JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with

MICHAEL NOVAK

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Interviewer

Morton Kondracke

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Morton Kondracke: This is a Jack Kemp oral history project interview with Michael Novak, visiting professor at Ave Maria University. We're at his home in Ave Maria, Florida. Today is January 20, 2012, and I'm Morton Kondracke. Thank you, Michael, for doing this.

Michael Novak: Glad to be with you again.

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

Novak: Boisterous laugh, speeches that go on too long, make Joanne [Kemp] very uncomfortable, going to Super Bowls—maybe I think of that first. Jack invited me to innumerable Super Bowls. He always had a right to bring 30 friends or something like that. And bring his biggest financial contributors and me, for the price of a talk to the group. It was a ball of fun, and my kids got to go and we all have very happy memories about them in city after city. The most important thing for me is Jack was the agent of completing my intellectual turn on economics. [John V.] Vin Weber had a conference out in Minnesota. You remember Karen [Laub-Novak], my wife, was from Iowa and taught at Carlton [College], so we had ties there. Vin invited me to a conference for Minnesota Young Republicans at some big lodge in the north of Minnesota, some big camp.

Kondracke: What year?

Novak: I don't remember, but I'm almost certain it was before [Ronald W.] Reagan, almost certain. I had been teaching in Stanford [University] in '65-68 and then at the experimental college at Old

Westbury in Long Island, which Harris Wofford was the first president; later senator of Pennsylvania. It was an experimental college and carefully chosen, original, different students, by Peace Corps veterans and others, Harris having helped build up the Peace Corps with [R. Sargent] Sarge Shriver. It was so left-wing, Old Westbury, that when I got there in 1968 only one out of 100 students, first class of students, thought that democracy was not a bourgeois illusion and was going to be active. And he happened to have come from Stanford that same year I did. He took one class from me but we didn't really know each other. And he was for [Eugene J.] Gene McCarthy. That was the ideological spread on campus. It was such a dispiriting experience for anybody on the left, and I was moving lefter at that time. I sided, not like [E.] Michael Harrington, but a little in that direction. A little bit more with the radicals than with the liberals. My experience at Harvard [University] for graduate studies was, well, a friend of mine wrote me a letter recently, had the room right next door to mine, and he reminded me of something I completely forgot. I had a little sign on my desk saying "Michael, don't think." Because we had absolutely no metaphysical, philosophical interest below ordinary language and logic. Ach. The great distinction on campus was emotive and cognitive. Cognitive is what you can do with logic, which a lot of them were extremely good at and led to the computers and everything so I don't want to make fun of it completely, but I hated it. I'd been studying in the Catholic schools with St. Thomas, not St. Thomas himself as much as his surroundings. I had enough of logic to last me my lifetime, and I sure didn't want to do it at Harvard. So cognitive is logic or empirical, what you can prove, replicate from sense experience, and that just seemed to me way too narrow for what the intellect does, way, way, way too narrow.

Kondracke: So how does Vin Weber connect with this?

Novak: Well, I have to say a little bit about where I was in political philosophy.

Kondracke: Sure. Okay.

Novak: I reacted against that and I wrote an essay in *Harper's* [Magazine] called, "God and the Colleges," which was an attack. I was a graduate student so it didn't help me too much, but it was an attack on this cognitive-emotive distinction and other things like it, and I thought, 'It's just killing humanism.' And the last line of the thing was "God will come back when man comes back to the colleges." It became the background of the Port Heron Statement. [Thomas E.] Tom Hayden and his friends naturally saw it, I think they were in graduate school, too, at the time. And so it started to be cited on the new left. But I was unhappy. I had already formed the intention of studying economics more, in fact I'd applied to Harvard before I got a scholarship there, a fellowship, to take a summer program in economics. But it was taught by the historian Oscar Handlin, and others, as I remember. His idea was that business was the least studied important part of American history by historians, and the most dynamic part. I was determined to give some time to study economics, so I began to do it. I educated myself first just by reading the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page.

Kondracke: Even though you're left, left-wing?

Novak: Oh, yes. My family is from Slovakia, in the center of Europe. They were living under Communist rule; it was exceedingly difficult to communicate with them. If you sent money it would be taken out. So I wasn't prepared to commit myself to socialism. I was willing to be a Social Democrat, but something worried me, because it was hard to find an argument in favor of socialism. All the experiments seemed to fail, so my defense was socialism's got the right idea. We just haven't hit out the practical method for achieving it. And then I began to think, if you have 50 experiments and none of them succeed, maybe it's not such a hot idea. But I had nothing to replace it with. And I grew up in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, a mill town where the managers lived up on the hill and the rest of us lived down in the dirty valley. I didn't think in terms of class warfare. None of us did in the immigrant community. We were just glad to be in America. Whatever the problems, it was better than where we'd been. But that made me suspicious of siding with a capitalist economy. But I said, "Some day I have to sit down and do a study of this." I did this seminar in Mexico along with Peter [L.] Berger. We jointly talked, and it was a criticism of, a plague-on-both-your-houses socialism. Peter supplied the economic component of his study of the four little tigers in Asia and how rapidly they advanced doing it by capitalist ways, and how retrogressively socialistic experiments happen even right next door. Two Koreas and stuff like that. The two Vietnams, even. So that really impressed me. I began reading about supply-side economics and things like that. The in '76 AEI [American Enterprise Institute] invited me down to be an adjunct fellow. I was at Syracuse, so I'd go down one day a week. And they had brown bag lunches. And Irving Kristol and Jude [T.] Wanniski and [Antonin G.] Scalia was there, Herb Stein was there. He was not for supply-side economics; he thought

that was awful stuff. And I began to learn that Irving was a very good friend of Jack Kemp's. And Jack took Irving as a kind of mentor in economics. Irving, in his usual independent way, had carved out his own critique and appreciation of capitalism in his essays in the *Wall Street Journal*. I think Irving never wrote a proper book. I think he learned that his talent was essayist. He wrote a beautiful essay. [interruption] Anyway, Vin Weber invites me to this conference and Jack is going to be there. I'm almost certain I was at Stanford. No, it can't be that early, it can't be pre-'68. It's got to be in the seventies.

Kondracke: When you were at Syracuse?

Novak: No, I think after Syracuse. In '78 I got an invitation from AEI. My wife was eager to get out of Syracuse because there's nothing for an artist to do. No community, really.

Kondracke: So when did you arrive at AEI?

Novak: '78.

Kondracke: '78.

Novak: March, April. It's some time before Reagan, as I recall. But that depends a little, now the other thing I'd check is Vin Weber running for Congress, because it's about in that period. I'm not sure he was elected yet, but he might have been for first term.

Kondracke: You hadn't met Jack yet?

Novak: I don't think so. I think it's the first time I ever heard Jack. We were both speakers at the thing, so we were together a bit. But the most impressive thing to me was his lecture. He probably gave a couple of them. I thought he was one of the best teachers I'd ever heard. He had a way of making things very clear and very concrete. You could tell having run for office in Buffalo, and he had already done that as I recall. That would be another way of dating this.

Kondracke: No, he was elected in 1970, so he'd been in for eight years.

