick. I mean literally. Albany? The center of the universe is Washington, D.C., the center of the universe. Why would I ever want to—?"

Now, he also realized that a lot of people thought he was more than a viable candidate for governor, and people looking to elect Republicans said, "Okay, he's got it going." But he made it clear to me early on that he's not going to be disrespectful to the notion, but going to Albany, forget it. Forget it.

So then the question then became, well, what about U.S. senator? What about the Javits seat? And he told me, in his words, that, "I'm already better known than 75 percent of the people in the U.S. Senate, and the Jews in New York City would never forgive me for

beating up Jacob Javits," beating him up politically, talking about politically now.

I said, "Well, I don't know if you have to beat him up. I mean, the guy's pretty sick."

Now, of course, the irony was—I shouldn't say irony. D'Amato won because he ran against two liberal Jews: Elizabeth Holtzman and Jacob Javits. I would contend that if Javits decided not to run, Holtzman would have beat him one on one. But obviously, you're talking about cutting the pie in half and dealing with the other half. I mean, D'Amato had nothing to lose. Jack felt he had a lot to lose in the Jewish community. I thought that was a miscalculation on his part, but who knows. Maybe he was right. I don't know.

He always felt that running for President, he could run from the House, could be James Buchanan of the century, which I guess is the only one who went directly from the House to the White House, if I remember correctly my history. We talked about that, but it wasn't like we were planning it. He had his advisors on that level. [Jeffrey] Jeff Bell was one. Wanniski was another. Dave Smick to some degree was in there. He had his list of advisors. A lot of them were former [Richard M.] Nixon people. [Herbert G.] Herb Klein.

Kondracke: [Arthur B.] Art Laffer.

Gugino: Art Laffer. Art Laffer a lot. Laffer was always so cool. He used to come in here. I liked him a lot. I still like him. I haven't seen him in a while. I see him on Fox all the time. But he was part of that.

In fact, on this thing that I just gave you, let me show you something. You'll get a kick out of this. I was just going through this, and as I say. The whole magazine wasn't about Jack, but I put this thing together. This will tell you a lot. "Young Turks." It says "Young Turks." He's talking to Young Turks. Who's this guy over here?

Kondracke: [Newton L.] Newt Gingrich.

Gugino: And who else? Who's next to him?

Kondracke: [L. William] Bill Paxon.

Gugino: [John Vincent] Vin Weber.

Kondracke: Vin Weber. But Bill Paxon's in this picture. Isn't that Bill Paxon right there?

Gugino: Yes. Right.

Kondracke: Vin Weber looks very different, doesn't he? He looks like a kid.

Gugino: Yes, right there. That's Vin Weber.

Kondracke: Yes, that is Vin Weber.

Gugino: I've been trying to reach him for [Timothy J.] Pawlenty. Do you see him at all?

Kondracke: I do, yes.

Gugino: I've been trying, because I know that he's having his issues. He's having his problems with—

Kondracke: Michele Bachmann.

Gugino: Bachmann, and he's having his problems with Iowa. I know it's Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina they've got to be concerned about. I said, "You know what? Before you know it, you're going to be in New York, and if you don't have something going on in

New York, this is done by congressional district around here, boy, and nobody's doing anything." Even [Willard Mitt] Romney's people, they're collecting money. Romney's people are collecting money in the state, but they're not organized. I'm trying to get a hold of him to let him know.

By the way, before I forget, my oldest daughter asked me to ask you if there's some way she could find a way you could expedite a meeting with Charles Krauthammer.

Kondracke: Sure.

Gugino: Because Beth wants to meet Charles. She lives in Chicago. My daughter lives in Chicago. She is very talented politically, but she's making too much money selling pharmaceuticals for Salix Pharmaceuticals, but she would love to meet Charles Krauthammer.

Kondracke: Okay. Done.

Gugino: If we could do something on that, it'd be great.

Kondracke: Let's talk afterward.

Gugino: Yes.

Kondracke: Super Bowl trips. Did you go on them?

Gugino: I did not. The Super Bowl trips, I know a lot about them.

Kondracke: Tell me.

