

JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with
EDWIN "ED" MEESE III

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Interviewer
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Jack Kemp Foundation
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Morton Kondracke: This is a [Jack] Kemp Foundation oral history interview with former Attorney General Ed Meese. Today is October 13, 2011, and we're at the Heritage Foundation. I'm Morton Kondracke.

Thank you so much, Mr. Meese, for doing this. When did you first hear about Jack Kemp?

Edwin [Ed] Meese: The first that I heard about Jack Kemp was when I first met him, which was in the summer of 1967. It was prior to the start of the football season and he volunteered to become an intern for then Governor [Ronald] Reagan. This was the first year of Reagan's governorship, and so he came and worked in the Governor's Office, where I had been working at that point about six or seven months. I was the Legal Affairs Secretary to the Governor. Jack worked, I think, with [Philip] Phil Battaglia and with somebody who was at that time the Chief of Staff, although I think he was called the Executive Secretary to the Governor was the actual title. He worked somewhere in the office. I didn't have much to do with him in terms of the day-to-day work, since I was in the legal office there, but I frequently met with him in kind of the social activities of the Governor's Office.

Kondracke: And so how did everybody react to having a football star working in the Governor's Office?

Meese: Well, everybody had come into that office fairly recently at that time from various walks of life, and so everybody was happy to see Jack. He was a very amiable person, worked hard, as I understand, in the work that he was doing there, which I don't quite

know exactly what it was, but he got along very well with everyone and everybody was interested in talking with him. At that time when he was in the Governor's Office, of course, he was more interested in himself and politics, leaving football for the rest of the season.

Kondracke: So you don't know exactly what he did. But how did he get the job, do you know?

Meese: I don't know exactly how he got the job, because, from my standpoint, one day he just appeared. But we had a lot of people that were Reagan people both in the political realm and in the governmental realm from San Diego, so I imagine there was some contact there.

Kondracke: And how much contact did he have with Governor Reagan in those days?

Meese: He met with the Governor on a number of occasions, and certainly at some of the general activities in the office and that sort of thing, he'd see the Governor.

Kondracke: And did you ever have any extended conversations with him?

Meese: Had some social conversations with him for long periods of time.

Kondracke: Do you remember anything about those conversations?

Meese: No, just that I learned he was a conservative, interested in politics, as well as interested in football.

Kondracke: Over all the years that you knew him, what are some of your standout memories of Jack Kemp?

Meese: Well, one of the things is Jack had a great sense of humor. He was a great promoter of ideas and he was, I would say, a pretty—oh, what's the term I'm looking for? He was pretty enthusiastic about everything he did. He was one of the most enthusiastic people I've ever met, and whether it was politics, supporting Governor Reagan, or, for that matter, in football, he was just a person you liked being around.

Kondracke: So when did Ronald Reagan first discover the Kemp-Roth tax-cutting idea?

Meese: I think it was probably sometime in 1978, probably '76, '77, '78, somewhere in that period of time. It was probably closer maybe to 1980. It was an idea he had in mind, and I think he had either talked to Jack or received something, some information. But I know it was in his mind as early as '78, '79, that period.

Kondracke: Is it your impression that Reagan's economic policy was based on Kemp-Roth?

Meese: Well, it was in part. A lot of the ideas in Kemp-Roth, such as the reduction of tax rates and that sort of thing, is something Ronald

Reagan talked about for a long time, but I think the combination of things, the idea of the legislation per se, I think came from Jack.

Kondracke: Now, there was this meeting in Los Angeles, late '79, where apparently all the advisors were there, and you must have been there, right?

Meese: Right, right.

Kondracke: And this was a policy discussion, foreign policy and domestic policy. Do you remember much about what Kemp did at that meeting?

Meese: I don't remember. I don't have much of a recollection of it, but I remember we went over a lot of ideas during that period of time. I'm not sure. It's hard because that period of time was a period of transition. Different people were coming in and going out of the campaign activity, so I don't have an awful lot of recollection right then.

Kondracke: Do you remember anything about [Martin] Marty Anderson's—Marty Anderson wrote a memo—

Meese: Right, right, yes.

Kondracke: —policy memo, in '79 that contained the ideas of Kemp-Roth. Do you have any idea what the origins of that was?