Novak: Okay. That makes sense. He was Vin's tutor in the Congress, if Vin was already there, or at least he was helping Vin get elected. One or the other. So Jack explained how the Republican Party was hampered, because all it offered is pain. The Democrats would run up the bills, inflation would start, and so on. But the people would clamor for the Republicans to come in and fix it. So he said the political policy of the GOP is the GOP School of Dentistry. It isn't good for you unless it hurts. So we come in and slash budgets and programs and cause pain for people and raise taxes. He said, "It's a crazy way; it's a party of pain." And he said, "When there's something we can offer them. The most important thing in economics is incentives, and you can't put more people to work without growth. And you can't have more growth without investment. So there has to be an incentive in investment, to boost investment." He was a supporter of reduce[ing] taxes on capital gains, which Reagan then put in. But it was an idea in Washington which labor was against, even big business was against it. This is AEI's discovery. AEI was pushing it. I don't remember their worries, whatever, maybe breaking the budget or something. Herb Stein

seems to me was one of those who was like that. Jack said, he made fun of George [S.] McGovern's tax reform practice, and that would put us back to '72. Remember Gordon Wao [phonetic], who introduced the idea of a thousand dollar tax, income shift, at $15,000 of income? If you can remember when that was the top 10 percent I think, or 20 percent. Jack said that just made absolutely no sense to the steel workers he talked to, or to the garbage man on the street. He was just disgusted with it. He never went to college, but he sure as hell wanted his kids to go to college. And he wanted them to be as rich as [John F.] Kennedy. He didn't mind being rich, and he sure as hell didn't want the rules changed when it came his son's turn, that he's going to get knocked $1,000 as something he hard-earned. And so it was with examples like that that Jack made his points very clear, and it turned my attention to incentives. I really hadn't thought enough about it.

Kondracke: This was kind of an epiphany for you at this Minnesota conference?

Novak: Yes. I'd begun to think that way a little bit, but it just wasn't crystallized yet. Epiphany is a pretty good word for it. I was beating around the bush but I didn't quite see the point. He began explaining supply-side economics in terms of attending to the incentives. You need investment to start a job. If you had an idea, and ideas are the cause of wealth, you couldn't make it real until you set up the office or the factory or whatever it was, and you needed to be paying people for some years before it really got going. Where's that money going to come from? How can poor people do that? So you need venture capital and you need people with money to invest rather than to build

yachts, and like that. Just bam, bam, bam. He'd take questions, and there were all kinds of questions, because these are—

Kondracke: Who was attending this conference?

Novak: Young Republicans from all over Minnesota. You know, almost all college degree, all college students, all graduate students, very young leaders. It was very youth-oriented. They were very enthusiastic but very inquisitive because they had the same questions their families would have, and most of them had been tutored by Minnesota Democrats or Farm Labor Party. Well, I was just very impressed with how clear Jack could be, how concrete, and how he could handle abstract ideas too, and with good humor and good grace. So I put him on my list of most successful teachers that I'd encountered. Two others on my list you'd be interested to know, the top two are [Walter E.] Walt Disney, the greatest teacher in the history of America, and Rush [H.] Limbaugh [III]. Gosh he can make things plain. They're really obstruse, and the *Wall Street Journal* handling the same day didn't come near as close to making it clear, with all his bombastic stuff that he goes to and all that, the prostitute with the heart of gold.

Kondracke: You're talking of Rush Limbaugh?

Novak: Well, I just think in this gold streak here somewhere, it is—he's really a great teacher. So, Jack was like that, and it set me on the course of thinking about economics in terms of the creativity and incentives. If you get the incentives right, all kinds of things, people are eager to do them, want to do them, but they need to be sure

they're not going to lose their shirt, which is what everybody tells you when you start a new business. I think that's why businessmen start describing everything in terms of the individual, because they remember their own lives, when they were going to start a company of this or that, wife didn't like it, associates didn't like it, banks didn't like it. You're going to lose your shirt. It can't work. And he just remembered the years when he just had to stand on his own intuition and fight for it. What he forgot is that the first thing he had to do was hire a lawyer, work with an engineer. You needed a team. But he never talked about that because the emotional grind was putting himself on the line.

Kondracke: So where did your relationship with Jack go after this?

Novak: Well, Jack took a shine to me as I to him. We met not very often, but I kept reading his stuff and following it, and he'd come over AEI every so often, and then in '82 when *Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* came out, he took that, as he's called, his Bible. He really, really liked that and he thought that was a good philosophical statement, to have what he was trying to do economically. And I enjoyed driving him nuts. He'd always introduce me in terms of football or something.

Kondracke: What did he say?

Novak: Oh, he'd loved my book on the joy of sports, which is '76.

Kondracke: Is he in that book?

Novak: No, I don't think so. It's a good question. I'll have to look in the index.

Kondracke: Because that would date when you actually met him.

Novak: Well, I would have known him from the papers or from television, particularly living in New York as I had after '68. And I remember really taking a shine to him because he was so spunky and spirited and so win-hungry.

Kondracke: Had you followed him as a football player? Did you know about him as a football player?

Novak: Not front and center because he was up in Buffalo, but I knew about him, because he got pretty good coverage in New York. A lot of comebacks, great performances, you could tangibly see his desire to win. And the kind of leader he was in Ottawa. That's the way he was in politics too. He just worked well with people, always driving them and always cheering for them and trying to make them more enthusiastic and spirited. Anyway, I just enjoyed driving him crazy by explaining how football was not a capitalist game. I said, "Look, you work your butt off to get down the field and you score a touchdown, and you have to give up all your territory again and start over. I mean, that's a hell of an investment, you know? In football, you know, the only actual play is about seven minutes long. Each play lasts about five seconds, six seconds maximum. So, count the number of plays in the game, 140 or something like that, five seconds each. It compresses to about seven minutes. Most of the time you just stand around in a collective huddle patting one another's fanny. It's a

socialist game." I was just yanking his leg. He soon stopped asking me that question.

Kondracke: What was his retort to that?

Novak: It was a weak one, whatever it was. He was just, "Ah, come on," or something like that.

Kondracke: Because he criticized soccer at one point as being either socialist or unmanly or something like that, or European, and got in trouble for it.

Novak: Well, it's probably what he'd do, because not so much physical contact. But we used to call when I was a kid and the field was too wet to play football, too many puddles and everything to practice, we'd play soccer, but we called it "sock him."

Kondracke: You did once describe him as the most joyous warrior of his generation.

Novak: Yes, well that's what I'm suggesting now. He just really was. And I noticed during the campaign of '80 that, we'd been in California at Stanford, so I knew Ronald Reagan as governor. And I was to the left of the Democrats, a left-wing Democrat. So he wasn't my cup of tea. But I just couldn't help laughing with him. I never saw him lose an argument with a professor, ever. I remember after his term [Robert F.] Bobby Kennedy challenged him to a debate at Yale, and I bet on Ronald Reagan. And everybody was pitying, the *New York Times* was pitying Ronald Reagan and how Bobby was going to chop

him up. Reagan did the same thing with Kennedy as he did with Berkeley. He went back to the fundamentals so early in the argument that educated people had forgotten the answers. You just hadn't thought that early in the argument. And he'd be down to the level of common sense and they'd be tongue-tied. Incentives would be one of the kinds of things he'd use.

Kondracke: Let me understand something. So you'd already had some education in supply-side economics at A.E.I. from Wanniski and people like that, because Jude Wanniski was the kind of person who wouldn't let you alone, right?

