

JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with
JAMES PAUL "JIMMY" KEMP

November 9, 2010

Interviewer
Morton Kondracke

Jack Kemp Foundation
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[James Kemp reviewed this transcript for accuracy of names and dates. Because no changes of substance were made, it is an accurate representation of the original recording.]

Morton Kondracke: This is a Kemp Oral History Project interview for the Jack Kemp Foundation with James [Paul] "Jimmy" Kemp, the youngest son of Jack Kemp's four children, and his second son. We're in the offices of the Jack Kemp Foundation in Washington, D.C. This is Monday, November 9, 2010, and I'm Morton Kondracke.

Jimmy, when did you first realize that you were the son of a famous father?

James Kemp: Well, certainly watching NFL [National Football League] football as a five-, six-, and seven-year-old in the mid seventies, I knew that my dad had played for the Buffalo Bills, and my brother [Jeffrey Allan Kemp] was a high school football player. There were old films around the house, so him playing for the Buffalo Bills to me was the coolest thing, but I thought that was gone.

I was eight years old, I guess I had just turned nine in 1980, August 1980, and I went to Detroit for the [Republican National] Convention, and I was stunned to walk into the Convention Center Hall

and the Convention Hall filled with [Ronald] Reagan-Kemp signs. That was the first time that I recognized on a national scale that Dad was very well known and a celebrity, although we certainly didn't think of it in those terms then. I think the celebrity culture today is much different. But it was a proud moment and stunning to walk in and see our last name throughout the Convention Hall. Having been up to Buffalo during elections, not terribly often but doing parades and those types of things, I knew that people in Buffalo loved him and I knew that he kept on winning elections very easily. Election Day was never a nervous time for our family.

Kondracke: You said that there were films that got played of him playing for the Buffalo Bills. Under what circumstances would these get played?

Kemp: They were in our library. I probably don't remember exactly when it was, but was VHS around in the mid seventies, late seventies? I know there's one specific video that everybody in my family will tell you about. Somebody made a highlight film of Dad's career, and among whatever videotapes we had close to our TV, it was the highlights from his football career put to the music of Gladys Knight singing "Memories." There are a couple of clips that are just etched in

my mind, where you see him scrambling out of the pocket and you hear Gladys Knight's voice in the background singing about memories. I'd watch those over and over. I'd put them in. Dad would never put them in. I would put them in.

Kondracke: This was hero worship by a little kid?

Kemp: Yes. I wanted to play football. I'd go out in the backyard. I didn't pretend to be Jack Kemp in the backyard when I was playing football, though. My football heroes were my brother Jeff and Roger Staubach, but I was proud that my dad was an NFL quarterback. But I didn't know—that was too far in the past. 1964 and '65, I couldn't fathom that it even existed. I just knew it was there. My heroes were Roger Staubach, which was not very common in Bethesda, Maryland, when everybody loved Billy Kilmer and Sonny Jurgensen and Joe Theismann, but I loved Roger Staubach and Jeff Kemp, the quarterback of Churchill High School.

Kondracke: So were you a Dallas Cowboys fan?

Kemp: I had a terrible character flaw growing up, and I'm sure I still have remnants of it. I'm not fans of these teams anymore, but

growing up, I liked the Dallas Cowboys, Philadelphia 76ers, and the Los Angeles Dodgers because in the seventies those were the teams I followed. I read the sports page every single day. That's how I learned to read, was by reading the sports page at age four. I followed whoever was in the top of the standings. I was a frontrunner; I was not a local guy. Dad was a Buffalo Bills fan; he wasn't a [Washington] Redskins fan. We weren't from Washington [D.C.] But the Bills were terrible, so I felt, I guess, free to pick what team I wanted to follow, and I chose who was at the top of the standings in each sport, and it was the Dodgers, the 76ers, and the Cowboys.

Kondracke: Did your family watch football on Sundays and did your father critique the other quarterbacks?

Kemp: Yes. Dad called Sundays religious holidays, and it wasn't because we went to church every Sunday, which we did. But I must say, it was very convenient that the NFL planned their schedule after church, because I don't know what would have happened if the games were played during church. Interesting conversations between Mom and Dad. But we'd go to church in the morning, come home, and Dad, you'd find him in front of his chair and he'd have books surrounding

him, and the football games would be on. I'd be sitting on the floor in between Dad and Mom's chair.

Sundays were often days where Mom and Dad would have people come over, but other people were never the focus of the afternoon. You were there to watch football with Kemp, and he'd comment, but he wasn't overly critical of people. I think he just enjoyed good football. My sons always ask me now, "Dad, who are you for in this game? Who are we for?" And I now recollect my dad saying, "I want to see a good game." Dad was not so much a fan. He certainly always wanted Buffalo to win and he had an affection for the [Los Angeles] Chargers, but he wasn't a fan of a specific team; he wanted to see good football played and had an appreciation for that.