Meese: I don't know, other than the fact that I think—and this is just speculation—I think that somehow the ideas of Kemp-Roth were expressed to the Governor either directly by Jack or indirectly by a letter or something like that. And then from discussion with the Governor, I think then Marty wrote up his paper which included the ideas of Kemp-Roth, the tax-rate reduction, along with some other ideas such as regulatory reform and stable monetary policies. Then another idea which was also, I think, inherent in Jack's advice was slowing the growth of federal spending.

Kondracke: So how did Kemp become the chief policy spokesman of the campaign? He got appointed to that job and I'm not sure exactly what he did, but maybe you remember.

Meese: Policy spokesman? I think on this subject, I think on the economic subject, I'm not sure whether—because he was in the Congress at the time, and I think probably the President asked him to speak out on these ideas and he was very enthusiastic to doing it.

Kondracke: So, go to the Detroit convention.

Meese: Yes.

Kondracke: Did Jack Kemp's name ever come up seriously as a possible Vice President with Ronald Reagan?

Meese: I can't remember for sure who all the people were. What happened there was we had a very, very closely held poll that we had in probably, I imagine, in April or May. It might have been as late as

June, and we had a list of about twelve people that were possible candidates. I don't remember whether Jack was on that list or not. The only people who knew about the poll were [Richard B.] Dick Wirthlin, [William J.] Bill Casey, the Governor, and myself. So I can't remember all the people, but it was pretty exhaustive. So if Jack had been talked about as a possible candidate, he was probably in the poll.

Kondracke: You think the poll was at the Reagan Library or—

Meese: No, I don't think anything was ever written about it because it was so closely held. We didn't want anybody to—our approach to the vice presidency was that the Governor would make that decision. He would not make any selections so he could honestly say before the convention he had not chosen anyone. The poll itself was so closely held, and he never talked about anyone as a potential vice presidential candidate, if you remember, nor did he have any of these trips some presidential candidates have had who were pretty sure of the nomination, having these visits to kiss his ring like some of them have had. [laughs]

Kondracke: So according to *Newsweek*, the *Newsweek* account of all this, there was a short list that included Kemp; Paul [D.] Laxalt; Richard [G.] Luger; [William E.] Bill Simon; Donald [H.] Rumsfeld; Guy [A.] Vander Jagt; Anne [L.] Armstrong. And then [Richard V.] Dick Allen wrote a piece that said that Howard [H.] Baker [Jr.] and George [H.W.] Bush were also on that list.

Meese: It's very possible. There was such a list, no question about that. Whether all of those people were actually on the list or not, I

don't know. I don't remember at this time. But the *Newsweek* article may or may not have been true, because the only people who really knew who were on the list were the four of us that I mentioned.

Kondracke: So did Kemp have any advocates in the inside circle?

Meese: You know, there was really very little discussion about the Vice President among the general group, so in terms of having advocates for any of those folks, I don't remember any of them. One of the reasons why we were very hesitant about talking—well, first of all, the governor discouraged any talk about these kinds of things. He wanted to get the nomination first and have that secured. It was his nature not to be presuming things until they actually occurred, even though it was very unlikely that there'd be any upset because he had the delegates pretty solidly going into the convention.

Kondracke: So you were in the middle of the [Gerald R.] Ford negotiations.

Meese: The way the Ford thing happened was that someone had started this idea of the so-called dream ticket. It was started mostly by people, or it was adhered to by people—I remember Max [M.] Fisher, particularly, in Michigan was one of the advocates, and many of the people who were involved in that. There were two groups of people. Some had been great Ford supporters and were interested in seeing about Ford come back into it. Others were people in the Republican establishment who just weren't sure of this Ronald Reagan as a candidate. He was not known to most people in the East very well. I mean, they knew about him, but as far as knowing him in

terms of a deep knowledge. And so there was enough push from influential people within the Republican establishment that the Governor, Bill Casey, and I all thought that we had an obligation to at least look at it, because some of them had also persuaded a couple of people in our California entourage that that would be a good idea. So we gave it a try.

We sat down—Dick Wirthlin, Bill Casey, and myself sat down with Alan Greenspan, Henry [A.] Kissinger, and one other, and for a couple of days there at the start of the convention, I think Monday and Tuesday, we spent several hours each day looking at how this might develop. I think all of us, from our standpoint, were skeptical about either whether this was likely to happen or whether it was a good idea. And then on Wednesday, of course, you had the situation where Ford appeared on the [Walter L.] Cronkite [Jr.] show, and the way it came out there, I don't think he intended it this way, but it made it look like it was a done deal.