Novak: I'd only go down one day a week when I first began. I first began going down in '77, I guess, and then after that they invited me to a full-time position and we went. I was simultaneously invited to take over the presidency of NPR [National Public Radio]. As I recall it, Frank [F.] Mankiewicz vetoed it. It wasn't the final step, but without working for it or anything, I was being, because I'd worked for the Kennedys since 1960 one way or the other. Anyway, I went to AEI. That was my choice. I thought about that carefully because I knew I'd ruin my reputation immediately on the left. The American Enterprise Institute had a more right-wing image then, in terms of sort of centrist GOP School of Dentistry, and that was Herb Stein for sure. But I noticed that when Herb Stein went out to travel with President Reagan, Reagan would lose his spirit. And Jack would go out every couple of weeks too, and every time Jack was with Reagan, Reagan went back to the old ammunition, and it would be joyful and joyous and he'd pick up steam, move up in the polls. I could see Jack being an infusion of kindred spirits. I thought giving Reagan in part a new

vocabulary. Not that these were unfamiliar ideas, but often it's just finding a way to put them that makes all the difference with the light going on in people. If you're a teacher, that's what you pay attention to. You try to get the light to go on for more and more students, and if they're not getting it you try a different way of doing it. And Jack was at his best with his PAC [Political Action Committee] friends at these football games. That's when we'd be together for three or four days. In fact, it was hard for me to go because I didn't have much money, and you had to pay these damn hotel prices. My tickets were free, but you had to pay these hotel prices and they made you pay four or five days not matter how long you stayed. At least once we just chose a different hotel. But then we fought traffic back and forth, we decided never to do that again. Got us a big hotel right near everything.

Kondracke: So when you went on those trips you did one talk to the PAC people, and what did you used to talk about? Did you talk about Jack?

Novak: No. Democratic capitalism. Purely philosophical. Or if Jack wanted me to, 'the joy of sports.' One year he gave everybody a copy of *The Joy of Sports* and wanted me to talk about that. And sports is the last bastion of meritocracy on the campus. You either were very good or you weren't on the team. And it didn't matter where you came from.

Kondracke: But to you Jack embodied the joy of sports.

Novak: Well, he was one example of it. He was not a hero of mine, really, but he was just a joy to be with. The other thing was he was praising me all the time. That's not too hard to take. Because that certainly was not a universal reaction.

Kondracke: You said somewhere that "He was the one who showed me the openness and joy in economics, seizing an opportunity to build a better life in one's family and community." Somewhere you wrote that.

Novak: Yes, probably, sounds right.

Kondracke: What influence do you think you had on him?

Novak: He used to talk about it a lot and he used a good many of the moves that I did in *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*. I think, I'm not positive about this, but I think one line he liked was something that in the book I attributed to Daniel Bell, and Daniel Bell told me, though, he hadn't said that. I'm sure I saw him quoted to that effect, but he said he hadn't said it. So I said, "Well, Dan, I'm going to say it myself it's so good." It was "The death of socialism is the most under-reported fact of the twentieth century." This is some time in the 1970s. Which I thought was quite prescient, but I thought exactly on. Irving Kristol had an idea rather like that too. And he had the same idea about secularism. I don't know if you remember an early essay of his on the death of secularism. It was an unspent force that had ruled through the culture for another decade or two. Its basic idea is nobody quite believed in or could defend. It was without a philosophy or without a tradition and it would wither. It runs very superficial is

more like it. Jack took it as a prediction of the downfall of the Berlin Wall and so forth, and he was really on target. That's the way they took it behind the Berlin Wall. It was published underground in Poland about 1984, published by Solidarność no less, which I didn't learn till afterwards that this almost divided Solidarity in the early days. It won by one vote, I mean, they put it to a vote. It was blocked by a tie vote and then one guy changed his mind, took credit for it later.

Kondracke: To publish *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*.

Novak: Well they were afraid, you know, how the hell can a Socialist union publish a book in favor of capitalism? But there were some very enthusiastic about it. They need an alternative. What's the alternative afterwards? And they needed that. It's why they came out in 1989, a number of the leaders, speaking of democratic capitalism. When I saw that I realized, 'They read it,' because nobody used that term before me. There are one or two uses, but I always thought I should have copyrighted it because if I got a quarter for every use of it, I'd be doing pretty well.

Kondracke: Did Jack used to quote you a lot?

Novak: Oh, a lot, yes. He always started quotes from me in those days. Another idea was family. I was the first one to write on the family, a big article in *Harper's* in '76, cover article. And I used a phrase which [William J.] Bill Bennett and others made pretty common, which was "The family is the only HEW [U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare] in America that works. And when the family doesn't work it almost doesn't matter what HEW does, they

can't heal all the damage." So that's another theme that Jack liked a lot.

Kondracke: Just one more thing about sports. A quarterback is a kind of an entrepreneur, isn't he?

Novak: Oh, of course, yes. And another thing is, I love sports. I was a pretty good wide receiver in college. We just played intramural, but I had the biggest hands in America. If I could touch it, it was mine, that was my role. I just adore it. I adored those great moments when you really do it well. They're rare in life, and it's just so thrilling. So I was trying to figure out why—my fortieth birthday, we're living in New York, I used to love the Brooklyn Dodgers ever since I was six or seven years old because we had a farm team for them in Johnstown. They'd moved out to Los Angeles. I didn't get to see the games or anything. So my fortieth birthday they were playing Cincinnati, September 9th. It was a tight race for the pennant, and the Dodgers lost by one run in the late innings, and I was broken-hearted. Even the next day I had a sour taste in my mouth and I was kind of depressed. I said, "Michael, you're forty years old. You don't even know the names of these kids. Why does it matter?" So I started going around to friends and literary types and professors and asking. They all loved sports but they didn't write about it. This is the biggest hidden secret on American campuses. They really loved these sports, but nobody talked about it. I remember I had the sports pages open at the Harvard faculty meeting—this is the lower faculty, the graduate students who teach. I had the paper open to the sports pages and the head of the program walked in behind me and he said, "Michael, that's very déclassé." But it turned out he was a sports fan too. I wanted to

figure out why is it so meaningful? And I realized there's a mythic structure going on here. Okay, what's the myth of basketball, the urban myth of baseball? It's the country myth, the wide-open spaces myth. Of football it's the immigrant myth, or as I came to learn later, it's the Alabama myth, it's the people who are looked down upon and are not part of the elites who re-live the image of their lives. You're trying to get to the goal and there are 11 hulking men there trying to stop you, so you have to contrive with your wit to get a break-through. Whether it's two and three yards in a cloud of dust, 'Lutheran football,' as I came to call it, or dazzling plays, I call that Baptist football, where it's really grace all the time. That ball's just always in the air. Or Pennsylvania football, quarterback capitol of the world. It's wit and ingenuity and diagnosing the weaknesses and going for them, and the long bomb. I thought, it's the myth of life and death and break-through, and running for daylight.

Kondracke: Do you think of Jack in those terms?

Novak: Yes, he was from California, not the same situation, but psychologically he was. He just loved that breaking through, he just loved surprising the other team. They could be bigger, they could be whatever, and he needed a running back to take the pressure off the passer, and got that in [Orenthal J.] O.J. [Simpson]. O.J. and his wife were at one of those Super Bowls, and I had the most sinking cold feeling about that. I just thought, 'This is a very hostile relationship, and that poor woman is in chains.' I didn't say anything to anybody, but I think Jack felt it too. He said something. It wasn't too long after that that the horrible thing happened. Another thing I want to say is, I campaigned with Sarge Shriver in '70 and '72 of course, and so I met

a lot of these athletes then, who were friends of Jack's. John Mackey, and I can't remember who all else. The Kennedys also were jock-lovers.

