

JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with

RAUL J. FERNANDEZ

February 28, 2012

Interviewer

Morton Kondracke

JACK KEMP FOUNDATION
WASHINGTON, DC

Morton Kondracke: This is a Jack Kemp oral history project interview with Raul Fernandez, now a technology entrepreneur in Washington, DC and co-owner of the Washington Wizards [National Basketball Association team] and the Capitals [National Hockey League team], once an intern and staff member of Jack Kemp's and later a good friend. Today is February 28, 2012, the interview is being conducted at Mr. Fernandez's offices in Washington, DC and I am Morton Kondracke. Thank you so much for doing this.

Raul Fernandez: Thank you.

Kondracke: When you think of Jack Kemp, what immediately comes to mind?

Fernandez: You know, a rare combination of passion, energy, enthusiasm, creativity, I always think of something I heard him say at many points in our relationship, and our relationship was one where I was an intern, where I was a staffer, where then I went off and started my company and he joined my boards. He made a lot of money, we made a lot of money together, we became closer friends, did a lot of travel. But there is always one line which I try to remember all the time in business and in life, and that is being worthy of winning. Winning, not necessarily at all costs, not just for the outcome, but being worthy of being a winner and what that meant. He really did live that completely. He lived that on the football field, he lived that in his political life, in his family life, in his business life. I think that was probably the biggest impact that he had on me, that phrase and how that phrase actually was lived and how I got to see that.

Kondracke: Tell me about your discussions about that idea.

Fernandez: It evolved over time. When I worked for him, first I started in the mid-eighties as an intern, [Henry A.] Kissinger Commission. The reason that I was actually brought on is that I was bilingual, there were some documents in Spanish that they needed some quick translations on, so I had a summer job. As I saw him take on different challenges in the Congress, because that then led to a part-time job that led to a full-time job, whether it was housing or education and vouchers or at the time Contras, it was always around an idea or a set of ideas or ideals that he was championing and it was the championing of those ideas or ideals that was important, not beating the other side. And I think that's so different from everything we see today, unfortunately, in politics and business and in sports, in many ways. That I got to see that just in different chapters in the different challenges that he had in his different roles, role as a Congressman, as a leader in the House, as a candidate aspiring for the presidency or for the nomination of the Republican Party and then ultimately a little bit at HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development], although I didn't spend much time there, but then just as a private citizen trying to make some money on one side, but also influence the debate, continue to influence the debate as well.

Kondracke: So did you have specific discussions about what it meant to be worthy of winning?

Fernandez: Yes. You know, along the way, discussions that were in some ways tactical, right at the moment when we were growing our business and when we were going from a private company to a public

company, he was on my board and I remember him asking one time "How can I help? Can I make an introduction?" And the way that I would use him, we did a lot of work with Fortune 500 companies and at the time, this was the dawn of the Internet, and obviously everything Internet and Web was a boardroom discussion. Companies didn't have websites to interact with their partners or their customers. They were building them, high-level discussion, and we were getting a lot of that work. One day he said, "Look, can I do intros?" and I said, "You know what? What you're great for is everybody loves to talk to you. Whenever we pitch against IBM [International Business Machines] or Anderson Consulting Companies that were 20 times our size and we're a finalist, and I think we're close, I'm just going to ask you, I'll give 10 bullet points, I'm going to ask you to call the CEO [Chief Executive Officer] and say 'thank you for letting us compete. I'm on the board of this company. Thanks for considering us.' You don't have to pitch us any more, just a thank-you for letting us be at the table." And he did that, all the time, and we won a lot of them. We were good, so we were worthy of winning on our own, but he did that a lot. It was small examples like that, and I think in politics at all times, hearing him either comment on or actually being an active participant, he wasn't about beating up the other guy or beating up the person that had a message that was 100 percent opposed to his. It was about really debating the ideas and winning the war of ideas, not beating up the opponent, the messenger.

Kondracke: Did he actually say that there are various ways of winning and this is what I choose to do, or this is what you ought to choose to do?

Fernandez: No, he just led by example. It was really a living set of examples. It wasn't just one, it was constantly leading by example. That's probably one of the biggest imprints that he had on my life.

Kondracke: So is worthy of winning his phrase or your evaluation of what he was all about?

Fernandez: I think it was my evaluation of what he was all about. As you know, he loved to speak, so I'm sure he brought those words together at some point, but it was more my evaluation of what he was about. And you know, that led to frustration, I remember at times, where they wanted him to be more aggressive as a campaigner, more negative, and that just wasn't in his DNA [genetic structure]. He couldn't even fake that. It was down to his core. I think it was part of his makeup. It wasn't just something that he bought into.

Kondracke: Because in all the interviews we've done, I've never heard that phrase before. So it must be something that you've come up with about him. What would you say are your standout experiences with him?

Fernandez: I think I got to see him at various points in different backdrops. I was handling [House] Appropriations Committee work, Foreign Operations [Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations] during the whole Contras get funded, Contras don't get funded, military aid, humanitarian aid, all this stuff, and we took some trips to Central America and there were some tense moments in those rooms with the various leaders, and I just remember seeing him elevate his game with the president of El

Salvador as an example. And having a frank exchange and really just seeing him take it to the next level. I think he was just like a lot of great athletes. When they're challenged, they automatically go to that next level. So that was one example. Countless hours in the boardroom where he had great feedback, great input. And then private time. The first professional boxing match I ever went to I went to with him, in Las Vegas, and we got to fly around the country together either for going on business. The one thing I miss, he was one of the guys that I could at any point say, "Hey, we're in the playoffs, we're playing in Miami, game's tomorrow night. You want to meet me in Miami?" and he'd be there, he'd show up. He'd be my traveling buddy to show up to these. [I] miss a lot of that. We got a lot of private time, especially from 1999 on, is where we spent the bulk of the time. The rest of the time was time that I spent working for him in different chunks.

Kondracke: He was on your Proxicon board.

Fernandez: Yes, he was on my Proxicom board and my Object Video board.

Kondracke: Let's go back. How did you first come to work in his office?

Fernandez: I want to say it was the summer of '83, '82, my dad worked at the Inter-American Development Bank, and there was a national Republican, kind of Hispanic event. My dad always encouraged me to go to these events with him.

Kondracke: You were in high school.

Fernandez: I was in high school, I used to dress up in a suit, come downtown, meet him, we'd go somewhere and go home. I met Joe [O.] Rogers, who was Jack's then-chief of staff when he was, I believe, chairman of the House Republican Conference [Committee]. And Joe said, "Hey, I need a kid"—to my dad's friend—"I need a kid that will do an internship, speaks Spanish and has some"—I think at the time—"computer skills," because I think this was the first time Compaq computers were being rolled out on the Hill, so it was going from those mainframe or mini-computers to what became ultimate desktop computers. My dad's friend said, "Hey, come here." Got connected with Joe Rogers, got an internship, and that's how it all started. And it started in the summer and then it started part-time during the school year.

Kondracke: So you met Joe Rogers at this Hispanic—

Fernandez: Met Joe Rogers there, yes. And then Joe Rogers was working at the Republican Conference.