Gugino: First of all, Jack, more than anything else, was a football fan. I'll tell you how much of a football fan. When we would have an event on a Monday, he had to be home by nine o'clock. Well, that's tough to do if you're in Buffalo and you want to be home in Washington by nine o'clock to watch Monday night football. So I can't tell you how many times we did this, but we made contact with Jack Prior, Prior Aviation. I don't know if he's still alive. He basically sold gas to all of the private airplanes in the airport, and he might have even sold it to the big airplanes, too. I don't know. But in any case, he was a pilot, and I can't tell you how many times he flew Jack home so he could be home by nine o'clock. You've got to cut an event, a dinner event, six o'clock cocktails, seven o'clock dinner, you've got to speak at eight-fifteen. I mean, you're not going to make it home by nine. But he wanted to see at least the second half of the game.

Now, that said, big football fan, obviously. The Super Bowl, he was very, very close to [Alvin Ray] Pete Rozelle, who was former commissioner of the National Football League. Pete Rozelle gave Jack, I think, a hundred tickets a year, gave them, and Jack used that as an opportunity to bring in his friends, Conrad [N.] Hilton and, I mean, fat cats, the Hiltons, some of the Hollywood types, Chad Everett, [Thomas W.] Tom Landry. I mean, Jack knew all of the owners.

In some respects I think he would have been almost as happy being Commissioner of the National Football League as he would be, and he used to talk about it, about, "Why would I want to run for President where by big ambition is—?" He used to joke about it, being Commissioner of the National Football League. That would be heaven on earth. For Jack it probably would have been. But on the other hand, Jack was so into social policy that that was a dead-end job for him. That would be a me-me job, but Jack wasn't about that. Jack was about the other guy.

So the Super Bowl evolved from purely a friendship thing to a thing that basically helped promote his presidential ambitions. I know that they had a couple of fundraisers that were related to it. None of them raise any huge money. Jack and money were not—I raised most of his money here, to be honest with you.

The Kemp Forum was a perfect example. When I first started with him, he was doing fundraisers for fifty bucks. I said, "Where the hell are we going with that? We're not going to do the \$50 fundraisers." They've got to get an awful lot of people to make a hundred-grand, a couple hundred-grand. Even back in 1980, fifty bucks was not a lot of money.

But the Super Bowl became an event where he was able to at least showcase himself and bring people into that. I think he had a PAC [Political Action Campaign] that might have gotten some money out of some of the stuff that they did. He was careful not to be too political. Sharon Zelaska was part of some of that, and I'm trying to remember who else, people who were members of the Kemp Forum.

Kondracke: Did he charter a plane or did he just fly wherever it was?

Gugino: I don't know if he ever missed a Super Bowl. I don't think he ever did, till his last days.

But it served its purpose to bring people in, and I know that they had a couple of fundraisers where they were charging maybe a thousand bucks or something like that, but I don't think that they got a tremendous amount of money. If they raised a hundred grand, that was a lot of money.

Kondracke: What was his problem raising money?

Gugino: He wasn't good at it, didn't like to ask for money. He just didn't like it. I didn't mind it. It was part of the deal. I didn't mind asking. I mean, you don't ask, you don't get. But one of the things that Jack appreciated was the fact that there's some people that were better at it than he was. It was not something that he liked to do at all. He realized, when he was running for President, he had to go to a different orbit. You need a lot more zeroes at the end of those checks than we were getting. For example, the Kemp Forum we're talking about here, brought in about \$150,000 a year. Well, back then, that was a lot of money.

Kondracke: This was your invention, though?

Gugino: Yes, Kent Forum was mine.

Kondracke: Was it here or was it down there?

Gugino: Here. Yes, it was \$1,000, 500. The predicate of it was that we were going to limit the size of this—"It may not be for you. It may

not be for you." There's \$1,000, there's \$500, there's \$250, but there's going to be limited numbers of people. But you get certain things for \$250, you get a little bit more for \$500, and \$1,000, you get the full boat. But you may not be able to afford the 1,000. Well, we had as many people on 1,000 as we did for 250, just about. More people at 250, but the bottom line was you sold exclusivity. The first event we had was Henry Kissinger, and that's why I can't believe I don't have that here.

So the people who were on this Kemp Forum thing that I showed you, each one of these people were responsible for a minimum of \$10,000. That's the way I did it. And then we had a separate one for the Jews. The Jews didn't want to be part of that. They wanted to have their own. So we have an organization called the Kemp Coalition, just for Jews. Their idea, not mine, to be honest with you.

Kondracke: Who were his major Jewish supporters?