Kondracke: Right. [Roosevelt] Rosie Grier.

Novak: Yes, Rosie Grier, and, oh gee, what was his name, Olson, big tackle, white blond hair.

Kondracke: Here's a conundrum that I can't quite get through. Here you have somebody who's a star at a contact sport, who's intensely competitive, and yet, when it comes to politics, he can't be a hatchet man. He was kind to his enemies. He never savaged anybody in person. How do you reconcile that?

Novak: Jack really believed his job as a quarterback was to be a team man, and he was one of the best in loving his black teammates and boosting them and encouraging them. They just recognized in him a kindred spirit. He was a fighter. He was for the underdog. I don't know why. I think it's an American instinct. Jack Merriweather at Yale [Frank Merriwell at Yale]. It's an old American sentiment.

Kondracke: But you've got these, I'm talking about the other team. The other team, this is an intense contact sport, people get hurt, you get hurt, and Jack is intensely competitive. But when it comes to politics, he won't hit anybody.

Novak: But that's the way he was about economics too. He thought capitalism is win-win. Everybody wins. When it goes right, everybody

wins. When it goes wrong everybody loses. Now, he would say, today, wealthy people have lost a third of their capital. There's got to be a lot more income equality now than there was 10 years ago. Does that make people feel better? Hell, no. So Jack was always win-win. The angriest he would get with me is when I would point—because it was becoming clearer and clearer to me—to the sort of cultural distain in the press and the academy toward the majority of Democratic voters. There were these rednecks or steelworkers, or racist, as they thought of them, and so forth, and this great gap between the intellectuals and the people. And I would turn to the press, how the press really made it much harder for, and I was on the Democratic side, much harder on the Republicans than on the Democrats. We got away with a lot of things with Sarge Shriver, which I was scared to death would write about, but they didn't. They protected us. Jack hated it if I criticized the press. He said, "That's enough of that." I would give a very good talk and everybody would be paying attention. I went out to, what were they? He had a week every year, maybe 300 people would attend, people successful in many fields, to talk politics and economics, and he would include me in his program.

Kondracke: Where was this? Where would it be?

Novak: We'd go to different places in Colorado. Some were near Vail, or, one of his supporters had a ranch and we'd go out there. I think we went to Boise once, we'd meet in these very nice Western places in August or something. On at least two occasions I did this move about the war between the—I call it the new class war in America—it's between the elites and the people on the one hand, and then it's between the two elites—the one whose money comes from ideas and

symbols and their position, from Hollywood to journalism to the academy. I said, "Just watch. When you advertise toothpaste, there's got to be an expert in a white coat." The world's changed since 1945 in this way, and this new class finds much of its money depends on government. So it's very pro-government. And the old elite is pro-private sector. So there's a war between our two elites and they're about evenly balanced, in influence and power, slightly tipping toward the new class.

Kondracke: And Jack hated this. Why?

Novak: Well, it was too adversarial. He didn't believe in dividing people. He said, "That's our fault. If we can't win them over, we're not doing it right." And he believed in being smiley and friendly with everybody. He just did. Whether it was due to his Christian roots, or, there's something in Christian Science about that. No real disease but willpower.

Kondracke: I wanted to ask you about that. Talk about that.

Novak: I don't know a lot about it, I really don't.

Kondracke: Did you ever talk to him about religion and what his religious beliefs?

Novak: No. Not that it was verboten or anything like that, we just never did. I felt that was a realm in which he didn't like to talk, and maybe I judged wrong. And since I was in theology, I didn't want to force it on anybody.

Kondracke: He did have a number of Catholics working for him. Did you know any of them? [J.] David Hoppe or Sharon Zelaska, or—

Novak: I knew Sharon, because she was so close. What? Secretary or something like that, assistant. And I probably met Hoppe but I don't remember.

Kondracke: John [D.] Mueller?

Novak: Yes. He was in my parish. He and I had an uneasy relationship too, because while he was free market and all that he had a lot more of the traditional Catholic cautions about it than I did. I just thought Catholicism is an old religion and it grew up in an agricultural age for most of its history, and it was really with the landowners and not with the commercial class. All its vocabulary was built that way, so it didn't really—

Kondracke: John interestingly, and John takes this from Kemp economics, that the Republican Party is always represented protecting capital and the Democratic Party is always represented labor. And the Republican Party is always trying to tax labor income and the Democratic Party is always trying to tax capital income. And that the great Kemp discovery was that you should tax them equally. And he's almost developed a kind of, it's not quite a theology about this, but John has written a book about this.

Novak: Oh, yes, I know. John and I have grown intellectually closer, but I always feel an uneasy relationship. I always feel he's a bit

suspicious of my kind of Catholicism. You know, I could be very wrong. Jack thought we were kindred spirits, John and I. But John and I never spent much time together until I started meeting him more often at the parish or events in the library or something like that. We were friendly enough, but I always felt he didn't want to be a friend. I don't know how to put it.

Kondracke: Can you see any other what you understand about Christian Science in the way Jack behaved?

Novak: I didn't try to analyze this, but I did feel that part of his buoyancy and stress on the positive and the affirmative was a reaction either of having grown up in California in the sun, or a part of the Christian Science way of thinking that you strengthen your spirit, you don't think about the disease or illness. You get over it. Spunk. Look at the bright side, concentrate on what you can do, that sort of sunny side of religion. Whereas Catholicism is so much more focused on the cross, it's like saying, if you're not scared, you're not noticing. You know, if Jesus does this to his son, what can you expect? It's a little darker that way. Here's my secret, I used to tell him this too, here's why Pennsylvania quarterbacks are so, there are so many great ones. And I said, "You're from Southern or Eastern Europe, [John C. "Johnny"] Unitas, [Angelo B.] Bertelli, [Daniel C. "Dan"] Marino, [Joseph W. "Joe"] Namath, [George F.] Blanda, there's a whole list of them. In a thousand years of Central and Southern European history nothing's gone very well. It's just bloody blow after bloody blow. So you're in the fourth quarter and you're down by seven points or 10 points and there are only seven minutes to play, so what's new? It's been that way for 1,000 years. You just lower your head and play

good football and concentrate, and out with them." And I said, "They're just so cool." You give them two minutes, and, [Joseph C. "Joe"] Montana, who's the guy from the Redskins? He's actually from New Jersey. [Joseph R. "Joe"] Theisman. Theisman [pronounced Theezeman] until he went to university. So there's that sort of toughness and stick-to-it-ness and you expect life to be rough, so you're not too dismayed when it—

Kondracke: Did Jack talk to you about quarterbacking?

Novak: What he would talk about is the wit and the team play and getting everybody in the game so it was hard for the opposition to know where—they couldn't keep striking at one same spot because you get them in another one. And Jack just loved that. It's the chess aspect of football that we love and that's part of the game plan thing. It's just a game that really relies on intelligence, not necessarily wordy intelligence, but hunches, that smart working people have, and you just sense which way things are going. Maybe you read body language, I don't know what all goes into it. But when you watch the other team come out of the huddle you're looking at certain key players and trying to diagnose what they're thinking and feeling, which way they're leaning, stuff like that. It's intuition. You're trying to keep really concentrating at that level all the time. Both Jack and I loved that.