Kondracke: Right. And so then when did you meet Jack?

Fernandez: It was '84, that summer of '84.

Kondracke: So you come start working at the Conference, and what does he walk in one day and—

Fernandez: No. So two offices, Conference office was in Longworth [House Office Building], his office was in Rayburn [House Office Building]. I went over there to the main office one day, got introduced to him, tried to throw some Spanish words around, we talked for a little bit—

Kondracke: *He* tried to throw some Spanish words around.

Fernandez: He tried to throw some Spanish words around.

Kondracke: How was his Spanish?

Fernandez: It needed some work, and we never did finish working on that, so—that was also the time of Kemp-Kasten and all of those different, Bradley-Gephardt, all of those different tax bills. And all of a sudden at the Conference we started ordering some new equipment, some new hardware, and I got put in charge of deciding what to bring in. And then with John [D.] Mueller, who was drafting the legislation for that wave of tax reform legislation that Kemp was authoring, I saw him doing by hand calculations, right? Single, married with one, married with two, with all these different permutations of calculations. I said, “Look, we can probably program this into a spreadsheet,” which was a big deal at the time, new. “And we can have a bunch of these just spit out within hours.” So I spent a ton of time with him, basically putting the framework of the plan on these computers and then beginning to spit out different changes and modifications here, modifications there. So I spent a lot of time working with John, who obviously was working very closely with Jack.

Kondracke: How much time did you spend with him when you working for him?

Fernandez: '84-'88 I was going to college full-time and working part-time, so I actually didn't finish until '89 at the University of Maryland, and I literally would take classes late at night or early in the morning, and it was just because a) it was interesting work and b) it was it was great pay. For somebody who hadn't even finished their college degree I think I was making like thirty, forty thousand dollars a year. And it was really fascinating. In school I started in engineering, went to economics, wasn't that challenging. I could actually read the stuff and show up for the tests, but I was living a great education working on the Hill. On the Hill, for me at least one of the things that I find interesting is three or four people, especially on the House side, have to know every issue under the sun, and they have to then describe it to somebody else, who then has to hopefully be articulate enough to describe it to somebody else. So that challenge of learning, learning how to learn, learning how to communicate, hopefully communicating the right way to somebody who can then communicate to somebody else, all that was great for me, and especially with a guy as charismatic as he was, was terrific.

Kondracke: How did you move from being an intern to being a staff member?

Fernandez: Attrition. People started leaving and all of a sudden one person left and they said, "Hey, somebody needs to cover the Appropriations Committee stuff. Do you want to do it?" And I said, "Sure." So I just kind of moved up because I focused a little bit of

time and attention on the policy stuff, and then somebody left, and said, "Well he can cover it." I came off the bench.

Kondracke: So covering it meant you were actually the legislative—

Fernandez: Yes, LA [Legislative Assistant] for it. So I went Foreign Operations guy on the Appropriations Committee.

Kondracke: Was that your first job?

Fernandez: Yes, that was my first job. So I was an intern, before that I was a lifeguard, a lifeguard for a whole summer. That's actually still the best job I ever had, the least stress. [laughs] So like a year and a half of internship, different projects, I worked a lot on Hispanic dropout rate issues, did research, did some op-eds for him, wrote some speeches, and it was a great group of, you know, Michelle [K.] Van Cleave, and John and ultimately [J. David] Dave Hoppe and all those guys. So it was a relatively small, Richard Billmire, a relatively small group. But as guys moved on, especially as we were getting close to his race, there were some people that went off and did other things, I got a chance to step up.

Kondracke: What year was it that you moved on to the staff?

Fernandez: I think it was '86.

Kondracke: '86. First you're doing Foreign Ops. You are the legislative assistant for Foreign Ops.

Fernandez: '86-'88, Foreign Ops, yes.

Kondracke: Right. But Michelle was there, so she's the chief aid for Foreign Ops, right?

Fernandez: Yes, military, yes. She was doing more on military defense.

Kondracke: And Richard, was he there?

Fernandez: Richard had left, yes. Richard had left.

Kondracke: Oh I see. So you took Richard's job, basically.

Fernandez: Yes, Richard had left.

Kondracke: So you took Richard's job, basically, Richard Billmire.

Fernandez: Yes. And so both of them were doing military defense. Then [Sven] Kramer came in for a while, that was the other one.

Kondracke: What did you do with the Kissinger Commission?

Fernandez: You know at the time it was the tail end, and it was just reading some documents and translating some stuff for him. That was kind of the hook in the very beginning, because he was on it, but it was at the tail end of that.

Kondracke: And how many trips to Central America did you do?

Fernandez: I did, with him, I think I did like three trips to Central America, but he did a lot more, because there was a lot of traveling then.

Kondracke: So what did you do when you traveled with him to Central America?

Fernandez: We went to the Contra camps on the border, we met with the various presidents that we were supporting at the time, we met some opposition. And it was a group that included some of the conservative think tanks at the time, some of the conservative leaders at the time, like Howard Phillips, etc. It was mainly to go see first-hand what these guys were doing, and see the operations. It was interesting to be—at the time I'll always remember this Contra camp and these guys were under a tent and they had these TRS-80 computers, these Radio Shack computers, like one of the original Radio Shack computers, and they had databases of troop movement and inventory and all this stuff on there, so it was eye-opening. It was fun.

Kondracke: This was in Honduras?

Fernandez: Yes.

Kondracke: Were you his translator?

Fernandez: Yes, I did a lot of translating, yes. I did a lot of translating on that trip, but a lot of the guys were good at English as well and/or they had their translator. But I did do a lot of translating.

Kondracke: You mentioned meetings with the president of El Salvador. What happened there?

Fernandez: All I remember is a heated exchange, and I remember walking out of it saying how he calmed everybody down and was able, again I don't remember the substance of it, but it was a moment where he kind of took command and was able to get everybody back on the same constructive kind of page as opposed to the bickering that it was evolving into.

Kondracke: Because the issue, if I remember correctly, with El Salvador was, depending on who the president was, it wasn't [José N.] Duarte was it?

Fernandez: I think it was Duarte.

Kondracke: It was Duarte. Because Duarte, as I remember was kind of a moderate, and he had right-wing death squads to contend with and he also had left-wing revolutionaries. But you don't remember—

Fernandez: I don't remember, but it was Duarte, yes.

Kondracke: Any memories of Contra camps and stuff like that besides the computers? And Jack's interaction?

Fernandez: With Jack's interaction it was just looking at the equipment, looking at the computers. We had those guys in our office a lot—[Adolfo] Calero, I forget all the names now—

Kondracke: [Enrique] Bermúdez?

Fernandez: Yes, Bermudez, and the military guy, right? Bermudez was the military guy?

Kondracke: Yes.

Fernandez: They were in a lot and he was a big advocate, and because he was on that committee when it was humanitarian and military aid he was able to be a good advocate there.

Kondracke: What other jobs did you have? You go from an L.A. for Foreign Ops, and what other jobs?