Gugino: [Nathaniel] Nate Benderson, Benderson Development. He's probably a billionaire here. Leonard Rochwarger, deceased, but Leonard Rochwarger was formerly, with Jack's help, ambassador to Fiji. [Donald A.] Don Sherris, who is an attorney. [Lawrence] Larry Levitt, who owned a radio station here. [Daniel A.] Dan Roblin of

Roblin Steel. Irwin [A.] Ginsberg, Dr. Irwin Ginsberg, also deceased, very world-famous ear, nose and throat guy, also a big antique car collector. I helped him on a couple of cases with his cars and his people working for him. He was very grateful, very grateful.

Kondracke: So who did you bring in for that?

Gugino: You know what? They didn't want anybody. They just wanted Jack. They just wanted Jack, and that was good for about thirty-five or forty grand a year. Twenty-five people at a thousand bucks apiece.

Kondracke: Okay. Let's talk about the '80 convention. You were there.

Gugino: Yes.

Kondracke: Did Jack think that there was a serious chance that he would be Vice President?

Gugino: Yes, he did. He did. We sent stuff to delegates. We didn't do it in a really sophisticated way, in my opinion. We put articles.

There was a [Robert D. S. "Bob"] Novak article, in fact, if I remember correctly, about how there was speculation that Kemp was one of the people, and we put that article underneath the doors of every delegate, the New York delegation, anyway.

I was staying at Dearborn, the Dearborn Hyatt Regency, and the very first day I was there, I saw [Joseph] Joe Margiatta, who was the Chairman of the Nassau County Republicans. He's dead now, but he also did some time for steering money, Republican money, into his pocket rather than to the party. But Nassau was one of the few places where it was iron control. He was very, very strict. You couldn't raise money without his permission. You couldn't *raise* it without his permission. He financed all of the campaigns himself, and therefore total control, Margiatta.

And I see him talking to this big gangly guy. There was a reception on the very first day at the Dearborn Hyatt. He's talking to this guy, and I'm saying, "Who the hell is this guy? I know who Margiatta is, but who's this guy?" William [J.] Casey. Now, William Casey was soon to be head of the CIA, but he was one of Reagan's close confidantes, close confidantes. Here's the conversation. I'm listening to the conversation because I'm probably about from here to that door away, so I could pretty much hear everything, and it wasn't

like I was so close that they thought I was staring, but I could hear them.

“Bill, I’m telling you, Bill, Kemp doesn’t help you that much. In fact, he doesn’t help you at all. The guy who helps you is Bush. Bush, I’m telling you.”

Casey, “You sure of that? Really? You sure of that?”

“I’m telling you, I know. I know.”

I thought to myself, son of a bitch. I remember a number of times when Jack was asked to go to Long Island to speak and he said no. One of Jack’s problems was that, of course, he never thought of himself as a favorite son of New York State, and he didn’t operate that way. So he said no to a lot of stuff in New York, Syracuse, Utica, Binghamton. He could have spoken at those places, and they would have loved him, and a lot of people did love him, but they didn’t like the fact that he basically nixed them from going out to other places, other states. So Jack didn’t have the cachet in New York state that he could have had, in my opinion, and he certainly didn’t have it with Joe Margiatta. And I know that George Bush worked Margiatta big time, big time.

Here I’m looking at this, and I report back to Jack and I said, “I’ve got some good news and some bad news. The good news is I

see Margiatta talking to Bill Casey about the Reagan ticket. The bad news is you ain't part of the conversation, buddy."

"Oh, don't worry about it. Don't worry about it."

Well, he worried about it. He wanted it. Depending on who you talked to—and there's some references to it in the Novak book—he came reasonably close, reasonably close, but it wasn't to be. A lot of people thought that Jack was a pain in the ass. He was not an easy guy to control. He was a guy with his own agenda, in a manner of speaking, and I don't mean that in a pejorative way, but he was not a guy that a lot of people felt was a team player. He was off on his own. And that came back to haunt him, I think, a little bit, in discussions like this.

Kondracke: What about the rest of the New York delegation?

Gugino: Well, Jack did not have a big following in Syracuse or Rochester. You'd think he was the upstate guy, but Jack didn't do a lot to cultivate that. He could have done a lot more. He just didn't see himself as a guy who was going to be leading the New York delegation at the convention; didn't come up. He just sort of felt that there were other places in the United States that were bedrock Jack Kemp areas: Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas. He was big in Texas and

they liked him there, and he figured, "I'll just go where people like me." Yes, well, okay.