Kondracke: Was Jack Kemp an intellectual?

Novak: He wanted to be. But intellectuals' words and precision, and Jack didn't always do that. He loved distinctions, he liked thinking

things through, he was much more so than the ordinary politician or businessman. He was with a lot of smart people who worked for these high tech companies, founded them and so forth. Boy, they were no dummies, but they didn't think philosophically as much as Jack, or see the way to connect ideas as well. So in that sense he was unusually intellectual for a practical man. And he was very practical. But he wouldn't claim to be an intellectual, he wouldn't claim to have the precision that five years of graduate school would have given him or something like that.

Kondracke: But he was well-read.

Novak: Yes, he read a lot. But a lot of them do. [George W.] Bush, for all the fun people made of him, would read 200 or 300 books a year. No, not 300, but over 200, or about 200. A lot of them do that.

Kondracke: Did Jack absorb what he read?

Novak: Oh, yes. He'd make it his own. He'd pull it apart and make it his own. He'd often quote people, often allude to them.

Kondracke: What was the influence of Irving Kristol on him?

Novak: Great, because I think Irving may have, I think, before I met him, Irving may have given him the strongest intellectual approval he'd ever had. I felt that; I can't verify it. Irving was thinking towards Jack's way himself, and working it out in essay after essay. So when he discovered Jack, he thought he was an extraordinarily teachable, promising leader. I think Irving took special pleasure in giving Jack

things to read, talking things through with him, 'you can't say this because it leads to this.' Teaching him how to think through things. That's what I think.

Kondracke: Did Irving or Jack ever talk about the origins of their relationship to you?

Novak: No, I regret I never asked them. But Irving was I think the godfather, to coin a phrase, of his reading and deepening himself, giving him the conservative classics. But Jack liked those of the classics that were buoyant and optimistic and creative—

Kondracke: Such as?

Novak: Well, that was part of Irving's own charm, that Irving was never bitter, never complaining. He would do with a little wit and sarcasm, he would deal with people who said stupid, critical things of him or his friends, but he didn't dwell on it. So he got it and turned it aside and go on in his quietly joyful spirit. That's Irving. By the way, I've been noticing, rereading some things of Irving's, that he's unusually pro-Christian for a Jewish intellectual. Very sensitive to little nuances you wouldn't think anybody got, but they're there in his writing. I mean they teach Christians about Christianity, and I wouldn't be surprised if there was a bit of that in their relationship. I felt that Irving taking him seriously gave Jack confidence, and he was willing to reach a little further and further into the realm of ideas. I'm trying to think of the names—I have as good a memory as I did in the 1930s, as photographic a mind, remember where it was on the page but I don't have that film anymore, I can't retain it—I can't remember

that guy who said ideas have consequences. He was a fellow at Yale, and a highly recognizable name in conservative circles. You know, I discovered conservative literature very late in life. I just didn't know it existed. It was a whole different world, which nobody ever quoted in my circles. Other writers, Russell Kirk is pressing on my mind. But it wasn't the Russell Kirk sort, [but] those who wrote more about economic thought and the role of ideas. So far as I know he was innocent of [Leo] Strauss, never heard Strauss mentioned or his ideas alluded to. Irving wasn't. In fact, I didn't realize how closely Irving knew Strauss until I was reading the collection that Bead [phonetic] just put out two years ago.

Kondracke: Kemp was miles from Straussian, right?

Novak: Except this one idea, that there's a perennial philosophy that has very deep underground waters beneath everything, and you really should understand everything in the Western world today, you should go back to those waters and test it against the pressure of those waters and the clarity of them. And so it's right to think philosophically about economic things and political things, and Americans tend not to go deep enough into the roots of their ideas, and to see problems in them. Like the unresolved problem between liberty and equality. To be committed to both of those is to be committed to a kind of contradiction. You're only going to get equality by coercion, for instance. You're only going to get equality by boiling everything down to the most common, uncreative denominator. So there's a contradiction there in American ideas that we should be clear about and sort out better. Both are important but you can't let either

one dominate. That instinct, at least, I don't think he learned it from Strauss, but that instinct Jack had, trying to go deeper in things.

Kondracke: For sure, Jack was a fellow believer with you in democratic capitalism around the world. Eastern Europe, the Contras in Nicaragua, all of that stuff. Now, did he get that from you, did he get it from his own instincts? The phrase, democratic capitalism, I'm sure he got from you, but the spirit he got from where?

Novak: I don't know that, but I think my work probably helped him a lot on human rights. Because, you know I was human rights ambassador for Reagan three times. Twice in Geneva and once in Bern, the Helsinki talks, after Max Kampelman. So I was forging a language for human rights, which is why Jeanne [J.] Kirkpatrick sent me there in the first place. I had one day to decide whether to do it or not and I had to leave in 10 days for Geneva. I said, "Jeanne, I don't have any lawyer's expertise in the language of these things. There's now a 38-year tradition of human rights language. I don't know that. I'm not a lawyer and I'm not a political philosopher." She said, "Michael, you're the only man I want to do this." I said, "Well, I've got to talk it over with Karen. How long can I have?" She said, "By tomorrow. I've got to know by tomorrow." So I felt inadequate on that, but I did forge a language for the United States. We were reconsidering all foreign policy.

Kondracke: What year was that?

Novak: First year of Reagan. In fact this is the anniversary, about a year from now. No, this is the inauguration. It was the next day,

January 21, that Jeanne approached me in the AEI dining room. I had to be there on the 31st. And it had to get through Congress, and I had to get signed off on by the president. I was on my own. I got the [James E. "Jimmy"] Carter briefing books, you know, which are like that, on each of the issues that would come up, and what the Carter administration had decided we should do. So I picked up some of the language from that. But I also saw where the United States was going to do something different, because I knew Jeanne. And Reagan, I didn't know him personally, but just from the public record. I couldn't use the language of the Carter books at certain places, and I didn't have anybody to help me, because they had put all foreign policy in abeyance, so I was flying by the seat of my pants. But I got a nice letter from [George P.] Schultz afterwards about how that helped, just on the language parts. Not the language; the ideas. And Jack liked that stuff.

Kondracke: Jack was the ranking Republican on Foreign Ops [Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations], so he was probably funding you.

Novak: Yes, probably. And I was on Radio Free Europe too, with [Francis J.] Frank [Shakespeare], you see. So we were in very close contact with sources all over Eastern Europe. For example, in 1989, our people knew for sure that before Christmas the Berlin Wall would be down, or the Iron Curtain would fall. Berlin Wall is a different matter, slightly. And I tried to write an article about this, I tried to publish it, predicting before Christmas, and using some convincing little anecdotes, just little anecdotes but to me they were really

significant. Nobody would publish it, Morton, nobody would publish it. It was too wild a fantasy.

Kondracke: Where do you place Kemp?

Novak: So Jack got all these little stories from me like that. Here's one that really got to me. The new market, Kiosk Market in Moscow, springing up, used light bulbs, and I can't remember what they were charging, nine kopeks or something. Why in the hell would people buy used light bulbs? And they were selling like hotcakes. Because they'd take them to work, screw out a good bulb, put in [laughter]— That told you something about realism in the Soviet Union. It's really very gritty and down to earth. Jack loved stuff like that too. He picked that up.

Kondracke: So where do you put Kemp in conservative tradition? Have you studied, you're not a conservative, but you must have looked at it. Is he a neoconservative, is he a compassionate conservative?