Fernandez: We carved it up. It started as intern, kind of tech assistant, helping John part-time, and doing some of the policy issues that I cared about, which is especially Hispanic and Hispanic dropout stuff, I'd just add content or help if there was a speech coming up, etc. And then it was the rules were less strict in that time period, so when he ran for president, prior to Super Tuesday, I went down to Miami and worked out of Miami for the campaign. So I took some time off, and we had a lot of financial support from Cuban-Americans that were very supportive of him. So I went down, I had two offices that we had down in the Dade County area. Staffed those with the campaign folks and was there until he dropped out shortly thereafter.

Kondracke: So was your job to be a fundraiser, or—

Fernandez: On the ground a lot of it was just interaction with the big money guys, the big Cuban-Americans like Jorge Mas [Canosa] and all those guys that were big supporters of Jack's.

Kondracke: And you're a college kid.

Fernandez: Yes, yes. It was fun. It was being thrown completely in the fire. It was great, best education I could have ever had.

Kondracke: And who were you working for in the campaign?

Fernandez: At that time, who would have been running [it]? I don't even remember who was running the campaign.

Kondracke: Well [Charles R.] Charlie Black [Jr.] was—

Fernandez: Was running it all, but regionally, down there, you know, that was close to the end and we had a presence. In fact Jack didn't even come down. The kids came down a few times.

Kondracke: Was there a Florida primary that you were preparing for?

Fernandez: Yes, Florida primary.

Kondracke: Which he never got to.

Fernandez: He never got to.

Kondracke: Right. Okay, after the campaign?

Fernandez: After the campaign everybody knew that their job was over because obviously he had announced that he was going to retire. One of the most interesting—I was in the Congressional office. Oh, yes, he had given up the Conference office, so we were all in just now one office, we were just in the Congressional office, and who called him? A New York Senator, literally the first call when we walked back in the office was, when he pulled out of the race, and I remember Dave or somebody saying “Oh, well, he wants to congratulate him for all his great work but he also doesn’t want him to jump into the New York race.” And I forget who it would have been.

Kondracke: Well, let’s see. [Daniel Patrick] Moynihan was a Senator, and [Alfonse M. “Al”] D’Amato was the other Senator.

Fernandez: Right, it must have been Moynihan, yes. And so everybody knew at that point, which I guess was like March, April, that he was out, that come December we were all out of jobs, and so I stayed in the office, literally the last one out, in like December, I remember closing the door and taking my last box out of there. Sharon [Zelaska] had left already. And then in that time period he was obviously short-listed and then selected to go to HUD, and I went to HUD for a very, very brief time. And for me it was, when you have four people or five people working with somebody and then you have a thousand people working with somebody, just that inter-personal relation wasn’t there and I felt like doing something else.

Kondracke: How long did you spend at HUD?

Fernandez: Two months.

Kondracke: And what did you do there?

Fernandez: I was in the administration side of it. It was kind of the boring, technical operations side of it, special assistant to the, you know, assistant secretary for administration or something non-descript.

Kondracke: So there are some great stories that I've heard about your technical genius in the office. What do you remember about that besides the spreadsheets for John Mueller?

Fernandez: He and Joanne [Kemp] and the family had great summer parties, staff appreciation parties, and he had great footage of himself as a football player. So one time, this Super 8 movie that they were trying to project, and something happened, something broke, and they didn't have a take-up reel, basically, at the back of it. So they had the reel that had the footage but no take-up reel.

Kondracke: So it would just run out onto the floor.

Fernandez: Right. So I grabbed two, I don't know, paper plates, bent them, put some stuff in between them, stuck it in there and made a homemade take-up reel for the thing, and that got me some infamy. [laughter] I'm not that actually gifted on putting stuff together like

that. Anyway that was one of the most appreciated moments, so that Jack could see himself and hear himself.

Kondracke: So you computered up his office, though.

Fernandez: Yes. Yes, it was at the dawn of actually the desktop, you know? Today you and I can connect from any one of these devices to a printer and print something. There you literally had to go take your drive over to something that was connected to a printer and that was your print server. So it was good.

Kondracke: As I understand, you helped John Mueller go from a Selectric typewriter, Memory Selectric typewriter to a computer. Tell me about that.

Fernandez: Everybody. Because we were fortunate in the sense that we had a decent budget and so I was able to talk to different people and say, "Okay, so what do you use? What do you need?" And then I would order the right equipment for them, and that's where John went from literally a typewriter to what looked like a sewing machine, because literally there were probably two trash cans with a handle and that was your desktop. Pretty comical in size. And now this [indicating smart phone] has probably 10 times the computing power that that has.

Kondracke: So, you weren't ever his driver or anything like that?

Fernandez: No.

Kondracke: Did you ever go driving with him?

Fernandez: Yes. I'd rather drive than him because he was a little scary as a driver. [laughs]

Kondracke: Yes, tell me about that.

Fernandez: Again, mainly on the road after work life we'd be in different places, whether it was skiing at that private place that he owned a house at, which was fabulous—

Kondrache: In Vail [Colorado], right?

Fernandez: No, no, the name will come to me. It's literally a private mountain, and they owned a house there, and he took me once and there was no one on the mountain. It was completely private, really high-end. Yellowstone, the Yellowstone Club is what it was called. We had a great time. But he could do multiple things at once. I always remember he'd have three Blackberries sitting on the desk at any given time. [laughs]

Kondracke: Why did he need three Blackberries?

Fernandez: Well I don't know why he needed three of them, but he had three of them, so it was always three phone or phones-slash-Blackberries.

Kondracke: What kind of a skier was he?

Fernandez: Very good. Very good skier.

Kondracke: Was he reckless?

Fernandez: No. He wasn't reckless with me. He was aggressive, but he wasn't reckless. We played tennis a few times over the course of that time. He loved to be active and he had a ton of energy. And when he wasn't active he was reading, so whether his body was active or his mind was active, something was always active with him.

Kondracke: Right. So tell me about the staff. How cohesive would you say the staff was?

Fernandez: I think pretty cohesive as an organization. There was a lot of respect, I think, for the ideals and people were drawn by his charisma and his ability to uniquely move the ball forward in a different way. He really did reach out across the aisle; he really did engage, he actually liked engaging with people that didn't agree with him, found a ton of common ground with people. And people were attracted to him. I talk to a lot of Democrats who remind me all the time that they miss him a lot, in this debate and in general. He was just a fabulous, fabulous guy, and unfortunately that DNA is kind of lost right now.

Kondracke: How did he interact with his staff? Did he know everybody's name?

Fernandez: Yes, he knew everybody's name. You know, demanding, he'd want stuff, a little bit impatient. You know, again, when you're

doing a million things you want things cued up for you, and he definitely did want that. You had to be ready, you had to be ready.

Kondracke: Or?

Fernandez: Or he'd yell at you.

Kondracke: What would he yell at you and say?

Fernandez: He'd just say, you know, like we were in a meeting and there was an amendment and I didn't have the right copy of the amendment and he's like, "Where the hell's the copy? Where's the right copy? This isn't the right copy." He was good. It was also—it was never condescending.