Then at halftime I'd run out and I'd play my own football game by myself. We didn't live in a neighborhood with a lot of kids my age, so I played a lot of fantasy football, not the way they do it today, but I'd be the offense, the defense, and the coach and all those things. So, yes, Sundays in the fall were football days.

Kondracke: All day long?

Kemp: Well, they didn't have Sunday night football then, so you had a one o'clock game and a four o'clock game, so one to seven, football

was on. I'm sure Dad didn't watch every second of every game, but it was always on, and whatever needed to get done on Sunday. The only time I ever remember Dad taking a nap is on Sundays, but I'm pretty confident it was never during the fall; it was during the spring or winter. Occasionally he'd take a nap on Sundays.

Kondracke: Did your mother watch too?

Kemp: No. She didn't consciously not watch; it's just that Mom always had things to do. She was in the kitchen; she was doing things around the house; she was on the phone. She may sit. She liked to watch the last two minutes of a football game if it was a good game. If it wasn't a good game, then there was no reason for her to watch. It wouldn't be uncommon for Mom to be doing yard work on a Sunday afternoon while Dad was inside watching a football game. Dad did not do yard work, by the way. [laughs]

Kondracke: He never did yard work?

Kemp: No. Maybe before I came along. Maybe when they were a young couple he did some stuff around the house, but by the time I came along and his career was established, no.

Kondracke: What about housework?

Kemp: No, he didn't do housework. No.

Kondracke: Who picked up after him?

Kemp: The newspaper was always a battle, especially Sundays. He was horrible. He'd read the newspaper and without folding it back—well, he'd rip articles out, so he'd rip articles out, columns out, and he would just destroy the newspaper. But even though he'd rip out what he wanted, he'd lump everything in a pile, and if Mom came to clean it up, he'd say, "No, no, no, no, don't touch it." By bedtime, I suppose, once he'd go upstairs, Mom would do what she needed to do with the scraps. He had two piles, a "don't touch" pile and the "Style" section, a "Metro" pile.

Kondracke: So where did all this stuff that he gathered during the day go? Did he take it to work on Monday?

Kemp: He was a bag man. It got worse the older he got. He had bags of stuff, and it would end up behind his desk. I know in the last

decade that I spent working with him, Christie Ferris [phonetic] and then Bona Park, his assistants, they would secretly throw newspapers away, when he wasn't in the office, that had piled up. You know those plastic bags you get in an airport that you buy a paper, they gave you a plastic bag? So he had a ton of those, and they'd be full of papers, ripped-up columns, and things would be marked up. He'd have notes all over them. So he had a real newspaper clutter issue.

Kondracke: So was he a cluttery guy?

Kemp: Yes. You wouldn't look at his desk and say this is an organized, detail-oriented person.

Kondracke: Was it a mess?

Kemp: Yes, it was a mess.

Kondracke: How bad a mess?

Kemp: He knew where everything was. He did have some system.

Sharon Zalaska [phonetic], I'm sure, figured out the system. Sharon was his executive assistant in the seventies, eighties, and nineties.

Christie Ferris figured it out. I'm not sure Bona ever figured it out. But he had a system. His desk was a mess, though. You couldn't see any part of the desk. Unfortunately, I inherited that from him, I think, but I try not to be as bad as he was. But, yes, he was messy.

Kondracke: So let's go back. What's it like growing up with a famous father?

Kemp: I don't know. I often get asked the question. I don't know anything different, so I don't know how to compare it. I can imagine differences, but I certainly don't feel similar to, say, a Hollywood actor's or actress' child. I feel like I was raised in a very normal way, even though it wasn't a normal childhood. Especially now that I'm married to my wife and we compare notes, I recognize that it was very different. But everybody who gets married comes from very different backgrounds, and you learn a lot about how other folks are raised.

Mom did an incredible job, I think, of providing stability for all of us, and Dad did as well, but that wasn't Dad's department. It was just understood in the family that Mom was the one who made sure that the trains ran on time, and whatever urgent situations would arise, Mom was able to make sure that things ran smoothly and that

whatever our schedules required, she'd get it taken care of and somebody would be taking care of us.

Mom and Dad bought their second house in Bethesda, Maryland, in 1975. When Dad was elected in 1970, they moved down to Bethesda from Hamburg, New York, and they bought a house where we lived for the first three or four years of Dad's time in Congress. Then they bought a house in 1975. I was born in 1971, so I was four years old. Mom still lives there today, and I think that's a sign of the stability that both Mom and Dad valued and believe is important for children.