Novak: A little of both of those. Neoconservatives are compassionate conservatives because they're mostly lower-class guys and they know what poverty is like. That's the people they want to help. But they don't talk about compassion.

Kondracke: Most neoconservatives, at least of the original kind, were former Democrats or former socialists.

Novak: All were. That's almost the definition of them.

Kondracke: Which Jack was never.

Novak: No, Jack was never, but he liked the grittiness. He knew the steelworkers, and he knew football players. By the way, another thing about Western Pennsylvania quarterbacks, it illuminates something about Jack, is that they all grew up playing with blacks, so they didn't have this, they knew friendships, not necessarily friendships but team relationships. They knew how great they could be. You looked at talent like that. And Jack had that, and I think he got it from football.

Kondracke: I ran across a reference to an article that Richard John Newhouse and Peter Berger wrote in 1977 in *In the Public Interest* called "To Empower People." Do you know that article?

Novak: I know it very well.

Kondracke: Okay. Now this strikes me as Kemp. Do you know whether Kemp ever read that article?

Novak: Oh, I'm sure he did. I'm not sure he read it there. They were at AEI just before me, they came in as adjuncts to do this project. They visited once in a while and they worked in New York. I always felt that was based a lot on my book, *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics*.

Kondracke: Which?

Novak: *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethinics*, it was called, 1972. It was about family and neighborhood and peace, but peace through strength. Reagan picked that up through, what was his PR man's name?

Kondracke: [Michael K.] Deaver?

Novak: No, the PR guy who tested things and helped them with advertising.

Kondracke: [Richard B. "Dick"] Wirthlin?

Novak: Yes, Richard Wirthlin. Wirthlin saw me on an airplane once and said, "By the way, I hope you noticed the slogan we used for the campaign, 'family, work, neighborhood, peace and strength.' Right out of your book." He said, "We tested it and it was gangbusters. Reagan just took it like that." You see, it doesn't talk about the individual. I always write about the Southern and Eastern Europeans, mostly. There are a number of books about Jewish immigrants and a couple about Italian, but the rest were overlooked, and that's what I was trying to bring to light. And one of the things that's different, is it isn't real until your family knows; it hasn't happened until your family knows. And so there's not so much talk about the individual. It's the family, and the neighborhood, and work is the big reality. Your guys go to war disproportionately more than anybody else, World War I, World War II, very heavily Eastern European guys went. Every World War II novel has somebody working in the steel industry. But they don't believe in weakness. George McGovern, I was writing speeches for him too.

Kondracke: You were writing speeches for George McGovern?

Novak: Yes, I did.

Kondracke: Oh my gosh. You didn't write "Come Home, America," did you?

Novak: Oh, no. I didn't like that stuff. I had hoped [Edmund S. "Ed"] Muskie would get it because of this Eastern European connection, but he didn't.

Kondracke: Back to the Newhouse, what struck me, this "To Empower People," and then Kemp calls his foundation Empower America.

Novak: That's because I was on the board.

Kondracke: Oh, you were? Oh. Well, talk about that, the formation of Empower America.

Novak: Well again Jack had me as his companion in this, and Jeanne Kirkpatrick and Bill Bennett and he were the leading figures, but we had a board and I can't remember who all was on it—mostly entrepreneurial types. I suggested the name. I felt the Newhouse book was a pickup of my themes, and so I was a big booster of it. Funny story. Karl [C.] Rove told me, "George Bush loves your book." He said, "He's underlining it every word." I said, "You know, Karl, I'm really glad about that because I agree with all those things. We had a project at AEI called To Empower People, but the only thing is I didn't

write that book. Newhouse and Berger did." And so I called Richard Newhouse, you knew him a little bit, he's actually a very humble man, but his appearance was pompous. I said, "Richard, I've got good news and bad news. The good news is that President Bush has been reading *To Empower People* and he's underlined every word, little comments, he loves it." I said, "The bad news is he thinks I wrote it." So I published a 20th anniversary edition of that piece, invited different people in different fields to comment on how it had worked out.

Kondracke: Did Jack participate in that?

Novak: No, no, no. I got mostly scholars to do it.

Kondracke: So you suggested Empower America as the title of that.

Novak: Yes. At Stanford in '65, and Berkeley, the big thing was Power to the People. And I was covering the election of '68 and George [C.] Wallace, and I went to a bunch of his rallies, and I said to myself, "My god, if the power ever goes to those people it's not going to be who the Berkeley kids think it is." [Laughter] So I liked that idea.

Kondracke: Jack's whole philosophy, what all links together is blacks. The Republican Party has always been, at least since [Barry M.] Goldwater, has been distant from blacks, distant from labor

Novak: Absolutely right.

Kondracke: I was going to ask you, where in Republican tradition does he fit? Is he a Roosevelt Republican? Teddy Roosevelt? There are elements of Taft-Coolidge Republicanism?

Novak: You know who there's a lot of in him that people don't, William Jennings Bryant.

Kondracke: Who was not a Republican.

Novak: Oh no. He was a much more left-wing Democrat that we ever had before Barak [H.] Obama.

Kondracke: Except that Jack believed in the gold standard.

Novak: [Laughter.] That's right, the prairie populist, and what do they call them, the people's something. People's voice, that's not quite right. There's a very good recent biography of William Jennings Bryant, by Arthur Kazin's son, I think it's Michael Kazin, Georgetown [University]. Very sympathetic for someone of his politics. The thing about William Jennings Bryant, is t he thought of himself as the most [Thomas] Jefferson since Jefferson. The Yeoman Democrat, the guy getting his hands dirty in the earth, the farmer, as the backbone of the Republic. That's what the vast majority of working people were, farmers, in the early 1900s, and somehow Jack was like that. He was a populist, gritty, working, America from the bottom up. And supply-side economics is like that, empowering people to work, get jobs, visions that garbage men's sons could own their own businesses and get an education. That's very Jeffersonian.

Kondracke: But it's also sort of [Abraham] Lincoln.

Novak: Oh, absolutely. I'm sorry. Jack would have taken the Lincoln model. But what Jennings Bryant taught me is that it's the strain that goes back to Jefferson and then Andrew Jackson and it doesn't belong only to the Democrats. That's the point.

Kondracke: Did you talk to Jack about Lincoln?

Novak: Well, I didn't have to. He talked about Lincoln so much. Lincoln was his hero. He didn't uncover as much as he could have about how capitalist Lincoln was, from the very beginning.

Kondracke: He didn't realize that?

Novak: He did realize it, I'm sure, but he didn't exploit it as much as he could. There are a lot of really good quotes. There was just an article in the *National Review*, the hardcover edition, in the last two months or so, certainly in 2011, that talked about Lincoln's economics. It's really very good. Jack would have loved it and it would have served his purposes. Maybe I haven't read—you've read a lot more of Jack's work now. Maybe you'll find it in his speeches.

Kondracke: There is some, no, there's quite a bit, actually.

Novak: Well then, maybe I might give him credit. But there's a fantastic speech that Lincoln gave in Springfield, I think it's 1834, very young man's speech. I don't remember what it's called, but the basic theme of it is that progress of the idea of liberty in history, the fire of

invention, pointing to the patent and copyright laws as being one of the six great steps in the history of liberty. I'm going to use my language now. They took the power from the landholders, they gave to people with ideas, whether rich or poor or whatever, they made ideas the chief form of economic power. Lincoln loved that notion. He called it 'adding the fire of interest to the fuel of invention,' and thought that was the great economically liberating force of history. I don't recall that Jack ever made use of that, and I discovered it rather late in my own life too. But it's so good and there's so much of it once you start looking for it.