Kondracke: I mean, he was so attentive to the district and to Buffalo and then ignored nearby.

Gugino: Not the state, though. He wasn't really part of the state. He wasn't a leader of the New York state delegation really. He was a member of it, he cooperated, but he never tried to take leadership for it. The stuff that he fought for, he fought for. As I say, he did not want to be the king of sewers as governor, and he didn't want to be remembered as the guy who delivered federal largesse to Buffalo, even though he did, even though he did. As I say, a lot of the downtown buildings, the rapid rail transit.

Now, the rapid rail transit I think he got under Nixon. The rapid rail transit was actually approved under Nixon. But that became sort of a double-bladed axe, because it was half-built. It's like, "Congratulations, Morton. You have a half a car." You know? Thanks, I think. It serves a purpose, sure, but it doesn't serve the purpose of a whole car, and there wasn't enough money for a whole car. Okay. So you've got mass transit and you've got flood-control projects and you've got Santa Maria Towers, that's a lot of the stuff that

congressmen get, and that's okay, except that that's not what Jack wanted to be remembered for.

He wanted to be seen as a guy attentive to the district, but had a view that was bigger than the district, and that Buffalo would benefit if America benefited, that if interest rates came down and taxes were low, Buffalo would benefit. He wanted additional incentives. Ah, okay. We'll use enterprise zones. We'll create enterprise zones where the taxes are even lower, where the interest rates are even lower, where the utility costs are even lower, and we'll green-line rather than red-line these area. He was very—

Kondracke: Did he convince the state legislature or the state government to go for enterprise zones around the state?

Gugino: Believe it or not, he had some discussions with Mario Cuomo about that, and his staff, and they liked that idea. Andrew [M.] Cuomo liked that idea at HUD, believe it or not. [William J.] Bill Clinton liked the idea. He didn't call it enterprise zones. He called it something else, opportunity zones or something like that. It changed a little bit and there are different versions of it here and there, but not as comprehensive as Jack had planned. He worked closely, believe it or not, with [Charles B.] Charlie Rangel on that and [Robert] Bob

Garcia, who is from the Bronx. He would go to the Bronx to speak, and he urged Reagan to—in fact, Reagan did speak at the Bronx during the 1980 campaign.

Jack did have some influence with Reagan, and Reagan definitely liked Jack a lot. He liked him, but he was also pragmatic on the number-two thing. He realized that there was some impediments that he wasn't going to fight. When I saw them together—and I saw them together several times here in Buffalo—they were telling stories, they were very, very friendly to one another. I mean, he was sort of like a protégé of his. And maybe Reagan was like that with a lot of people, but he was certainly like that with Jack, very comfortable, very comfortable.

Kondracke: So at the '80 convention, there's a demonstration.

Gugino: Right.

Kondracke: Who demonstrated?

Gugino: Boy, I'm trying to remember the guy's name. Jim [Edwards]. He was a guy who had a foundation that used the foundation to buy the signs, the Reagan-Kemp signs, which were just like the buttons,

by the way. I wasn't supposed to know about it, but I knew about it. Everybody knew about it. They wanted to be sort of clever about it. "It's not us. It's being done on our behalf." Yeah, right. Fine. Please.

But the demonstration—I'm trying to remember now. In fact, I think he wound up eventually being on our staff. Sharon knows his name. Jim. Maybe it's on here.

Kondracke: Who all demonstrated, though? I mean, was it New York?

Gugino: No, a bunch of people from suburban Virginia. They weren't people from western New York, no. They could have been, could have been. I mean, I remember this so distinctly. We had all these signs, and it was all done at the last minute. They had no money. They had no money. So I went to a friend of mine and I said, "I need some money for the convention."

"How much do you need?"

"I don't know, five grand, ten grand, something like that."

"What's it for?"

I told him. "You'll get paid back, I promise you. You're just going to have to trust me on this."

Sharon Zelaska asked me, "Who do you know that can help with the money, pay for it?" I wasn't part of the whole other thing, but I didn't give a crap.

Kondracke: Were you on the floor?

Gugino: I was out on the floor. No, no, I was out on the floor. I paid for the signs.

Kondracke: So tell me about the speech and the tie.