But I didn't feel like I was growing up as a celebrity's child. I certainly did feel special. I was told the story many times of when I was born. Mom was in Buffalo. Dad, I think, was in Buffalo when I was born, but he quickly had to go back to D.C. When I was four or five days old, there was a dinner at the White House and President [Richard M.] Nixon got up to greet or address everybody. There were a bunch of members of Congress and, I'm sure, senators.

Kondracke: I think it was a Chowder and Marching Society dinner.

Kemp: So you've heard the story before.

Kondracke: Yes, I've heard the story, but go ahead.

Kemp: So President Nixon says something to the effect that he'd like to recognize a future President of the United States of America. Dad would tell the story in public and say everybody kind of puffed up their chest and got ready to stand up and be recognized. He said, "A few days ago in Buffalo, New York, Joanne Kemp gave birth to James Paul Kemp. Jack, congratulations, and give our best to Joanne and James." So that made an impression on me, and I recognize that that was uncommon.

I met President [Gerald R.] Ford. I've met President [James Earl "Jimmy"] Carter. I'm not sure I met him when I was a child, but certainly in 1980 and into the eighties, meeting President Reagan on occasions, and getting to do special things. There were not the rules and regulations imposed on congressmen then that there are today, so we were able to accept all kinds of gifts and trips. Mom and Dad did not have a lot of money. We were not poor by any stretch, obviously, and I'm sure we were upper middle class, but they didn't have much money to spare. We'd go skiing and we'd stay in somebody's house in Vail, Colorado, and I sure felt like we were wealthy. And I had a dad who played in the NFL.

The older I got, and by the time I was nine years old, my brother was playing for the [Los Angeles] Rams, so not only did I have a dad who played successfully, but now I had a brother for my later elementary school and my junior high school and high school years. I was growing up as the younger brother of an NFL quarterback, which that really stuck out in my mind more than my dad ran for president when I was sixteen years old. So those were all very clear signs that we were not an average family, but because I went to public school and stayed in the same school system with the same children throughout, everybody knew me and I wasn't some new—

Kondracke: Was it at all a burden that you had an NFL quarterback for a father and an NFL quarterback for a brother?

Kemp: No, I loved it, and thankfully—I guess thankfully, at the time it worked out well, I was a very good athlete at a young age, so there was never a feeling, “Your dad was an NFL quarterback. Your brother’s an NFL quarterback. What happened to you?” Growing up, that never crossed my mind. I assumed I was going to be an NFL quarterback, and I think everybody else just kind of said, “Wow, this kid’s good. He’s better than everybody else he’s playing with. He probably will be an NFL quarterback.” So I was not self-conscious

about that at all, and I'm sure that had some positive effects at the time, but I'm sure it also had some negative effects. I assumed that it was just going to happen, my dad and my brother, me. But I never felt a burden, I think partially because I was a good athlete, but also because Mom kept things very steady and stable. I was told, "You're only allowed to brag inside our family. You're not allowed to brag outside of our family. You can talk about your exploits at home."

Kondracke: This was your mother's rule?

Kemp: Well, Dad reinforced it, but Mom, I remember her specifically saying once time when I was talking about how well I did in some game, and my sisters were there, they said, "Mom, Jimmy's bragging." And she said, "It's okay. Jimmy, you know you can talk about how you did here at home, but when you go outside of the house, you're not allowed to talk like that." So Mom gave me kind of some room to get that out, but made it clear that that wasn't appropriate outside the home.

Kondracke: So what was the division of labor in parenting between your father and your mother?

Kemp: Dad was the stern voice, but his father [Paul Robert Kemp, Sr.] was not a disciplinarian at all. His father was a softie. His mom [Frances Elizabeth Pope Kemp] was the iron hand in the family. He was the third of four boys, so she really had an iron hand. In our family, Jeff had a younger sister who he tortured a little bit, but I've never heard about a lot of fights between Jeff and Jennifer. Jennifer was an incredibly sweet child. All of us, we were just together the other day, and we were talking about our childhoods. Jennifer said, "I just remember everybody telling me how sweet I was and easy I was." And Judith [Kemp Nolan] was a sweet child.

There didn't need to be a disciplinarian in the household. Mom was the disciplinarian. Dad was kind of a stern voice every once in a while. But if somebody needed discipline, it would come from Mom, and Mom set the family schedule. She managed everything. The division of labor between them was the house was Mom's responsibility. Dad controlled his chair and his bedside. She controlled everything else in the house and outside of the house. In terms of parenting, Mom really managed the parenting duties, and she and Dad saw parenting similarly. Dad never spanked me. Mom spanked me. She'd get the wooden spoon and spank me.

Kondracke: For?

Kemp: Oh, being disrespectful or doing something that I was told not to do. Dad never spanked me. He raised his voice. Once I hit adolescence, he would raise his voice to me every once in a while. I'd get under Mom's skin. Mom pushed me down the stairs one time, kind of accidentally, but kind of on purpose, and I tumbled down. I was fourteen years old.