Kondracke: Because he's not a small government conservative, and neither was Lincoln for that matter.

Novak: No. The Confederacy blamed Lincoln for just the opposite, for destroying the local communities, for building the national railroads, companies big enough to make uniforms and guns and so forth, and producing them so fast.

Kondracke: Did you participate in the '88 campaign? Did you work for Jack in '88?

Novak: I worked for him and I worked with him, but I wasn't on the campaign all the time; I would show up and try to add a few words here or there. I remember more vividly working for [Malcolm S.] Steve Forbes [Jr.], and that came out of the Empower America group. Steve was on that board. In fact, to my knowledge that's the first Steve ever talked about the idea of running for president, but he was very much in Jack's sphere, I thought.

Kondracke: When did Steve run?

Novak: Well that's what I was just trying to get my head around.

Kondracke: It might have been '92 or '96.

Novak: It probably was both. I think it was both.

Kondracke: So you were more active in the Forbes campaign than you were in the—

Novak: Yes. Steve and I had served on the board for International Broadcasting at Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, so we were quite close, and he invited me to do a column in *Forbes Magazine*. And Jack had plenty of people already for years to work with, pollsters and speechwriters and like that. There wasn't as much need. Steve was starting from scratch. I couldn't be with him the whole campaign, but I would go out certain weekends or a few days, did Iowa, did New Hampshire, things like that.

Kondracke: During the HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development] days did you talk to him a lot?

Novak: No. He helped my son Richard [L. Novak] get a job in HUD. Richard's team got a big award from the Government for ideas they came up with. Rich used that, Jack helped him again, to get into Fannie Mae [Federal National Mortgage Association]. Jack was big in Fannie Mae at the time.

Kondracke: What do you mean big in Fannie Mae?

Novak: There were a lot of people close to him that he got, the Republicans had-

Kondracke: John [W.] Buckley?

Novak: Yes, and somebody else, I can't remember, more important, a couple years later, I think head of it, I can't remember the name. I don't remember how it worked but I think Republicans had so many seats they could fill and Democrats, others. I'm not sure. [aside: My brother's sleeping in there.] We exchanged some words about HUD. I was very much in favor of housing programs for low-income people. The more people we can get into homes, the better. I never dreamed that they would do it for people who couldn't afford to pay the mortgage, but I loved that idea. I thought being homeowners is one of the great lessons in life, especially for children, because you have to do so many things around the home. And you need to learn how to caulk your own windows and paint your own things and put up storm windows and stuff like that. You have to learn all those tools, the wrenches, the different kinds of wrenches, and the hammers and the screwdrivers, pliers, and everything. You need to know those things. Luckily my wife knew more about it than I did and I didn't have to do very much in my last 50 years. [laughter] I remember Rich being reluctant to take the job through a kind of patronage. I said, "Rich, look, all I can do, I can help open the door. But what you do with it, the minute you stride across it, that's entirely up to you, I can't help you at all. " So on that grounds he did.

Kondracke: What job did he have at HUD?

Novak: He was assistant to somebody. I forget the years.

Kondracke: Jack took the job, obviously, in ’89 and had it till ’92.

Novak: I don’t remember the dates. He didn’t do it while Jack was secretary, I don’t think.

Kondracke: Oh, really? Oh, I see.

Novak: I don’t think. I think a little before that or a little bit after. I don’t remember exactly how it worked. I can’t think of the dates Rich finished his R.O.T.C, got his commission, and then started looking for work. But anyway, I’d been quite close to Geno Baroni, and I’d written a lot about redlining in city neighborhoods, Chicago and other places, where after x number of blacks had moved in the banks would refuse to give mortgages to any more. And it was driving lots of whites out of these neighborhoods. They wanted to be in those neighborhoods because that’s where the church was, Polish or Lithuanian or whatever. They were being forced out by bank policies. That led me to be very interested in greenlining, encouraging banks. We even identified Geno Baroni’s organization. National Organization of Neighborhoods, something like that. It was mostly for Italian-Americans. My PIGS, they used to call them: Poles, Italians, Greeks and other Slobs. [laughter] That if you could keep the local bakery and the local parish-- what was the other thing? I can’t remember the

other thing-- you had a very good chance of keeping people there. And when they went it was last man out.

Kondracke: Did you talk to Jack at all when he got sick?

Novak: No. Jack was very private about that for one thing, and didn't want to be seen. So I prayed for him a lot, but I didn't see him.

Kondracke: Did you talk to Joanne?

Novak: More often, but not so much. Joanne and my wife were pretty close. So Karen would take things up there and they'd talk. Joanne had a Friday morning Bible group, mostly for wives in Congress, who have the most difficult job in Washington. Their husbands are seldom around and they always have to be cheerful, good to be around, their children have to be well-behaved and they've got to dress and they've got to go to dinners. It's very hard, very stressful. So Joanne moved in and started this study group. And she invited Karen to be part of it, though Catholic. Karen was good for the group because she couldn't stand the joyful spirit of all these people. You know, Evangelicals, they're always happy. They kind of have to be.

Kondracke: Because they're saved.

Novak: Because they're saved and it's a hard role to keep, it's a hard feeling to keep up. Karen's just so much harder-headed about it and they loved her. She constantly shocked them about how grim life is and how much suffering there is. Joanne loved having her come and

Karen enjoyed it immensely. Our contacts were mostly through Karen.

Kondracke: How did Joanne take Jack's illness?

Novak: I think it hit her very hard. I think she hated to see it taking Jack's strength away. And I don't know how much it dimmed his spirit. I don't know and I didn't ask. Maybe not at all. I just don't know. But I think it was hard to see him waste away and not be able to see people and not be able to do his usual.

Kondracke: When did you last see him?

Novak: I don't know. I'd have to try and go back and try to compute that. I don't remember the last Super Bowl we went to. It used to be easy for me because I kept the seat cushions and I had to go to the closet and look at the years.

Kondracke: You went to a lot of Super Bowls.

Novak: I went to a lot. Ten easily, maybe 12. It was quite something.

Kondracke: Before we finish—

Novak: By the way, my kids are still close to a bunch of people they met, some of the younger guys in business.

Kondracke: Did you know Jack's kids?

Novak: No, not well. They were not along. I knew [James P.] Jimmy [Kemp] a little bit, and his older brother too.

Kondracke: [Jeffrey A.] Jeff [Kemp].

Novak: Yes. We knew him, and the daughters we would meet every so often. They knew us by name. They might have seen Karen more often because she was often over at the Kemps', in good times and bad. And one or two of them married Catholics and Joanne wanted to talk about that.

Kondracke: One other thing and then we'll quit. The formation of Empower America. What was the idea that Empower America was going to do?

Novak: Keep ideas going. In effect, the economic ideas, but more than that, family, human rights, and liberty around the world, the foreign and domestic sides. Jeanne and Bill and Jack and there was such bitter rivalry, humorous, but bitter, between Jack and Bill.

Kondracke: In what way?

Novak: Well they couldn't resist an opportunity to put one another down in public. When we had Christmas dinners, or groups met with spouses, it was kind of fun to watch them banter back and forth, but there was an edge to it, no doubt.