At the same time, we had come to the conclusion that night, seven or eight o'clock, after the last meeting we had, that it would not work. President Ford came to see Ronald Reagan, said he didn't think it would work and wouldn't go ahead. That afternoon, I had talked with the Governor and I said, "I don't think this is going to happen and I don't think it should happen." That was when I said, "I've been thinking about probably the best person of the possibilities would be George H.W. Bush."

And he said, "Well, you know, I've been thinking along the same lines."

And then we kind of left it to get together later on, went back into the meetings, came back to the meeting. By that time, he had met with Ford. We told him our results, our thinking, and he made the two

decisions. Number one, the Ford thing was not going to go, and, secondly, that he wanted to find out from George Bush whether George would be fully supportive of his policies. So that's when he placed the call to George Bush and George Bush says that he was.

The main thing that relates to Jack Kemp was George Bush had called this voodoo economics, and as I said afterwards when people said, "Well, how could you take George Bush with his comments about voodoo economics," I said, "Well, he had an exorcism at Detroit." [laughs] But he said specifically on that point that he could support the Republican platform, which we had pretty carefully engineered, and he could also support all of Ronald Reagan's policies.

Kondracke: So you've read Dick Allen's version of all this.

Meese: Yes. It's wrong.

Kondracke: It's wrong?

Meese: Yes, I've written an article that shows how it was wrong. That article is—

Kondracke: Review it, because I haven't read your article, but I have read what Dick Allen wrote.

Meese: Well, Dick wrote something about that he talked it over with the President or something in the afternoon and—

Kondracke: Now, he places himself as the guy who gave the idea of George Bush, that—

Meese: Yes, and this was—I mean, he would not have known that we had George Bush in this poll several months before and that the poll had come back showing that the two people that would help Ronald Reagan the most were Gerald Ford and George Bush. So he was always, in our mind, one of the principal contenders.

Incidentally, if you're interested, I think Dick wrote this article in *The New York Times*. It was then also published in the Stanford—what do they call it? The *Hoover Review* or whatever the *Hoover Review* is. When I saw that, I wrote a letter to *The New York Times* correcting it and they printed that, but they only printed a very short letter. And then when the article appeared in the *Hoover* whatever they call it—

Kondracke: *Digest*, I think.

Meese: —*Hoover Digest*. Then in the next issue of the *Hoover Digest*, I had written the rebuttal, so it's available there.

Kondracke: Okay. So then do you have any recollections of Kemp during the campaign after that?

Meese: Yes, my recollection is that Jack gave a number of speeches supporting Ronald Reagan for the presidency and always built around this whole idea of the economic plan.

Kondracke: Okay. So Ronald Reagan wins the election, and then according to Arthur [B.] Laffer—we interviewed Arthur Laffer—right at the outset of the administration, there's a meeting, and he says, Laffer says, "I remember sitting in the Oval Office and all of a sudden this

discussion comes up. It's right after the campaign. We're in there, I don't know, January 22nd. I was sitting there, eleven or fifteen of us, whatever the number was, and Reagan asked, 'What did I promise? I want to make sure to deliver on our campaign promises. What did we actually promise on tax cuts? Did I promise tax reductions?'

"And somebody said, 'No, Mr. President, you never did. I've gone and checked all the transcripts. No, you didn't. You promised tax cuts, not rate cuts.'" And he doesn't know whether it was Wirthlin or [Michael K.] Deaver, neither of whom he trusted very much. Do you remember any such discussion?

Meese: I don't. I don't. I'm sure I was there, but I don't remember any particular discussion. But I remember definitely the President's idea was 10, 10, and 10; 10 percent cut each year for three years. And then through the negotiations up on the Hill with our own guys and with the Democrats, it became clear, or there was a pretty good body of opinion there, that since we were already in the middle of the first year by the time this was really getting down to brass tacks, because of the time when the assassination attempt and all that sort of thing, so we're really into pretty close to June, I guess, or thereabouts when—I don't know when the legislation was introduced, but the idea was we'd already gone through half a year. So in the first year it would 5 percent and then 10 percent each of the next two years, and that was ultimately the agreement, ultimately what happened.