Kondracke: Were there ever any severe crises in your family?

Kemp: From the perspective of a child messing up?

Kondracke: No. Any kind of crisis that you remember growing up as a kid.

Kemp: No . I had a carefree childhood. There weren't really any—

Kondracke: Nobody arrested for drunk driving or anything like that, police trouble?

Kemp: I guess Jeff flipped his CJ-7 Jeep when he was in high school on Seven Locks Road, but Mom and Dad didn't treat that like a crisis.

Jennifer threw a wild party at home when they were out, and that was significant. She got a talking-to. They were gone for the weekend. There were cigarettes all over the yard. I remember that. That's about the most significant. She got upbraided for having a pretty wild party at our house. She was in our houses. Jeff was at college.

Something that was probably more than a crisis than either of those things was when my sister Judith came home from college and had chosen to take a course—and this was her choosing—on French feminism. She started arguing with Dad about French feminism at the dinner table, and Dad did not like that. [laughs] He didn't put up with that for long at all.

Kondracke: Because?

Kemp: Well, I think it was his sweet daughter and he didn't want her to have what he considered to be a perverted understanding of humanity, and he thought that French feminism, those writers, flaunted natural law and Judeo-Christian values and the things that he treasured and valued most. So that was an issue. But no big crises.

Kondracke: Was he a male chauvinist?

Kemp: I think that's too strong, but he certainly believed that men and women were different. I've actually had some conversations. Because I have thought about that issue, I've had conversations with some of the women who have worked with him, and he made a point to make sure that if there was a woman who was a policy expert on an issue and there were some men who weren't interested in having a woman in the room, he'd make sure that she was sitting right next to them and that they recognized that she was a valued policy advisor.

So I don't think you can call him a male chauvinist, but he certainly did not think that it was his job to do the dishes, ever. He's from a different culture than I'm in now, but I would not call him a male chauvinist.

Kondracke: So what do you think your mother and your dad contributed differently to your value system, the value system of the home?

Kemp: Mom made the choice of where to live. When Dad got elected to Congress, Mom chose the home that they bought based on how close it was to the church that was recommended to her and that she had scouted out, Fourth Presbyterian Church. So she showed Dad the house and he said, "That's fine." It was five minutes from church.

After four years, Jeff was in high school, and Dad was not impressed with the football program at the high school where Jeff was attending.

Kondracke: Which high school was that?

Kemp: It was Whitman High School. I don't know all the details because I was so young, but I do know that they started looking for houses in the school district of Churchill, which had a great coach and a strong football program. It was still in Bethesda and close to church.

There's no doubt that from a religious upbringing perspective, Mom was the standard-bearer. She made sure that we went to church as a family, and Dad shared this and it was very evident. Church was important and the dinner table was important. We had dinner every night at about eight o'clock, eight-fifteen, and I'd go to bed right after dinner when I was little. Dad got home by eight o'clock, eight-fifteen, every night unless there were votes that were real late. That was the schedule.

So Mom set the priorities for the family and gave us the structure that Dad agreed with, but he fit in too, as well, and it was built around his schedule, certainly, but we were going to go to church on Sunday mornings, to Fourth Presbyterian. We were going to have

dinner every night. So Mom was the glue for the family. She was going to cook dinner, have it ready, we were going to eat together, and we were going to go to church together, and then she was going to drive the kids around to where we needed to go in her station wagon.

Then she had her own priorities, and her own priorities were religious. Dad, his career was in politics. Mom's career was in parenting, homemaking, and then her extracurricular activities were based in Christian fellowship. She had Friday class every Friday, and we knew that was a priority for her. She went to Community Bible Study every Tuesday. So it was very clear where Mom's value system came from; it came from Christianity. She has a deep faith and that was her driving force. The love, it was never a judgmental perspective from which she came. She was coming from a position of love, and there was forgiveness, there was judgment and structure, but there was always forgiveness and love and an understanding that if you were sorry for what you did, that was the right thing to do, and you were always welcomed with open arms.

So Mom's contributions were really on the religious side and the emotional side, and Dad's contributions, he was committed to his family. He was going to be home every night for dinner. He believed that he should be home. He had a very busy schedule and he traveled

an awful lot, but if he was in Washington, D.C. and if he could turn some travel down, he would, but we knew what his priorities were. His priorities were to help save the country. That really was his lodestar. He was very grateful that Mom handled the family side of things so well. He wanted to be a mainstay and he was, but he wasn't a terribly active parent, although he would always write notes and encourage you.

Kondracke: Did he go to football games?

Kemp: He never missed any football game. Well, I'm sure he missed a few, but he rarely missed football games.

Kondracke: What about your sisters' activities?