Gugino: Well, what happened was that I had this video camera. I think it was a video camera that I'm videoing Jack on and then playing it back so that they could see how he was in his hotel room, I mean no teleprompters. He was given, I think, fifteen or twenty minutes of teleprompter rehearsal, which is nothing, and Jack does not read well off the teleprompter. But that aside, we're doing this and holding the camera, and he says to me, "Jeez, that's a nice tie you got."

I said, "Thanks."

He says, "No, really, I like the tie."

I said, "Thanks again."

He said, "No, really, I really, really, really like the tie."

I said, "Jack, what, are you trying to tell me something? You want the tie?"

He says, "Actually, yeah."

I said, "Fine." I took it off. "Here. Here you go. Here's your tie." And that tie was that thing that I just showed you. Here's the tie. Here's the tie. The tie, he wore that that night, the night of the convention. My little contribution to history.

Kondracke: And he didn't give it back?

Gugino: No, never did get it back.

Kondracke: Did he wear it often?

Gugino: He wore it in my presence several times. I didn't make any big deal about it.

Kondracke: Did he remember that it was your tie?

Gugino: I did. I remembered it. But the tie did not have any emotional appeal to me. If anything, it had more of an emotional appeal to see it on him, you know. But he was funny because he was

so particular with certain things. Like he wanted a certain type of a hairspray, like industrial-strength hairspray, Command hairspray, heavy-duty Command.

When Reagan came here for that meeting with the longshoremen that I told you about, the event that we had afterwards was at the Buffalo Port Authority, and a big crane that says "Port of Buffalo" in the background, and Reagan was speaking without a coat on, and his hair was blowing left and right, this very big wind coming off the lake. Jack's, I think, maybe one or two hairs maybe were out of place in the windstorm, because, I mean, he had that stuff down to the point where it just didn't move.

That picture, by the way, I felt [Michael K.] Deaver-like. That picture was on the next day in *The New York Times*, Port of Buffalo, *New York Times* front page. I didn't pick out the—I helped, but I picked out the location. They wanted to be at the Port of Buffalo. Then they got the crane. They moved the crane right in back of him, so it says "Port of Buffalo" right in back, sort of like not quite the Statue of Liberty in the background, with the Port of Buffalo crane, not exactly the same thing. But I thought it was kind of cool, you know.  
[laughs]

Kondracke: So you stayed till '84.

Gugino: I stayed till '85.

Kondracke: So why did you leave in '85?

Gugino: I was offered a position as Senior Vice President at Children's Hospital, Buffalo, which I initially refused, and then they said, "Well, why are you refusing?"

I said, "Well, I'm going to work with this guy who might be President of the United States."

"Well, what if we do this? If you need to have a leave of absence, we'll give you a leave of absence, and if he doesn't make it, you can have the position back. In other words, we'll take the risk for you leaving, but you'll come back and then you won't have to worry about losing anything."

Because in the back of my mind I felt Jack can run for President, but other people are going to, too, and the idea that he's going to be successful, as successful as he was as a congressman, it doesn't necessarily translate on the campaign trail, as I found out, as friends of mine who were with him in Iowa told me that he just wasn't going over really well in Iowa. He was talking the gold standard to farmers, who were saying, "Yeah, but what about hogs? Tell us about hogs."

Tell us how we're going to sell more hogs." Jack wanted to talk about the gold standard to people who wanted to sell hogs. It wasn't going over real well.

So, you know, campaigns are funny things. There's a chemistry, there's a biology to them, and some people know how to tune in, and some people like Bill Clinton are just magic. They just know where they are, how to be where they are, how to be part of the fabric of where they are, and how people can relate to them. Now, Jack had that ability in western New York, but it just didn't translate outside of western New York. The proof was in the polls. I mean, I think he wound up with 5 percent of the vote or something like that in Iowa. He did not work Iowa.

I later worked Iowa for [Malcolm S.] Steve Forbes in '96 and then again in 2000. That was an entirely different operation, but Steve Forbes worked it the way it should be worked, and we talked about the flat tax and all of that stuff. But it's a different animal. The caucus state is a way different animal. The same thing with New Hampshire. That's also a different animal too. It's different than western New York.

Kondracke: Did you work on the '88 campaign?

Gugino: No, I did not.

Kondracke: Why?

Gugino: Busy doing other things and he had other things. I helped him on a couple of things when he came back to Buffalo.