Kondracke: Now, your book. You describe some people in the administration who were kind of hostile to all this.

Meese: Yes, yes.

Kondracke: And how did that work?

Meese: Well, there were people who really didn't understand the dynamic effect of tax cuts and they thought that this was a revenue loss. And the position that Jack took, the position that Martin Anderson took, the position I took was that ultimately, first of all, if you didn't have something to stop the stagflation, to get the economy moving, you were going to continue to have worse revenue losses, and that the only way you stop the revenue losses was to have tax-rate reduction, which will stimulate the economy and start things moving along and moving back into a normal economic situation. So those are the kinds of discussions I remember.

Kondracke: So the person who I guess is the main leader of that anti group was David [A.] Stockman.

Meese: Stockman, and there were probably some others. I don't remember exactly who.

Kondracke: You imply that [James A.] Baker and [Richard D.] Darman were.

Meese: I don't remember what their position was on it.

Kondracke: In your book, you quote Lawrence Barrett's book as referring to the Baker group, and it was Darman and Stockman and those people.

Meese: Yes, that's probably right. That's probably right.

Kondracke: Did you ever have any conversations with Kemp during this period?

Meese: I'm sure we did because he was quite frequently talking with us during this period and he was, of course, one of our main cheerleaders in the Congress.

Kondracke: So it was Jack Kemp who recommended David Stockman to be the OMB [Office of Management and Budget] director.

Meese: Right. I guess that's right. I assume it is.

Kondracke: So what happened when the *Atlantic Monthly* article came out? I know Stockman was taken to the woodshed, but—

Meese: Well, I'll tell you exactly what happened.

Kondracke: Okay.

Meese: And I don't remember Jack being involved in that, in any discussions at all. I don't think he came as a champion for Stockman or anything. He could have been. I don't know. I don't have any recollection of that. But I thought that that was such an egregious act on Stockman's part that he ought to be fired, and I think Mike Deaver agreed with me. Jim Baker, on the other hand, said he thought he ought to be given one more chance, and Ronald Reagan hated to fire

anybody, so if any one of the three of us urged leniency, he was willing to go along with that. And of course, then Stockman did the same thing again. He continued to give—what was his name?

Kondracke: [William] Greider.

Meese: Greider, more information, and I think there was a second round. And finally, I think that was too much.

Kondracke: Now, were there any efforts by people in the White House to keep Kemp away from Reagan?

Meese: There may have been, but I don't remember any. There may have been, but certainly if there had been, I would have been to taking the other side.

Kondracke: So did you have much contact with Kemp during this whole period? Did you talk to him?

Meese: A reasonable amount, a reasonable amount. I remember talking to him from time to time, particularly if he visited the White House. If he was having a meeting with the President, I would normally be there.

Kondracke: Okay. So then in 1982, there's a revision of the original Reagan tax cuts and a tax increase, which Kemp was against.

Meese: Well, this was not a revision of the original tax cuts, because the original tax cuts were never touched. What happened was we had

the serious deficit problem that Stockman brought to the President's attention, and finally it was resolved. Stockman, I think, orchestrated this, probably with Jim Baker, maybe others, that there would be a conference, a negotiation, to see if anything could be done, could be worked out.

They brought out of the conference—I deliberately stayed away from the conference, and I think Darman and Jim Baker and Stockman, with [Thomas P.] "Tip" O'Neill's [Jr.] people—I forget who they were, but there were Tip O'Neill's staff people. I don't think there were any members involved in that. And they had these meetings. I think they started at Jim Baker's house, even, I'm not sure, or maybe there was some location they had off site. They came up with this idea of an agreement. There would be three dollars of spending reductions for every dollar of tax increase.

I remember when that was presented and it was a meeting with the President and Tip O'Neill. I remember being at that meeting because I remember raising some questions about it, and Tip O'Neill said, "Well, were you there at the meeting?" So there was a little back-and-forth there. But ultimately the President agreed to try that, but on the condition that it would not in any way affect the income tax rate reductions that had been made.

Kondracke: Kemp was against that.

Meese: Yes.

Kondracke: Now, how was that taken in the White House?