Kemp: They would do ballet. Judith was in ballet. Dad loved the ballet. He didn't go to all of her recitals, but he went to her recitals. That was a priority. She played piano. He didn't go to every piano recital, but he went to piano recitals. Judith, I think, knew that he valued those activities.

Jennifer played tennis in high school and she was a very good tennis player, and her partner was a gal named Stacey Roth. Jennifer

graduated from high school in 1980. So in 1978 and '79, her doubles partner, Stacey Roth, Kemp-Roth, right when the Kemp-Roth [Tax Cut] bill had been introduced, so Dad got a kick out of that. He made some tennis matches of hers. He probably had to work pretty hard to get there, because they're afternoon tennis matches. Football lent itself to him attending all of our games or most of our games, Saturdays.

Kondracke: Didn't he have to go to Buffalo and campaign on weekends and stuff like that?

Kemp: You would think so, but I don't remember him being up there that often. By the time I was probably six years old, he'd been in office for three terms, and I think he was winning his elections by 70-plus percent, and somehow he'd earned the trust and respect of folks in Buffalo and they elected him without him having to go back there all the time. I've never looked at his calendar and seen how often he did or didn't, but it sure didn't feel like he spent a lot of time in Buffalo.

I do know that he was asked a question that he considered a "gotcha" question, but who wouldn't ask this question, "Congressman Kemp, what's your address in Buffalo?"

"That's a trick question." [laughs]

"No, sir. What's your address?"

"Russ, what's my address?" He didn't know his address. They sold their Hamburg house in '74 and bought a duplex in Buffalo. I don't know if he ever saw it. So that's the way it was. We lived in Bethesda, Maryland, and it was great for our family, a lot of stability, and it was also great for him because Mom would get together with other congressmen's and senators' wives and their families, and we got to know each other. I think that was part of a different dynamic that existed in Washington in the seventies and eighties and probably before then, than certainly exists now.

Kondracke: There were a lot of Democrats around?

Kemp: Henry [J.] Nowak, [Samuel A.] Sam Nunn [Jr.] were among the families who we knew really well. I met [Daniel Patrick] Pat Moynihan. I remember being in his house in Georgetown, I think. So Democrats were not viewed as bad people. In fact, certainly the Nowaks and the Kemps had a very warm relationship. We knew their kids well and would do things together. The Nunns, I went to basketball camp with Brian Nunn, Senator Nunn's son. You're members of Congress, not Republican or Democrat, those terms.

Kondracke: What did your dad say about Democrats?

Kemp: They were misguided, well intentioned, and he agreed with the idea that government has a role. I never heard him say that government doesn't have a role, and that was really, I think, his view, that Democrats believed that we really needed to provide a safety net and care, and he agreed. He just had a different philosophy on how government could do what it was established to do. He did believe in limited government. I never heard him speak ill of Democrats unless they attacked his policies, but he would criticize Republicans privately just as he would Democrats if they didn't understand tax rate reductions. He'd get frustrated. He'd probably get more frustrated with Republicans who were so focused on balancing the budget and cutting government and didn't understand the dynamic aspects of a growing economy and the benefits that would accrue to our government and its people.

Growing up, I certainly didn't feel like there was a divide between Republicans and Democrats and you couldn't do things with them.

Kondracke: So if the lodestar of your mother was Christian faith, what would you say the lodestar for your father was?

Kemp: I think Dad had a deep patriotic spirit and abiding optimistic view of the future, and he believed that we could improve our stake in this world, and that's what he fought for every day. He wanted people to understand. Norman Vincent Peale had a real strong impact on Dad. *The Power of Positive Thinking*, I think, was a big part of what drove Dad, and he wanted people to see what they and others could be.

I think he looked at his own life, and very early on you would not have pegged him to be a future NFL quarterback. His older brother, Tom Kemp, was the star athlete, and he was a freckly-faced, undersized kid who just loved sports, but he somehow quickly learned that through determination and hard work, and he lifted a lot of weights in college, he discovered weightlifting, and I think that really informed what became his lodestar: improvement and growth, positivity, and having the mental state. If you say you can't do something, then you won't do it. So he became an encourager not only inside the family, which he certainly was. He'd leave JFK-grams on our pillows that were encouraging notes. But he believed the same thing for the country. He believed that America was an exceptional place and that we had a lot of potential and a lot of responsibility, and he wanted everybody to understand that and believe. I think that's

why he and President Reagan were so well matched. But it was a powerful belief in the human spirit and what the human spirit could overcome.

Kondracke: Where did that come from?

Kemp: It certainly came from his family. I don't claim to understand the religion he grew up in in his family, Christian Science. I'm not an expert. But Christian Science is a very optimistic, positive religion, so much so that they don't believe that sickness is really sickness. I don't understand exactly how that works.