Kondracke: What was the edge over?

Novak: King of the block, just a guy thing. Bill was more the intellectual, Jack was more the nationally known figure. And I was very proud of Jack and I told him. With that campaign, what he did for blacks and how often he stuck to it.

Kondracke: In '96 you mean?

Novak: Yes. I called him maybe two or three months before. I said, "If you're going to be vice president, you better get yourself ready." "Ah, no, no, no, no, no." I'd lived through it with Sarge Shriver and [Thomas F.] Eagleton. Once Eagleton went I knew it had to be Sarge. They talked about it but it came down to Sarge, because [Edward M.] Teddy [Kennedy] wouldn't do it, [Hubert H.] Humphrey wouldn't do it. So I started writing Sarge's acceptance speech. So I started writing notes for Jack.

Kondracke: Did you?

Novak: Oh, I did.

Kondracke: You wrote—

Novak: Oh, I didn't write his speech, no, no, no. I just gave him some notions and encouragement. He didn't do well in his debate. I remember that was a hard conversation, but he did some things well.

Kondracke: What do you mean it was a hard conversation?

Novak: I talked to him about it.

Kondracke: Afterwards?

Novak: Yes.

Kondracke: And what did you say?

Novak: I don't remember. I felt bad for him but I also thought he did some very good things. I think the black theme was in there. I encouraged him to keep that up. I don't remember the textual stuff, but I knew he felt a little bit dejected afterwards. Tried not to but he did.

Kondracke: He got nothing but grief afterwards, I know.

Novak: Yes. He should have prepared more.

Kondracke: Why didn't he prepare more?

Novak: Jack—

Kondracke: He played tennis all day.

Novak: Jack, confident in his rhetorical, it's just my guess. And somebody said you're probably best to come in with a fresh mind. Richard [M.] Nixon used to, on days before a debate or something like that, they'd have photographs out about him sitting right near his yellow pad, books around, and advisers around. Jack Kennedy would

be out playing touch football. Jack was more like Jack Kennedy. It's not that Kennedy didn't really work, but he wanted the public to think this is—

Kondracke: Well, Ronald Reagan did practice sessions with David [A.] Stockman.

Novak: Yes, they all do. You should, you must.

Kondracke: But Jack didn't.

Novak: You must, but Jack didn't. But Jack was very confident in his own abilities. A little bit like [Newton L. "Newt"] Gingrich on that.

Kondracke: Now this is an issue. Some people say that Jack, well, Jack certainly gave the impression of always being confident. And other people say, like [David M.] Dave Smick said yesterday, that he was basically insecure, because he was Occidental College, a phys ed major and stuff like that and he was sort of compensating. Which do you think?

Novak: Both. Don't you find that frequently in Washington? And most of the successful people I know come from immigrant, unlettered backgrounds.

Kondracke: Actually Jack didn't. Jack's mother, you know, was a well-educated woman.

Novak: Yes, I know, that's true. But Jack aspired to be an intellectual, when he didn't have the background for it, and he more than held his own and won some respect and so forth. But he had to be a little bit insecure. Most of the politicians I know have been terribly insecure. Sarge Shriver was. Eunice [Kennedy Shriver] bet me $5, which was rather meaningful in 1970, that I wouldn't hold the job six weeks. Because Sarge gets very nervous when he gives a speech. Sometimes I would prepare, he'd like to have five-by-eight cards with seven or eight different riffs, so he could mix them up in different talks. Sometimes he'd just read through them and he'd been in frustration and he'd just throw the cards across the room at me. But I was expecting it. The Kennedys so severely criticized everything he did, privately and semi-publicly. It was just, I don't know how he did it, I don't know how he put up with it. But he did, sweetly. I learned. I knew Teddy Kennedy had his own insecurities. I discovered the only way you could get Teddy's attention is after he gave a speech, you'd say to him, "You did one thing wrong." The first words out of your mouth. He couldn't wait to hear you and argue against you. You'd know he'd take that seriously and wouldn't do that again. Otherwise Teddy couldn't focus on you. His eyes were always going somewhere else. I wasn't surprised to see some of that in Jack. Football players are so much made fun of, 'dumb jocks' and so forth. He had to feel that. And he had to get used to how to talk about these things.

Kondracke: Did Jack have a tendency to create distance between himself and other people? Was there a kind of shell or veneer around him? Was anybody really intimate with him?

Novak: I don't know the answer to that. I wasn't with him a lot. I was with him on occasions, but I wasn't with him on a daily basis. There too I wouldn't be too surprised if a man who has to give a lot of talks just desperately needs some private time. And you can create it even when you're in semi-public. You just go into your little shell, commune with yourself a little bit. I think that's normal. Before I give a talk I ask the sponsors can I go out and walk the hall for five minutes. I want to get ready for the football game. I want to get up on my toes and be real nervous. So I wouldn't be at all surprised about that.

Kondracke: Okay. Is there anything else?

Novak: One last thing about politicians. You know, one careless line and you could hurt yourself for months or years. It's a terrifying job to speak. And Jack liked to be off the cuff, had great confidence in it, but still you have to be scared all the time. Even a journalist, I think, the same thing. You just get one thing really wrong and it can be tough for you to earn you way back in the profession.

Kondracke: How do you think Jack Kemp should be remembered in history.

Novak: First, as responsible as anybody for a revolution in ideas, towards turning the Republican Party toward creating wealth and creating opportunity. Steve Forbes owed "hope, growth and opportunity" to Jack Kemp. Right now everybody is running on Steve Forbes' flat tax and personal medical accounts and personal Social Security tax. These guys really changed the debate for 20 or 30

years. I used to say and Jack loved it. I wrote an article in the Republican journal, the late 1960s, what was it called? [Michael E.] Mike Baroody edited it. *Common Sense*. And I wrote a piece in there about the great issue of the next 20 years is who will capture the language of family and neighborhood. I said, "Give a Republican the party, he'll start talking about the individual, and give a Democrat a problem and he'll start talking about the state." But the huge middle ground of human life is local life, family, neighborhood, parish, whatever the local expression is, is where most of life is lived. And that's where American vitality is and so forth. So whoever gets best at adapting that will own the language of the next 25 years. Jack did that. He did it on not just tax, but family and neighborhood and white and black. He tried to take off the edge between the press and Republicans. He didn't want the Republicans to make the press the enemy. I thought Republicans needed to pay a little more attention to that because they needed to see they just weren't convincing people. Like a say, he buoyed the spirits of Ronald Reagan. I think he was very important to Reagan's inner self. It really was the Kemp-Roth revolution. Your Roth retirement accounts. It was amazing the votes they won in those days, and all these young guys, [John V.] Vin Weber and so on, came along behind them. What I thought was happening, I came to this after a while, was that they were renewing the ideas of my youth, which I learned from Democrats, and now Young Republicans were representing them. And the Democrats were going more and more to the state and less and less to business and tax cuts, like Jack Kennedy. They were embarrassed about Jack Kennedy's inaugural. Pay any price, bear any burden. That's what I still was, damnit, and now the Republicans, Reagan picked it up. And I just thought, 'Geez, the parties changed place in my lifetime. Jack was a

big fulcrum of that. And on the ground, where it counted. Being able to move people in Congress. Huddle up.

Kondracke: Thank you, Michael. I really appreciate it.

[pause]

Kondracke: Turn it back on.

Novak: I really loved the guy.

[end of interview]