Meese: Well, I think the President realized a lot of people were against it. One thing about Ronald Reagan, he looked for people's advice. He would often, when he was Governor and to some extent when he was President, he would encourage people to take positions that even if they didn't believe in them, that were contrary to his own, just so he would know what that other side was. So far as I know, as far as the President was concerned, there was never any anxiety about Jack being opposed to it. As I say, a number of other people were.

Kondracke: What did Ronald Reagan think about Jack Kemp?

Meese: He always thought very highly of him. He thought Jack was a smart guy. He thought he was a very good conservative. Really, they thought along similar lines on these issues and he admired him particularly for the Kemp-Roth thing. I mean, he really appreciated Jack being the principal spokesman in the House for it.

Kondracke: Did he ever say anything even vaguely critical of Kemp?

Meese: I don't remember anything at all. I think he generally liked him, liked to talk sports and football with him and all that. I mean everything about Jack, I think, the President was very approving. Jack was an amiable guy, a guy he liked to be around.

Kondracke: So in August of '82, there's a *New York Times* story that quotes White House insiders, unnamed, that accused Kemp, because he was opposing you guys on TEFRA [Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982], of playing politics and trying to advance

his own political career at the expense of the President. Any idea who that would have been?

Meese: Yes. [laughter] Well, I suspect that was probably Darman or someone like that. Could even have been Jim Baker. I'm not sure, but it was somebody out of that group.

Kondracke: Well, did you hear any muttering in the White House about Kemp?

Meese: Oh, I don't have a distinct recollection, but I'm sure that those for the Stockman people, and Stockman himself—when did Stockman leave? He left in—

Kondracke: I'm not sure.

Meese: I'm not sure either. I think maybe it was '82 or '83. But I'm sure that the people who were advocating the TEFRA were not pleased with the opposition.

Kondracke: So Kemp also wants to get Paul [A.] Volcker [Jr.] fired.

Meese: Yes. I don't remember anything about that.

Kondracke: Because Volcker created a recession, basically, by raising interest rates in order to stifle inflation—

Meese: Right.

Kondracke: —which Kemp didn't like, and he was quite vociferous about it.

Meese: Yes, I don't remember much discussion because basically the President's idea was that Volcker's steps were necessary in order to deal with the inflation problem and he understood that and recognized that, but he also recognized that the stimulative effect of the tax rate reductions and the regulatory reform and those things would ultimately kick in and would overcome what was happening, which, of course, is what happened.

Kondracke: So Kemp also wanted George [P.] Shultz fired over issues about Jonas [M.] Savimbi in Angola and détente and stuff like that. How was that taken in the White House?

Meese: Let's see. George didn't come in till June of '82, so it would have been after that. Basically, I think George was reflecting the State Department line on these different issues, but I don't remember Jack advocating that George be fired, even though I'm sure that he probably disagreed with some of these things.

Kondracke: You don't remember specifically much about Kemp's foreign policy? He became ranking member on Foreign Ops and so on.

Meese: Yes, and I have no doubt—I don't remember any specific incidents of this. What I'm questioning is what the timing was, because it would have to be into '83, probably, or even '84 when he felt this way, but I don't remember anything specific about it.

Kondracke: So in '85, when the President went to see [Mikhail S.] Gorbachev in Geneva, Kemp said that he was afraid that the administration was going to be seduced by the allure of détente. Do you remember any of that?

Meese: See, I don't remember much about that because there wasn't really any—there was no question that Ronald Reagan was not going to give up on Savimbi. Likewise, there was no chance that he was going to change his mind on détente, his ideas, because that was why he ran against Ford in '76. There was no doubt in my mind that the President was stalwart on all those issues, so that's why I probably don't have much recollection of how he might have felt.

Kondracke: Were you involved in the '86 tax reform program?

Meese: Well, I was involved to the extent that we had meetings on it, cabinet meetings and so on. [Donald T.] Don Regan had developed this plan and had brought it over, I think in '84 or very early '85, when he was still Secretary of the Treasury, or at least it was pretty much complete by that time. It came out of his work. He had done the work and then I brought it over, and then it was a matter of cabinet discussion and then legislative enactment. So I was a participant in all the policy decision meetings on it.