But I think the combination of his family's religious background, his father's company, the California Delivery Service, growing and his dad and his mom putting four boys through college successfully, and that time period, the forties coming out of World War II, having come out of the [Great] Depression, and people in America, and California specifically, making their way in this great country, I think there must have been a lot of factors. And he had a desire inside him to be something. He wanted to be a football player from the time he was very little and had seen [Robert S.] Bob Waterfield play quarterback.

So there were a number of factors that fed into his optimistic view of human nature and what people can overcome: religion, his

dad's persistence and success, his brothers' success. His brothers were his role models, in addition to Bob Waterfield. His success in getting Mom to marry him. He just learned early on that if you say you can and you think positively, good things will happen, and that idea continued to get reinforced throughout his life. All of us remark that things seemed to always work out for Jack Kemp. It was quite a strong trait throughout his life, that things would work out for him.

Kondracke: Your mother was a serious Christian. Was your father a serious Christian too?

Kemp: He certainly had a serious faith, but he certainly didn't pursue it as seriously as Mom did. Mom believed that going to church was important, she believed being in a Bible study and having regular fellowship was important, and she believed that reaching out to others and sharing the good news of the gospel was important.

Dad took church less seriously. I think he had an appreciation for good teaching, good biblical teaching, and he certainly appreciated the oratory skills of a good pastor. I think that interested him more, the oratory skills of a good pastor. I think those interested him more than the gospel message, and I think that's because while I was growing up—he stopped going to Christian Science Church. I don't

know if it was in college or after college, and when he married Mom, but certainly by the time he married Mom, he was going to Protestant Church. Mainline Protestantism has a very different understanding of sin, which is at the core of the gospel, than does Christian Science.

So Christian Science was something that he decided not to pursue seriously, but I think he did not want to turn his back on Christian Science because his parents were deep believers and certainly at least two of his brothers were very serious followers of the Christian Science faith. So he funneled his faith into an appreciation for good oratory and the general concepts of Christianity, and certainly he had a deep appreciation for the Judeo-Christian roots of this country. I would say Dad's religion became economics and growth. That's where he put his time and he really saw meaning in a way that he could contribute. Whereas Mom saw her way to contribute in this life through a spiritual lens, Dad saw it through a political and activist lens. I think it's a distinction that was clear.

Kondracke: What was the discussion about religion like between the two of them?

Kemp: Growing up, I don't know. Certainly the older I got, the more I witnessed it, and I think it's something that they didn't resolve early

on, and I don't think they ever fully resolved their religious differences. That's a painful part of their relationship.

Kondracke: Talk about that.

Kemp: I don't think that Dad had the capacity—it seems very important to me, from Dad's perspective, to not turn his back on Christian Science, as I said earlier. His mom passed away in '67, '68, so I never met my dad's mother. His father passed away in '77, and he was a wonderful, wonderful man. Dad had deep respect for his parents, and turning away from Christian Science, clearly he did, but he didn't want to throw it in his parents' face. I think he felt if he fully embraced going to Presbyterian Church, I think he must have sensed that that would have sent a hurtful message to his family, and he did not want to do that.

It would be interesting to see, in those congressional books. In his first year he always had to affiliate with a religion, right? So I don't know if he affiliated with Christian Science or if he affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. I don't know what he would put down. But I do know that he was sensitive about the Christian Science religion, not only personally in offending his family, but also in the public, because Christian Science was not viewed as really a mainline reasonable faith.

Kondracke: Did he ever talk about it in public?

Kemp: I'm sure during the '88 election, I recall him having to address it, and any effort to address his Christian Science background, it was minimized. He would minimize the impact of Christian Science, and he would say, "I've gone to Protestant Church for twenty years," or thirty years, however long. And he did.

So Christian Science, he didn't talk about it very much, and I think Mom tried to talk to him about it. She wanted to dig into it and Dad didn't want to dig into it either in public or in private, so Dad didn't talk about it within the family. Mom and Dad agreed that all of us children should be raised in the Presbyterian Church, where we were, and all of us children are believing Protestant Christians, and none of us have any experience with Christian Science. So I think that's something that I don't know if Dad would ever have said that he regretted it.

The one anomaly here is that I want to say from '84-'85 to '86-'87, somewhere in the mid eighties, Dad started going to Christian Science Church again. He stopped going to church with us, and he would just go by himself, and that was not discussed in great detail.

Kondracke: How long did that last?

Kemp: It probably lasted three years. There's a church on Massachusetts Avenue, a Christian Science Church on Mass, that he attended regularly. I never saw Dad read the Bible at home. He would get a Bible every once in a while out to add references to speeches, and he loved to tie a fair tax rate back to the Old Testament.