Kondracke: Even as a college kid or as a high school kid, how did you feel? That he valued you?

Fernandez: Oh, yes, absolutely. He liked people and he liked being around people that kind of shared his vision or his mission, and he enjoyed it. Ultimately he likes teams. Quarterback is probably one of the most important positions in all of pro sports, so he likes teams. So over the time, as you know Michael Jordan was our partner here, spent a bunch of time with Michael Jordan and Jack Kemp. One of the most memorable dinners I ever had was with Michael [J.] Jordan, [Daniel C.] Dan Marino [Jr.] and Jack Kemp and I in New York City, and Jack and Jordan going, "There's no quarterback in basketball. Basketball's not that great of a game." And Jordan giving it back to him. And he was obviously a lot older than we were, but he was

almost transgenerational in terms of, especially with sports, how he could connect with people, and he was also that way from an ethnic or economic bounds. He could connect, unique way of connecting.

Kondracke: Michael Jordan was a partner in Proxicom or—

Fernandez: No. He was one of our partners here.

Kondracke: At the Wizards.

Fernandez: At the Wizards, yes, for a brief period of time.

Kondracke: What would you say the level of the competence of his staff was? Did he ever have to fire anybody because they weren't competent?

Fernandez: During my period there I do not remember anybody being fired. I think people were very competent in their silos, whether they were legislative director or had a certain policy portfolio or they had a certain staff function, press secretary, whatever, they all were experienced. I got the sense, my feeling was that people got along and part of that was fueled by the tone that he set.

Kondracke: One of his former chiefs of staff, [David M.] Dave Smick, said that he would assign different people to do the same job. Did you experience that?

Fernandez: No, and I know Dave now. We didn't overlap then.

Kondracke: Did you notice that pattern?

Fernandez: Yes, yes.

Kondracke: And what was that all about? Why did he do that?

Fernandez: I'm not sure if it was, "I want to make sure I'm getting all of the ideas and not just one filter of the idea," I think that probably had something to do with it, that he really wanted to understand all sides of the issue. And look, he really respected being prepared. I remember non-proliferation treaty, [James Danforth "Dan"] Quayle, and some comment he made about how well-prepared Quayle was for this hearing, and just respected Quayle for having dug down on it, so he really respected being 100 percent prepared, being ready, briefed with all points of views. So that's probably where that came from.

Kondracke: Smick thinks that he was insecure and that he wanted to maintain control and that was the reason.

Fernandez: I didn't see it that way. There is a lot of curiosity in him. I felt like it was a flat organization, because it wasn't as if I had to go through someone to go to him. I could actually just pop in and say something, and that's kind of unique, in terms of cultures. I think he liked that. That can be frustrating, though, if you're trying to structure a set of initiatives or keep some order. I can see how some guys could get a little bent out of shape about it.

Kondracke: So how well-organized was he?

Fernandez: I think as a minority member that was championing ideas, he was very well organized. Had you put him in a—and he was in the leadership but in the minority part of the leadership—could that have translated well once you're in charge and running legislation? I don't know. I got the sense he enjoyed less the administrative stuff and more the ideas. Obviously the ideas have got to go through administration in order to become laws, but he was more the ideas guy than the administrative guy, the "Okay, here's how I'm going to get x number of votes to put this one amendment over the top, which is going to move. Less that level of detail, more the higher.

Kondracke: When he was trying to get support for a bill, how did he work that?

Fernandez: Interpersonally, he'd reach out to people, he'd say, "Can you read this? Can you get back to me? Will you consider joining me on this?" He cared a lot about—I remember stuff we did with [Walter E.] Fountroy here, with housing, the early opportunity zones, empowerment zones, public housing stuff. It'd be one-on-one, it'd be one-on-one.

Kondracke: Did you get involved in that, in enterprise zones?

Fernandez: Just on the tangent.

Kondracke: Somebody described the office as frenetic.

Fernandez: I think his intent, like if you walked into any office, the office is a reflection of the leader, and, again, he was unique. He had

a ton of energy, right? Not a lot of those guys had or even have today that level of energy. And he had a certain amount of star power, whether it was because he was a former football player or because he was articulate and a rising star, yes, that did lead to frenetic.

Kondracke: Somebody said he was like a scrambling quarterback.

Fernandez: Yes, he definitely did. He definitely did. He enjoyed it, he lived off of it. Again, he liked movement and moving things forward, not necessarily sitting back and thinking about how to do it.

Kondracke: How did he fasten on a cause or a movement? Clearly taxes were a big deal with him, tax reform, but he had all these other things as well, the Contras, democratic capitalism, enterprise zones. Where did all that stuff come from?

Fernandez: That's a great question. That's a great question. I think a lot of it came, I don't know how curious he was or how in college, before college, and then as a player, you hear stories of "read a lot of books," etc. But I just remember, especially from when I worked for him and even afterwards, just devouring tons of books, history, a ton of stuff. And that, I think, provided spark, it provided imagination, it provided an interest in something in particular. That then led to the initiatives that he got involved in.

Kondracke: So you're traveling with him and you're on an airplane with him, he's doing what?

Fernandez: He's reading a pile of newspapers, he's got a couple of books that he's marking up, in fact—

Kondracke: Carries them in a satchel?

Fernandez: In a bag, he's got a bunch of books that he's marking up and circling. In fact, he left a couple of them in my house in Florida and I find them last year, and I was reading through his notes, which was great to see.

Kondracke: Do you remember what the books were?

Fernandez: It was a Winston Churchill book, and he had just finished it, and he had dog-eared it.

Kondracke: He read the whole thing?

Fernandez: Yes he did. [laughs] I saw notes at the end of it, so I guess he did, or maybe he skipped to the end.

Kondracke: Was this the history of World War II, one of those books?

Fernandez: No, no. This was a shorter book, and I want to say it was a different take on—it was a shorter biography or some sub-biography of a period during the War. It was a paperback, it was pretty short. Or we'd turned on, he loved, obviously, sports, football, number one. For me as a dad, one of the things that I saw him, and [James P.] Jimmy [Kemp] was a child when I started working there, was just his desire to come back and watch games and that always stuck for me.

No matter where he was he'd come back to watch his kids play on the weekend, so I've tried to follow that as well. Unfortunately I haven't been able to not miss many games. He was very passionate.

Kondracke: Would you say that, and I take it he worked hard.

Fernandez: He worked very hard. Even after Congress, I'll give you a great example. I forget what year it was, but it was the first time that we got vouchers passed here in the District [of Columbia], and we actually had a Republican-controlled—

Kondracke: School vouchers.