Kondracke: There's a point at which the Republicans rebelled, the House Republicans rebelled against the tax reform that [Daniel D.] Rostenkowski produced in the Ways and Means Committee, and they all were going to kill tax reform at the end of 1985. Do you remember

anything about this? Jack Kemp was then the Chairman of the House Republican Conference. Do you remember?

Meese: I remember there was a lot of give-and-take during that period of time. I don't remember all the details of what their concerns were.

Kondracke: Well, then Jack got the President to come and talk to the assembled House Republicans. Do you remember anything about that?

Meese: I do remember that, yes. I do remember that that was part of the—

Kondracke: Did you go?

Meese: I don't think I went with him up there. No, I'm sure I didn't. This would have been in early '86 or—

Kondracke: Late '85, I think, at Christmastime.

Meese: Yes. See, by that time, I was already over in the Justice Department, so I didn't participate in that. I was a member of the cabinet, so I was in all the cabinet meetings where this was discussed, and I was there—it seems to me that at least some aspects of it had been brought in in '84, still, while I was in the White House, but I could be wrong on that.

But it definitely was a Don Regan—Don Regan had worked with a lot of different people in producing this, and I think it was also

discussed—may have been discussed with the PEAB, President's Economic Advisory Board. But I remember this being presented, and then, of course, the whole legislative work went on until it was passed.

Kondracke: Did you have much contact with Arthur Laffer in those days?

Meese: Used to see Arthur quite a bit. Particularly when I was in the White House, of course, I'd see him.

Kondracke: What did Arthur Laffer push in those days?

Meese: I can't remember anything specific, except I think he always pushed for a rate reduction, and that was how, in the package from Don Regan, what ultimately came out of that was the 28 percent top rate. Then there was some aspect that something continued higher than that for a short period of time, I think.

Kondracke: Remember, there was Bradley-Gephardt was the first tax reform that sort of came down the pike, and then Kemp and Kasten had a tax reform, as well, and then the President referred to tax reform in, I believe, his 1985 State of the Union message.

Meese: That's probably right.

Kondracke: Then Regan took it up and did a study, and then came out with it, I guess whether it was in the 1984 State of the Union.

Meese: It was '84 because Regan really worked on it in '84, because by February or March of '85, he had come into the White House then.

Kondracke: So do you remember any of Kemp's activities with the White House in that fight?

Meese: Again, I don't have a distinct recollection of it because, again, in '85 I was over in the Department of Justice. So whatever may have happened during that year, I would not have been close to that since I was following other issues.

Kondracke: When I talked to [James L.] Jim Buckley, Jim Buckley said that he was once there in the White House and Reagan said something to Jack like, "Jack, how low do you think tax rates can go?" And Buckley interprets this as being a kind of a putdown of Jack Kemp. So did Reagan have any thought that Jack was a little over the top on this subject?

Meese: I don't have any recollection of that. All my recollections are that he and Jack thought pretty much alike, but there may have been some discussion like that.

Kondracke: So one of the items that Jack Kemp was constantly pushing was the gold standard.

Meese: Right. That's true.

Kondracke: And nothing ever happened.

Meese: No.

Kondracke: Why?

Meese: I think largely because I think Ronald Reagan and most other people felt that there wasn't much chance of getting anything changed in regard to that.

Kondracke: Did it ever get studied?

Meese: I don't remember that it was, not as a conscious working group type of thing.

Kondracke: So post-Reagan, 1988, Kemp is running for President. Who did you support in '88? Did you support Bush or—

Meese: Probably supported Bush, yes. But again, in '88 I was still in the Department of Justice, so I stayed out of—in '88 I went to the convention as a guest, or wait a minute. No, actually, in '84, I went as a guest. I think in '88—I'm not sure. Where was the '88 convention? Gosh, I can't remember. I don't think I went to the convention, actually, in '88.

Kondracke: Now, one of the issues when Kemp was running against [Robert J.] Dole, and Bush, of course, and didn't go very far, but one of the issues that came up was this gay issue, which harkened all the way back to the time when he was working as an intern back in Reagan's office.

Meese: Right.

Kondracke: And there was a house in Tahoe, I guess, that he shared with—

Meese: I think he went up with us to Tahoe. There were a couple of things that happened up in Lake Tahoe. One was we had an overall staff meeting there, kind of a staff retreat, at Tahoe, and I think he may have been with us at that time. And then on another occasion, I think there was another Tahoe event with Paul [D.] Laxalt, where the governors got together at Lake Tahoe in sort of a good will joining of forces there between the two states. There were some phony allegations about some homosexual activity going on at Lake Tahoe, but I don't remember—I remember vaguely. I can't remember all the details.