He would ask Mom lots of questions. Anytime he had a Bible question, he'd say, "Hey, Joanne, where does it say such and such?" So she was his concordance and she inevitably knew right where the passage he was looking for was. So I really never saw Dad pick up a Bible. I do remember him asking Mom where this passage was. And he knew scripture. "Trust in the lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your path." He had passages that he knew from somewhere, but I never saw my dad read the Bible. I saw Mom read the Bible all the time.

In the mid eighties, every single morning I'd come down or I'd come up—I was sleeping in the basement by then—I'd come up for breakfast. Dad, throughout my life, was again in the morning in his chair, reading the morning paper. So I'd go to bed, Dad would be in

his chair reading books, newspaper articles, and I'd come up and in the morning he'd be sitting in his chair, in his bathrobe, with a cup of coffee, and he'd be reading the morning paper. Well, in the mid eighties, I'd come up. All of a sudden, Dad's not in his bathrobe, reading; he's dressed and he's in the living room. Nobody ever spent any time in our living room except for Mom's Friday class ladies. And Dad would be in the living room reading *Science and Health*. He did that religiously for three, four years in the mid eighties.

I asked, "What are you doing?" And he didn't want to talk about it. I remember asking him what he did on Sunday mornings, and he said, "I'm going to church," but he didn't want to talk about it. So it was not open for discussion.

Kondracke: Did you ever have a discussion with him about what this was all about?

Kemp: No. No, never talked to him about what this was about.

Kondracke: It must have disturbed your mother.

Kemp: I think it was very hard for Mom. Mom, I'm sure, had hopes of Dad sharing and being a real partner in faith with her. I've talked with

Mom a lot about this, and Mom wishes that when they were dating they'd talked more about his faith and her faith, and certainly when they were engaged to be married she would have liked to have had more counseling and had somebody talk about their faith differences. She's told me she didn't know very much about Christian Science when they got married. She subsequently learned an awful lot. Mom has studied. I have not studied Christian Science. Mom has studied Christian Science. Yes, it was very troubling to Mom.

Kondracke: What were JFK-grams?

Kemp: Dad liked to make himself unique in many ways, and he was given, when he became a member of Congress, these notecards. They were on heavy stock and had the congressional seal on them. He decided to turn those into his business card, and he used it even after he left the house. So whenever he'd give somebody his business card, he'd give them this memo card.

Kondracke: How big?

Kemp: It's way bigger than a business card. How big is that?

Brien Williams: Four-by-six.

Kemp: Four-by-six. A little bit smaller than four-by-six. It was skinnier. It was probably three-by-six or two-and-a-half-by-six. So those became—

Kondracke: Seal on the front. His name?

Kemp: Seal on the front, name, and then on that card stock he'd write encouraging notes to us the night before a big game, the day after a bad loss, on our birthday. Dad wouldn't buy birthday presents. He'd authorize Mom, "Go get Jimmy a Roger Staubach jersey." But Mom knew what to get. He had probably no input on that. But I would get a wonderful handwritten note in his black felt pen, and it was just very, very loving.

Kondracke: Did you save them?

Kemp: I've got a couple, but, no, I didn't save them. When I was little, I didn't value them. By the time I was older, my issues made

me not value them as much. Jeff probably has saved a lot. I wouldn't be surprised if Jeff and Jennifer, especially, have saved a lot of them. They probably have very different memories of those, but they're well known in our family and he gave them to all of us.

Kondracke: Wonderful, you say. What made them wonderful?

Kemp: They were personal and they expressed his emotion. He was great at expressing his emotion and love. He was an emotional man. I saw Dad cry more often than I saw Mom cry. I don't know that I ever saw Mom cry. I don't remember specifically why, but I remember a number of occasions seeing Dad not bawling, but misty-eyed. He was sentimental. He had a lot of sentimentality.

Kondracke: Were they eloquent?

Kemp: I don't know that they were eloquent, but they were personal, and it just showed that he knew what was going on in your life and he wanted to encourage you and inspire you, whether you had done well, done poorly. It was like his political career, actually, but on a personal level he was focusing on the future. "If you didn't do well, you'll do better next time." "Be a leader" was his trademark phrase that he

would often put on the JFK-grams, but he said it a million times as you were walking out the door. "Be a leader."

Kondracke: What did that mean?

Kemp: "Be a leader" was to recognize that you're different. He loved the meaning of our last name, Kemp. He taught all of us very early, "You know what Kemp means?"

"No, Dad. What's it mean?"

"Champion. Champion athlete."

Kondracke: In what? In some language?

Kemp: Yes, in Old English, German something. "Kemp" was a champion. So he wanted us to be leaders, whether Judith was doing ballet or whether we were at school. I recognized that part of what he was saying is if you excel in something, make sure that others don't feel that you're abusing your excellence to be mean to them, and to be a leader means to make other people better and help them improve.