Fernandez: Yes. So if you were in an under-achieving public school in the District, this program let you take your Opportunity Scholarship and go to a private school. This is really at the beginning of the whole charter reform program here. And I was very involved, with [Joseph E.] Joe Robert [Jr.], and a whole bunch of other people, Cardinal [Theodore E.] McCarrick at the time that we were trying, we had these center-city consortium schools, these Catholic schools that had capacity; we had these failing schools, we wanted to create it. And obviously here the city council is the Congress, so it was a legislative vote, and Jack was obviously very into it as well. And we tag-teamed different Members, it was going to be razor-thin, even though we had a majority, for some reason some of the guys left town, and it was going to be a razor-thin vote, and he and I tag-teamed Harold [E.] Ford, Jr., together, and we both talked to Harold before the vote and we talked to Harold literally right before we voted, and it passed by one vote, and it was Harold Ford, Jr.'s vote that passed it. And that

actually led to a great friendship with Harold and I, and Harold and Jack and I, and it was all around that one issue. So a lot of his causes led to friendships, which was kind of unique.

Kondracke: And what was it about him that made people want to be his friend?

Fernandez: You know, I introduced him to so many people along the way, and he was just a fascinating human being, like somebody who thanked me the other day, Julius Genachowski, who's now the FCC [Federal Communications Commission] chairman, was a college roommate of Obama's in law school. We had a dinner about a year and a half before Jack died, our wives and just some Chinese place, and he was like, "God, what a fascinating guy." He was blown away by just how, not just intelligent, passionate, but just a terrific human being to interact with. He had that impact regardless of what your philosophy was, what side of the aisle you were on or where you came from.

Kondracke: What would you say the biggest influences that Jack had on you are, beside visiting your kids', making sure that you were at your kids'—

Fernandez: Yes, you know it's the power of ideas, it's the power of not just ideas but again this whole concept of being worthy of winning, and not playing to win at any cost, but wanting to win for the right reasons, and letting that be your beacon in terms of how you make smaller decisions.

Kondracke: Was there ever a point where he was really tempted to win at any cost?

Fernandez: Not that I saw. I never ever saw that. I think some people were frustrated that he didn't get angry or that he didn't have sharper elbows or he didn't counter-punch harder.

Kondracke: John Buckley wanted him to go negative.

Fernandez: Exactly, and it just wasn't him. It wasn't him in his DNA. Some of us can fake it, right, but that just wasn't how he was made up.

Kondracke: So you know this is a conundrum with me. Here he is in the most violent sport there is, right? Contact sport, people clobbering each other all the time, and he wouldn't clobber anybody. How do you account for that?

Fernandez: Whether it was wanting to be more of a finesse player intellectually than what you are afforded to be as football player, I don't know. That's a great question. I don't know.

Kondracke: Because he was competitive.

Fernandez: He was, he was. I do think, as I look back on it, and at the time I thought, "Oh my God, how can you?" I thought he under-used what should have been the original Captain America of politics. Football, quarterback, to a certain extent, yes, he loved it, promoted it, but I thought the mix could have been a higher-octane mix of that,

because it was just such an incredible story. And I don't know if he was, not embarrassed, but for whatever reason, it didn't take on, at least in my view, as high a level, especially in his run, as it should have been. You couldn't have scripted a better candidate, right? In terms of having that career and then having the career that he had legislatively before he ran.

Kondracke: That is one of the curious things, that here you have, he's the author of '81 tax bill, he's got all these other activities, foreign policy, '86 tax reform is his tax reform, he's a former football player, star football player, and yet his image when he ran was not as exalted as it probably deserved to be. How do you account for that?

Fernandez: I think that's maybe where he had some level of insecurity and maybe that's what drove him to read so much. That he was being seen as a jock and not as the legislator, as the intellectual leader of a movement or a reform movement, and I think he had a hard time balancing that. In those shoes, I would have grabbed all the jock I could and thrown it in as much as possible. Because that's what sells. It's the American Dream, it's an incredible story. And for some reason he was uncomfortable with reaching too far into that part of his world. I don't know why.

Kondracke: Were you ever involved with the sort of the brain trust, the Jude [T.] Wanniskis or the Irving Kristols or any of those people?

Fernandez: No, I was too young and too late, because a lot of that stuff had happened already, with Kristol and [Arthur B. "Art"] Laffer and all of those guys.

Kondracke: Right. So what circle were you involved with as time went on?

Fernandez: Mueller, Hoppe, [Richard] Billmire, less extent, Van Cleave, somewhat Kramer. That would have been the—

Kondracke: That was the staff. And what about during the Empower America era?

Fernandez: I was just a contributor.

Kondracke: But you were a friend.

Fernandez: Yes, yes. Just supported them as they were launching it. Got to know Paul [D. Ryan] there.

Kondracke: Paul?

Fernandez: Ryan. He continued to have a non-stop passion for the policy side, and people around him were always around him in large part because of the policy side. So as we had resources to help him continue that on, we were happy to do that.

Kondracke: Do you consider him a mentor?

Fernandez: Absolutely, absolutely. By just being able to be so close to someone who was riding so high and being able to see all of, you know, it was for that period of time a lifelong internship for me in the

sense of just coaching and feedback. I always remember one board meeting, he's like, "God, I've been in a lot of meetings with [Lawrence J.] Larry Ellison and a bunch of other guys. You ran this better than any of those guys did." I mean that sort of feedback is terrific, no matter how well you do, it's awesome to get that sort of feedback from somebody like him. We evolved into just having a great friendship, we sold the business, got more comfortable, had more fun, but absolutely, in terms of influencing my life, other than my family, my parents, he had the single biggest influence. There's no teacher, there's no business mentor, you know, I had I had a lot of business mentors, I had a lot of business partners, they're still my partners, like [Theodore J.] Ted Leonsis, but he touched me at different points, pre-meeting my wife, being married, post-kids, all that stuff.

Kondracke: Let's walk through that. So you leave HUD, this is '89, presumably, right? So then how does your relationship go after that?

Fernandez: Lose track for a while. I went to a defense contractor in the marketing department, started with a small group of programmers, grew that, and then left and started my own company in 1991, and took it public in 1999 and sold it in 2001.

Kondracke: Are you back with him in 1991?

Fernandez: No. I'm back with him somewhere after Bush. After HUD is when I got back in touch with Empower America, started supporting Empower America.

Kondracke: How did that happen?

Fernandez: I don't remember how that happened. We reconnected, I started supporting Empower America, I asked him to come on the Proxcom board. He came on the Proxcom board very early.

Kondracke: How early?

Fernandez: 1995.

Kondracke: It was still private?

Fernandez: And it was a great board, and we had Ted Leonsis and him and some private equity guys. They all have extremely fond memories of those years. He was very active, would be at every board meeting. Again, everybody had different roles. Jack would do certain things for us, Ted would sit with our marketing guys and sit for hours going over our strategy, the technology guy would look at our technology. So we had a great group of different individuals that not just sat around the room and heard the reports but actually got their hands dirty.

Kondracke: And Jack's job was to intervene with customers.

Fernandez: Yes, Jack did great with meeting customers, mainly reaching out and trying to level the playing field for us in terms of high-level decision-making. He'd come to our offices, we had probably 500 people here in Reston [Virginia], he'd come when we had these celebrations and he'd hang out and talk to people. He was very active.

Kondracke: This was his first board, as I understand it.

Fernandez: I believe it was, yes. And then he joined Oracle. Yes, this was his first board. Because he joined Oracle afterwards.