Kondracke: Well, there were two people who got fired from the office.

Meese: Sandy Quinn and Phil Battaglia got fired, but it wasn't related to things necessarily in Tahoe. That may have been part of it. But I don't remember Jack's being involved.

Kondracke: There was some reference, some newspaper reference to an athlete being involved, and it dogged Kemp for a long time.

Meese: Well, it was totally false, and even the allegations against Battaglia and Quinn were never proven beyond a reasonable doubt. There was a lot of suspicion and all that sort of thing. The main reason, there was a concern about their activities between those two

guys, but the main thing that was happening was that Battaglia was going to Washington without the Governor's knowledge and promoting him as a presidential candidate for '68, and was engaging in a lot of unauthorized activities on his behalf. So it was a combination of these two things, but because—

Kondracke: Battaglia was at that time—

Meese: He was the executive secretary, which was the head of the office.

Kondracke: He's the one who Kemp was working for, though.

Meese: I think he was. I think he was, but I'm not positive. I mean, they had definite assignments from him, but I think that's where he was located organizationally.

Kondracke: And who was Quinn?

Meese: And Sandy Quinn was Battaglia's assistant. He was the number-two guy in that office. In that office suite, as you went through the door of the suite, you had two secretaries there, and then the door on the left opened into the executive secretary's office, which was Phil Battaglia. The one on the right was Sandy Quinn, and he did the things like the scheduling and all those kinds of things.

Kondracke: So where did Jack fit into that?

Meese: I don't know where he had an office at that time. That's why I'm not exactly sure what he did.

Kondracke: So what about in later years? So he becomes HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development] Secretary. Did you have any contact with him when he was HUD Secretary?

Meese: Yes, yes, I would see him regularly around. By that time, I was here at Heritage. He became HUD Secretary when? Probably in February or March of '89.

Kondracke: Yes. Actually, he was at Heritage, wasn't he, before he went to HUD?

Meese: He may have been, may have been. Did he not run again in '88?

Kondracke: He did not run in '88.

Meese: No, that's right, because he was running for President. So I think he may have come over here, because I came over here at the end of '88 and I think he may have had some affiliation here. So I would see him frequently in different things, and he was always a good friend.

Kondracke: What did you talk about?

Meese: Talked about politics sometimes, talked about what was going on in Washington, talked about what was going on in HUD, just general conversation.

Kondracke: His idea for enterprise zones never seemed to go very far in the Reagan administration either, or, for that matter, in the Bush administration.

Meese: Yes, and I don't know why, because I think a lot of us thought it was a good idea. I think it was maybe crowded out by other issues, particularly in the second term. The first term, you had all the economic issues, the other economic issues. The President, I think, was always pretty much in favor of it. In the latter part, the second term, most of the emphasis at that time was on foreign policy because that was the major effort being made with the Soviet Union and things like that.

Kondracke: Okay. Is there anything else that you recollect about Jack Kemp?

Meese: My recollections which are fairly dim, this being twenty-five years ago, but he and Ronald Reagan always got along well. Ronald Reagan liked him, appreciated his ideas, that he was a champion of the enterprise zones and of good conservative economic ideas, and that he enjoyed a very good reputation with most of us in the White House.

Kondracke: So how do you think he ought to be remembered in history?

Meese: Well, I think Jack ought to be remembered certainly for his ideas and promotion of the Reagan economic program and his contributions to it in terms of Kemp-Roth, and also what he did, I thought, as the HUD Secretary, he did very well. That was kind of a—let's say it was not, in the minds of most people, a highly visible part of the federal government, but he made it visible. I mean, I think he brought energy into that department that we hadn't seen before or, for that matter, since.

Kondracke: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Meese.

Meese: Okay. I wish I had better recollection of some of these things—

Kondracke: It's okay.

Meese: —but I would say this. Whatever I said in the book I would certainly stand behind because, at the time, my memory was much fresher. To the extent there was any references to Jack or where he was and those things, I definitely would stand behind that.

Kondracke: Thank you. Thank you so much.

Meese: Okay.

[End of interview]