Kondracke: How much contact did you have with him from '85 to—

Gugino: A little bit. A little bit. When he declared in '88, I had suggested that he use the [Theodore] Teddy Roosevelt site here in Buffalo, called the Wilcox Mansion, where Teddy Roosevelt became President of the United States here in Buffalo during the Pan American Games when [William] McKinley was shot, and Jack was always quoting T.R. I said, "Well, why don't you begin your campaign where Teddy Roosevelt began his presidency." Because the place looks like the White House. It's got these big columns. It's in downtown Buffalo.

I'm trying to remember who came. Gingrich came, Weber came, and a bunch of other guys came for Jack. He had this stupid announcement at the Executive Inn at the airport, which I thought was dumb, and that's when I decided, "You know what? I may not be the

smartest guy in the world, but I think I know what works politically and what doesn't because of my training here." I didn't get trained in Washington, but the last time I checked, not that many people get elected in Washington.

Kondracke: How did Jack take your decision to go to the hospital?

Gugino: His jaw dropped. His jaw dropped. I mean, I could see the shock on his face. Then he caught himself and he was very gracious. He said, "You know, I sort of feel like my offensive coordinator is leaving my staff to become a head coach someplace." It was a really nice thing to say. It was a very nice thing to say, because I was a little bit ambivalent about how he was going to take it.

I said, "Jack, I think I can do everything I could do for you here, but even more so if I'm not on your staff." I didn't tell him that I didn't think he was going to win or I didn't know if he was going to win. But I just felt, with me and my wife and my children, that if he didn't win, where the hell was I going to be? I'm going to be in Buffalo working for a guy who used to be a congressman, now he's not a congressman anymore, because he pretty much cast his fate to the wind on that. Unlike some staffers in Washington who just go from one office to another office to another office—you know how that is—I

mean, I'm going to go to LaFalce? I mean, I don't think so. Henry Nowak? I don't think so. Then what?

So the situation with Children's Hospital became an opportunity to run my own show. We brought in a Gastrointestinal Center with the help of Jack, came in, a couple-million-dollar grant from AID [U.S. Agency for International Development], and I think it was two or three million bucks. He came in for that announcement and we chatted, shook hands, hugged, and all that stuff.

Kondracke: Would you say you were friends with him?

Gugino: I would say I was friends, but I would not say I was anywhere close as Eddie Rutkowski was. Eddie Rutkowski was his best friend, and he would say that. In fact, when I first accepted the position, I said, "What do you want me to do?"

"Well, the first thing you've got to do is get Eddie Rutkowski elected," because he had been appointed county executive in 1979, but he was running in November of '79.

So I said, "Well, what happens if Eddie Rutkowski doesn't get elected?"

"Well, he's my best friend. I'm certainly going to take care of him."

"I don't know if I like the sound of that. In other words, if he doesn't get elected, he might have his old job back, is that what you're saying to me?"

"Well, might, might. We might have to do something. I don't know exactly what he's doing, but he's going to get elected. He's going to get elected."

So that was a little disconcerting, a little bit. But you take the risk and you pays your money, you takes your chances.

Eddie and I became good friends and have become even better friends ever since the incident that we've talked about [Gugino's recent serious illness]. He's a wonderful guy. He's just a classy guy all the way. He's one of the Fighting Irish, Rutkowski, Fighting Irish of Notre Dame, number 40. He's a good, good man.

But that did become an issue, not one that I was terribly concerned about, but survival is an instinct that's pretty primal, you know, pretty primal. But as it turned out, I'll tell you the one thing that Jack gave me a lot of latitude on, and that was he had told me that he felt relieved, when I had taken over, that he didn't have to sort of look over my shoulder, even though there was some little backbiting that would go on in the congressional staff. There always is. I never let it get to me. He'd say to me, "I hear a lot of crap. Don't worry about it. You only have one constituent: it's me. You're doing fine.

You're doing a great job. Thank you." So being popular with the staff or being popular with other people in Washington was not my ambition. Being successful and being popular with Jack was my ambition.

Kondracke: Did you have trouble with the people in Washington?

Gugino: Maybe one or two.

Kondracke: Over what?