Kondracke: How did he come to join Oracle?

Fernandez: Through [Thomas W.] Tom Weisel, met Larry Ellison. And he was on Oracle's board for a while.

Kondracke: Sharon says that he learned how to be a board member from you, basically. And he became a great board member from—

Fernandez: Yes.

Kondracke: So if he was your mentor, what did you teach him do you think, or what did you do for him?

Fernandez: I think he got to see my dream and he got to live my dream. Literally \$10,000 that I put into the company in '91 and sold it for half-a-billion dollars, and he got to see that whole ride and he got to see the buying of the teams and experienced all that stuff and all the fun things. There were some highs and lows along the way, but it was mainly, it was a lot of work but it wasn't like oh, product failed. It moved up into the right, not necessarily always at the same pitch, but it moved at a good pitch.

Kondracke: And how often would you talk to him during those years?

Fernandez: Oh, gosh, at least once or twice a week, whether it was to get together for something or to plan a trip or to have him call somebody or to follow up on a discussion. A lot.

Kondracke: Did he give you advice on how to grow your business, or was it mainly—

Fernandez: Whenever there was a certain set of facts, fully briefed, he would absolutely give his opinion and thought on it. Yes, he would chime in.

Kondracke: Did he understand budgets?

Fernandez: Yes, yes, he understood budgets. And having worked with him for so many years, when you work for somebody you kind of figure out how they learn or how they take in information, so I was pretty good at giving him content that I knew he'd just process really quickly. I think that's one of the reasons over time that we worked very well together.

Kondracke: Did he understand tech stuff?

Fernandez: Yes, yes he did. He wasn't at the code programming level, but he understood databases and websites.

Kondracke: As friends, did you ever talk to him about quarterbacking?

Fernandez: About leadership and the huddle and what it takes to lead. I think one of the things over time that I always enjoyed with him and

others like him is trying to draw parallels in business. Early on one of my challenges was I had some really good all-stars, but they weren't great human beings, they would be abusive to staff, or it would be hard for people to work for them, a lot of turnover under them, and initially, I'm like, "Wow, they're an All Star, I can't get rid of them." So I talked to them a lot about chemistry, teamwork chemistry, and over time we made some good and bad decisions in the teams that we owned, but trying to draw some of those lessons—

Kondracke: These are the sports teams and—

Fernandez: Sports teams and also any team. One of the things I've learned, and tell when I mentor guys is, "Look, I don't care how great an all star, if that guy is a prick and it doesn't align with your values, just get him out, get him earlier rather than later, because you're going to get him out anyway later, and you're going to cause yourself a lot of damage along the way."

Kondracke: Is that something Jack taught you?

Fernandez: Yes, we had a lot of discussion about it and about how to deal with people like that and what's the right decision-making, so there was a lot of discussion about that. And some of it I learned up front, and some of it I didn't, I made the mistakes, and then I fixed it, I figured it out later and then I fixed it.

Kondracke: Did he ever talk about any pricks in his background?

Fernandez: No. You know, he was unbelievably positive. That's the other thing, which was—

Kondracke: No Daryle Lamonica?

Fernandez: Yes, it's really wild how, and maybe I'm filtering it and maybe he did and I just blanked it out. He was unbelievably positive.

Kondracke: [Robert J.] Bob Dole?

Fernandez: He had great stories of interactions with [James A.] Jim Baker and having some heated discussions there and being passionate. He'd be candid about people and what he thought about them, not in a mean way, like [William W. "Bill"] Bradley —

Kondracke: Bill Bradley?

Fernandez: "You'd ask him what time it is, he'd tell you how to build the clock." I remember him saying that. And he wouldn't tell you the time. It was interesting, because I remember McMillan was the only other professional athlete, there weren't a ton back then—

Kondracke: In Congress.

Fernandez: In Congress at the time. I think [Charles T. "Tom"] McMillan was there, Tom was there. I think that may have been the only one. I think there was this love-hate relationship with other jocks that turned to the Senate or the House, because at the time it would

have been McMillan and Bradley and Kemp, I think would have been it, in terms of pro athletes up there—

Kondracke: What did he tell you about Jim Baker?

Fernandez: When they had a heated exchange, I guess in front of Bush, and Baker I think called him something, and he went at Baker and somebody had to break it up, which is pretty wild because I had never seen him physically lose his temper like that. He always had great stories, he always had great stories. And, what was funny for me is he'd introduce me and I'd always want to listen to my introduction because I didn't know how my history was going to change. He would change it, you know, that I came during Elián González, he's like, "And he came on a boat," and on and on and on. [laughs] So he'd take some liberties with the past.

Kondracke: Did you talk about politics?

Fernandez: Yes. I was growingly frustrated with the Republican Party over time and the choices that we had, very frank discussion about it and about what was good and bad. Yes, so we did.

Kondracke: You're there during the period when, what about '96, what role did you play in '96?

Fernandez: Very limited, I think we just gave money. And that was such a quick, it was September to November or August to November.

Kondracke: Were you there at the Convention?

Fernandez: Yes, I was there, I was at the Convention. His son did that great introduction to him. And in 2000, when was the last live prime-time convention, what year would that have been? Two thousand, 2004.

Kondracke: I thought they were all prime-time conventions.

Fernandez: On the networks. Last time it was carried at 9 pm on the networks. I'm pretty sure it was [George W.] Bush, yes. So I spoke at the Republican Convention, and Jack was there, and Jack was on Larry King doing commentary, and my timeslot, it was supposed to be 8:15 and things were running late, so it actually made it to prime time. And I remember this because it was the last time that they were airing it on CBS, NBC, the networks. It wasn't one of the cable-only channels. And I spoke and I saw Jack there before and after, and he [was] talking about the American Dream. He said, "Raul Fernandez who spoke earlier tonight has lived the American Dream" and all this stuff. So we crossed a lot. And he was always a huge promoter in terms of wanting to introduce me to people and meet different people, he was fabulous.

Kondracke: What did he think about the direction of the Republican Party?

Fernandez: The negativity, I think when you think of the antithesis of being worthy of winning, it's kind of what we're at, and he was very, very down on it. I think much more now than then, very much down on it

Kondracke: This is in what context, do you remember?

Fernandez: As the whole pendulum swung to the right, the whole compassionate piece that he felt so strongly about and defined as a compassionate conservative just got tuned out, right? His frustration with the Party, the leadership, the candidates, even how—

Kondracke: Do you remember anything specific that he said?

Fernandez: Let me think about it a minute and see if I can come up with something. But just in general we'd talk about the tone and how negative it had become, and I remember how civil, even though they'd argue they'd be civil and they'd get stuff done. Not like today. I remember [Daniel D. "Dan"] Rostenkowski, chairman of the Appropriations Committee at the time, at two in the morning we're in a markup session—

Kondracke: Ways and Means.

Fernandez: Yes, Ways and Means. For whatever reason I was in that meeting as well, because I remember them saying, Jack and Rostenkowski were going at it, and he's like, "Just split the difference on this, split the difference." And they solved it, they got it done. He definitely over time just got more and more fed up with both sides, polarization.

Kondracke: What about Latinos?

Fernandez: He thought he was one. [laughs] He thought he was one and he thought it was a missed opportunity for the Republican Party not to have taken advantage of a gap in time on immigration issues. Obviously he's out of step right now. His ideas, the Julian [L.] Simon ideas of more immigrants make us stronger, completely out of step with that side of the Party. But he believed it, he absolutely believed it.

Kondracke: The [Peter B.] Pete Wilson thing in California,

Fernandez: Yes.

Kondracke: Did he talk to you about it?

Fernandez: Yes. I remember he and [William J. "Bill"] Bennett — right?—went out pretty strong on that. He would stand up, he would pick a fight if he needed to with his own guys. He didn't have an agenda, it was what he believed in.

Kondracke: What would you say the deepest conversation that you ever had with him was about?

Fernandez: One of the most interesting ones was when Cardinal McCarrick came back from the Vatican for the election of Pope Benedict [XVI], and I had a private dinner that I'd won at a charity auction, and Cardinal McCarrick, I wanted to talk to him because of this incredible once-in-a-lifetime thing, selecting the successor to [Saint] Peter. So we had dinner, it was Jack, Cardinal McCarrick, me, and another mentor of mine, Mario [M.] Marino. It was an incredible

open dialogue about religion and about the whole process of selecting a pope. I'll always remember Cardinal McCarrick saying, and I remember saying, "Look, we've all been in meetings, in important places, but we haven't been in the meeting you just came from ever, and so what was it like?" And he said, "It wasn't an election or a selection, it was a discernment. It was a discernment of what the Holy Spirit had already ordained and it was trying to discern that, and that was the right answer." It was just a fascinating night of trying to get as much as you could out of—

Kondracke: What was Jack's—

Fernandez: He was taken by it. He was asking a lot of questions, he was listening to it. And the Cardinal is just a fabulous guy. I told the Cardinal that I'd actually placed some money on him and his odds had gone up right before the election. But it was one of the most memorable interactions about religion, how the institution evolves itself, all the majesty of it, some of the technical aspects to it like how things actually—how you go through the voting, how the doors are closed, how there's the older cardinals that you can, beyond a certain age, they're still there but they don't vote, but there is a little bit of time where they get to have their say. So he was just going through the whole thing. It was just a great night.

Kondracke: Did you ever talk to Jack about his own faith?

Fernandez: Yes, not deeply. We were close, but there were certain areas where we—it was close—but he was a man's man in terms of not super emotional, like there was always a little bit of a barrier there,

which I respected completely. So it wasn't any kind of Bible study type of interaction, it was more values than theology, and it was more actions than anything else.

Kondracke: Some people have said that he did maintain this distance from lots of people, that either it's a quarterback thing where you can't be too close to your players, but I've been told that it was even there with some family members. Is that the case?

Fernandez: I think he felt uncomfortable getting a little bit too close, for whatever reason. At the end, he had come down with his diagnosis. Literally right before that a friend of mine had come down with cancer as well. In fact a mutual friend of Jack was at the hospital, at Georgetown [Hospital] seeing our friend Steve Vermillion, who literally almost died, leukemia, and then he got a bone marrow transplant and he's doing okay now. And then I had another friend, younger guy than me, that came down with mesothelioma, so here I had three close friends that all of a sudden got sacked by cancer, and so it was horrible. This young guy had three guys my kids' age, nine, four and six, now, back then, three years ago. So I had an extra desire to tell him what he meant to me, so any time that I did see him while he was sick I would make the point, but I could always see that he didn't want to go [there], and I wanted to push it because that may have been the last time I could have said it. So I learned unfortunately during the death of two great friend, don't waste a minute, tell him how you feel.

Kondracke: How did Jack—

Fernandez: And Jack listened, but not a lot of feedback. It was more taking it in and not a lot of feedback. He came off the campaign, I saw him Wednesday before Thanksgiving, Wednesday afternoon before Thanksgiving. I invited him to—Mark [R.] Warner has a lunch at the Palm after we play basketball for three hours at G.W. [George Washington University] a bunch of old guys, and then we go to the Palm [Restaurant] and just have steaks and drink all afternoon. So I asked Jack, “Do you want to come? We’re going to play basketball.” He said, “You know, my hip’s really hurting me. I’m going to do something on Fox tonight, so I’m going to go home, shower, shave, come back, do Fox, and then I’ll probably stop by.” He called me later, he didn’t stop by. He’d been seeing our team doctor for what was his hip pain, and I think that Friday he went in, the team doctor said, “You know, I’ve given you two cortisone shots, you should be feeling better by now. Let me go do an MRI [magnetic resonance imaging].” He did the MRI and apparently just lit up everywhere, and he said, “Look, I’m not an oncologist, but you’ve got to go to an oncologist right away.” The team doctor called me and he said—

Kondracke: This is [Benjamin S.] Ben Schafer?

Fernandez: Yes. “Look, you say whatever you have to say to him as soon as possible because this doesn’t look good. It’s everywhere.” That’s when it started.

Kondracke: So Ben Schafer told you that he told Jack this.

Fernandez: Yes.

Kondracke: Do you have any idea how he took it?

Fernandez: How Jack took it?

Kondracke: Yes.

Fernandez: I talked to Jack the following week. He told me and I said, "Look, you've got to fight this, you're going to fight this." For whatever reason I didn't—

Kondracke: Tell me the context of his telling you.

Fernandez: He called me up and he said, "I've got cancer, it's spread, we're trying to figure out what to do, it's pretty spread." And then I just started, "Well, you're going to beat it. Whatever you need I'll help you." And I knew at the time that Larry Ellison was helping, everybody was just trying to figure out what the best approach is. And I just gave him a pep talk, and he said, "No, thank you. That's great, I'm going to beat—" I don't know if others were like, "Oh, no, that's horrible" and they weren't giving him the flip, because he made a comment like, "Thank you. That's how I feel, that's what I'm going to do." Maybe it was wishful thinking, but it just came out that way, I wasn't going to be like, "Okay, this is our death talk." I got to see him a couple times at the house while he was there, and in the week before he died, we were playing the Rangers, playoff game, and he was strong enough, and we actually had all set up for him to come to the owner's box to watch that game, because he wanted to get out. He wanted to go see a hockey game.

Kondracke: This is how long before he died?

Fernandez: This is days, literally days before he died. And that morning everything was still on, and by the afternoon Jimmy said, "Look, he just can't. I mean he wants to but he can't." And he died that Saturday, yes, four days later. I remember when he couldn't talk, because I'd go see him and I'd talk to him, and say, "Jack, when you beat this thing we're going to go down to Miami and have a great time." And he goes, "Oh, God, I need that."

Kondracke: So what would you say his strengths of character were?