Gugino: Turf. I mean, everybody wants to stick their nose into someplace where they don't know what the hell they're doing, and a district office runs quite differently than a Washington office does, and a lot of people in the Washington office might feel that they have the sophistication to do anything. Well, when they went to Iowa as chiefs, they didn't know what the hell they were doing, because you don't run campaigns out of—people who are reading *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post* every day in their offices in the Longworth [House Office] Building, tell me what you know about running a campaign. How do you coordinate volunteers? How do you get volunteers? How do you coordinate volunteers? How do you do media

buys? How do you raise money to do media buys? You tell me that. Come on, tell me. You're the smart people.

I didn't know any of that stuff when I started, but I know one thing, that it was like being thrown into the pool saying if you can't swim, you're going to have a problem. So I learned it right away, what to do, what worked, and I asked a lot of people, "Hey, what works for you?" So I learned it.

I've been always so grateful that Jack gave me the opportunity to do a Santa Maria Towers. I grew up a block away from there. That was my old neighborhood. It was a pleasure and an honor to be a part of that, and the fact that it had mushroomed into this literally national political scene was triple bonus points. But even if it hadn't been that way, it would have been an honor for the people who are living there now, who are living in safe housing, and something that the Italian American community wanted. And as I said, Jack being the only non-Italian that ever was recognized for his accomplishments there, that makes you proud. He gave me that opportunity to go as far as I wanted. "Watch your step, watch your step, but you go as far as you want."

Kondracke: What did he mean by "watch your step"?

Gugino: Well, don't go overboard. There are people in this kind of a position, not surprisingly, want to become the congressman. That was not my ambition. I figure, you know what? Working for the President of the United States, President Jack Kemp, that'd be fine. That'd be fine. I don't need to replace him if he becomes President. No, that never really crossed my mind. There were some people who thought that that was on my mind. Some people thought that was on my mind, but that never was on my mind. There was never an article about me, "Russ Gugino wants to be a congressman," or anything like that, because I never fed that, because I was so inspired about maybe going on to a different stage with him. That would have been great.

Kondracke: Did you have any idea what kind of job in the Kemp administration you'd liked to have had?

Gugino: Domestic counsel, the domestic counsel. I'd like to work right in the West Wing. I've been at the West Wing a couple of times, touring it. Friends of mine who worked for Reagan, a couple of guys, were right there working with Deaver and Ed Meese, who I've met a number of times, very nice fellow. They had wonderful opportunities, but a lot of that is being at the right place at the right time, literally, literally at the right time.

I would love an opportunity to talk with—I mean, I still think Pawlenty’s got an opportunity. It’s still early, and I’d really like an opportunity. I’ve called Vin Weber a couple of times.

Kondracke: I’ll take care of it.

Gugino: But I mean, “Hey, look, buddy, if you don’t want to, that’s okay.” I’ve done stuff with [Sarah L.] Palin. Palin’s people called me, and it’s funny because they—this is last year. No, this is 2009, I think. They had an event in Auburn, New York. Do you know where Auburn is? Auburn is east of Rochester but before Syracuse, and it’s the home of William [H.] Seward, who is?

Kondracke: Secretary of State under [Abraham] Lincoln.

Gugino: Under Lincoln. Right. And the reason why he’s such a big deal in Auburn is because he’s from Auburn and that he’s the guy who purchased Alaska for the United States for 2 million dollars or 5 million dollars or whatever the heck it is.

So I get a call from the Palin people, and they said, “We’d like your help. We’d like to have you bring some people from Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo to meet Governor Palin and Todd [M. Palin].”

I said, "Sure. Why?"

"I just want to say thank you," which is kind of nice, "for all the work that you did for the campaign." We busted our asses for the campaign, but the campaign people were not as smart as they thought they were. Typical, typical. Trashed the candidates afterwards. I mean, I hate that. You know what I mean? But, anyway, we brought them.

She was so nice, so gracious, and Todd was a very soft-spoken guy. So I said, "Well, maybe I'll work with them. Maybe not." I don't know if she's going to run. She may not even run.

But I've got the disease, the political disease, and I think, you know what? Maybe I can help Pawlenty. I know I could, absolutely. And I did that with [John S.] McCain [III], because this entire state was all [Rudolph "Rudy"] Giuliani country, so I was running against the tide.

Kondracke: What were you for McCain?

Gugino: I was the Western Area Coordinator for him. I was a delegate to the convention. I probably got him 30 percent of all of his delegates for the state, of all of the state.

Kondracke: Russ Gugino, thanks so much.

Gugino: Thank you. It was a privilege.

[End of interview]