Fernandez: He had a value system that he believed in that he was true to, a set of ideals that obviously evolved over time, but that really influenced decisions, and it was about fairness, it was about compassion, it was about opportunity, it was about celebrating everything that is great about having a chance. I think a big thing as an athlete is, you know, there's a lot of great athletes, Jeremy Lin [of the New York Knicks] is a great example, right? But until you get that chance to shine. And he got the chance to shine and he so appreciated that chance to shine in sports that I think he took it in terms of immigrants coming to this country, their chance to shine, whether it's to get a job and have another generation go to school, well that's there shining moment. And he just believed that, in an unbelievable, optimistic way.

Kondracke: Idealist.

Fernandez: Idealist, absolutely, yes.

Kondracke: What foibles did he have?

Fernandez: I think the organization thing. I mean, he was a scrambling quarterback, right? So I think that was one of them. I think that, I wouldn't say it's a foible, but I always thought he could have done it again. Why not take another run at it? And so there was a certain frustration that some of us had said, "Look, you know."

Kondracke: Tell me about that.

Fernandez: Just to run.

Kondracke: This would have been '96.

Fernandez: Yes. Run again.

Kondracke: Yes, because Bush-one had to run for reelection in '92, so it would have been '96.

Fernandez: Yes, yes.

Kondracke: So did you actually go to him and urge him to run?

Fernandez: Yes, yes. And he just didn't have it. You could tell. It just wasn't in the belly to play another game. It was frustrating because—

Kondracke: What did he say?

Fernandez: Immediately, "Nah, nah, no way, no way." Just completely, knock it off, don't even talk about that. Especially now, when you think about all the stuff that's going on today, had he been healthy and a little younger, he could still be in the game literally right now.

Kondracke: Somebody described him as being vain. Was he vain, about his personal appearance and about his image and stuff like that?

Fernandez: He wanted to be presentable at all times, and his famous hair. I wouldn't say vain. I'd say it's somebody who respected himself and wanted to look good and presentable at all times and didn't want to let it, but not vain.

Kondracke: What accomplishments was he proudest of?

Fernandez: His kids. And his grandkids. He really lived through their success, he lived through their journeys, he lived through their stories, he lived through their games. There was a peace, it was irreplaceable that joy that he got from that. And yes, he had other stuff that was side by side, but it wasn't swappable. It was unique.

Kondracke: Was he a football adviser to his boys? I mean, they were quarterbacks.

Fernandez: You know, when he was with his kids I didn't spend much time other than with Jimmy in meetings and more in the grown-up part of Jimmy's life, so I don't know how he did as a dad. I remember

telling him when he was sick, I said, "You know, you have to pull through because you have to teach Alexander how to throw a ball." I said, "I got you to teach him, I'll get Michael Jordan to teach him a little basketball and I'll get Alexander Ovechkin to give him some tips on the ice." He got a chuckle out of that. Yes, I don't know that piece.

Kondracke: Do you have any idea what he might have most regretted in his life?

Fernandez: That's a great question. No, I don't. I think about the decisions that he made that were kind of at the moment, more thought out. He enjoyed every minute of it. I never saw him down. You know, he'd be tired and maybe cranky, but I never saw him, like, in a funk, which is unusual, for any human being not to go through.

Kondracke: Were you part of the Super Bowl gang?

Fernandez: Yes.

Kondracke: You went to many?

Fernandez: Went to many.

Kondracke: What happened at those events?

Fernandez: You know it's funny, because we were the youngest couple there, right? My wife and I would joke that it was the Lawrence Welk party. And it was funny because we had just gotten married,

and it was the dinner in the ballroom with all the friends, and another set of friends of mine, an ex-football player, [Max] John Kidd, from Buffalo also, came over and he's like, "Let's go to the Maxim party and this party" and I'm like, "I'm at the anti-Maxim party. I'm at the Lawrence Welk party." Anyway, Jean Marie [Fernandez] said, "Look, I'm going to hang out here for a while. Why don't you guys go?" We ended up going and the traffic was so bad, we never got to any of the parties. We spent the whole night in a car never getting to anything, so it would have been better to stay at the Lawrence Welk party. But yes, they were great, and he always got me tickets, and I haven't gone to a Super Bowl without him yet. I haven't gone back to any of them. It was just a wonderful weekend where he just got to reconnect with old friends. He was beloved by [Paul J.] Tagliabue, and Roger [S. Goodell] now, and he was also an incredible promoter. What I appreciated about him was that all these people knew me, and I didn't know them. It's because he was proud of our relationship and our friendship and me. So it was terrific. He was my mentor.

Kondracke: So he took you around and introduced you to people you didn't know, right from the get go. What was the earliest Super Bowl you went to? How old were you?

Fernandez: That's a great question. I don't remember.

Kondracke: But you went several. many, you were a regular.

Fernandez: Oh, yes. I went to many.

Kondracke: What's the Larry Ellison connection? How did that develop?

Fernandez: I don't know how he got on that board originally, but he got on that board and he was part of a lot of the serious committees that were doing a lot of work as Oracle was buying companies. I think actually that may have come together from Tom Wisal. And Tom ran Montgomery Securities, which became part of Bank of America, which then got spun out. And as an example, 1141

003Tom did my secondary, so we got taken public by Alex Brown, which became Deutsche Bank. And then Tom spun out, and Jack was actually influential in getting Tom, because it was a toss-up and Jack said, "Look, Tom's a good friend" and you know. Networking and promoting his friends, and they did a fine job. But I think it was through Tom that he met Larry.

Kondracke: And what other board was he on?
come about?

Fernandez: Alexis Herman got him on that board.

Kondracke: Secretary of Labor.

Fernandez: Under Clinton, right? So that's who got him on that board. He was on that board for a while. He was on a couple of others. Some of them didn't work out. And there were some where he'd bring me the idea, and I'd be, "No, don't get involved in that. It's

not a business. It's just not worth reputation." I don't remember all of them.

Kondracke: Okay, what have I not asked you about?

Fernandez: You covered a lot. Yes, you covered a lot.

Kondracke: Any memories that leap out at you that you haven't talked about?

Fernandez: One of his favorite people in the last three or four years was [Stanley K. Burrell] MC Hammer. MC Hammer—I saw him the other day—and he said, "You know, I still can't erase this voice mail message." And he play's Jack's voice mail message, and it's "Hey, MC, it's Jack. Just love to your family and you, thinking about you." And MC said, "I just can't erase it."

Kondracke: How did that friendship—

Fernandez: I introduced them four or five years ago at Fight Night here, and we then ended up traveling together to different things. MC has had highs and lows in his career, and he just loved it. Obviously MC was big baseball fan, big sports fan, now more involved in technology. And so they loved talking about all sorts of stuff. That's one of the more eclectic combos. It's funny, we're sitting at the fight in Las Vegas, and he's looking, "Hey, look. That's that guy Snoopy." He called him Snoopy instead of [Calvin C. Broadus, Jr.] Snoop [Dog], so he was trying to be multigenerational, but he didn't always get the name right.

Kondracke: Right.

Fernandez: What's your biggest surprise in this, because you knew him, you knew him very well. You covered him.

Kondracke: Well, yes, I covered him but, I guess we ought to shut that off.

[end of interview]