He was great at thinking of others. Dad always made other people feel special, and I think that's what we understood he meant by "Be a leader." Go make other people feel special and encourage them.

He never talked about servant leadership, but it think of leadership, certainly in part because of Dad, as being a servant, caring for other people. Dad believed that we should care for other people, and I believe that was a big part of his public service.

Kondracke: This is so "quarterback-y," you know. The quarterback is obviously the leader of the team and is not only trying to score a touchdown, but I guess to look out for the team, right?

Kemp: Yes. There was no doubt that Dad believed that quarterback was the best position in all of sports. There was no sport that had a position like a quarterback, and he believed that those skills transferred to whatever you were doing. So, "Be a leader," he didn't say, "Be a quarterback out there," but he believed that quarterbacks required unique leadership skills that he wanted all of us to develop, regardless of whether or not we played football. I believe that Dad took great pleasure in Jeff and I playing football. I know he did. But I genuinely believe that he wouldn't have cared if we had not played football.

Kondracke: Really?

Kemp: If I decided to become a soccer player, he wouldn't have been interested in soccer and he wouldn't have subverted his love for football to support me as much as he did in football if I were playing soccer, but he wouldn't have disowned—he wouldn't have treated me any worse.

Kondracke: Your sisters weren't quarterbacks. He encouraged them, too, right?

Kemp: Oh, yes. He encouraged them, but they felt slighted to a degree, but they also both felt deeply loved by him. Something I appreciate about Dad is that he recognized distinction in people. He believed in equality of opportunity for our country and for humanity, but he didn't believe that everybody had to have the same result. It's common sense. He treated my sisters differently than he treated us. He treated Jeff differently than he treated me. Circumstances change, times are unique, and so I think he would have used common sense, if we hadn't played football, and realized, hey, it's just a sport, there are other great ways to contribute to society, and he would have encouraged us to be leaders.

Kondracke: Let's go to politics. 1980, you go to the convention. There are signs that say "Reagan-Kemp." Was there ever any real movement, or did he have any ambition to actually be Ronald Reagan's running mate?

Kemp: He certainly had ambition. He was thrilled that President Reagan had signed on to his economic proposals, and I have to believe—I don't have any basis to affirmatively say this, but I have to believe that when he walked in there, he thought, "Wow. This can happen. I'd love to be vice president. I'd love to be Ronald Reagan's vice president." I'm sure he was not going to diminish any talk of him being a vice presidential nominee, but he wasn't seeking that explicitly. I think Dad, again, had great common sense and recognized that if you want something too much and you're angling for it, that's a good way for that to not happen. So he wasn't pushing his own nomination, but there was a groundswell of support from people who saw Kemp as the perfect running mate to Reagan. But from what I understand, the political forces inside the party and inside Reagan's camp won out. I think Reagan wanted Kemp to be vice president. I just believe that.

Kondracke: Any evidence for that?

Kemp: No, I don't have any evidence.

Kondracke: Did he try to organize anything for that convention on his own behalf?

Kemp: I'm sure his staff organized some things, but I don't know. I'm not familiar enough with the political workings at that time.

What I do remember is I stayed at Ralph Wilson's, the owner of the Buffalo Bills, home in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, and I learned how to water ski, and I was left at a political rally at somebody's house, without my parents or any of my siblings, and I was nine years old. I had a tie and a sports coat on, khakis on. A busload of political supporters—I think Kemp political supporters—pulled up to this house and I greeted everyone and shook all their hands. I said, "Hi, I'm Jimmy Kemp, Jack and Joanne's son." To this day I still run into people every once in a while who say, "I remember you from the 1980 convention." Mom and Dad eventually came to that event. It may have been at the Wilsons' house, even. Those are the three things I remember from the '80 convention: water skiing on the lake, that party and greeting a busload of visitors, and walking into the

convention hall and seeing "Reagan-Kemp." Beyond that, I don't know really the political inner workings.

Kondracke: 1988. What role did you play in that campaign?

Kemp: I was a junior in high school, and really the campaign was— when would the primary campaign have been? Eighty-seven?

Kondracke: Late '87 and early '88.

Kemp: Late '87 and early '88. I graduated from high school in '89, so I was a junior in high school. We'd just finished my junior year, my junior football season, and I wanted to play basketball. I was on the JV basketball team the year before. I wanted to play varsity basketball, but there were too many events that our whole family was going to, and I would have had to miss too much basketball. The basketball coach was very serious about basketball. He wanted me to commit to everything, and I said, "Well, Dad's running for president. We're going to be going on an announcement tour." So I didn't play varsity basketball that season.

I remember the announcement tour, we went for a week, as a family, we flew around the country, and I remember throwing up in a

St. Louis bathroom. I got really sick on stage. All the lights were on us, and I leaned over to my sister Judith and I said, "I think I'm going to get sick." I got the most sick I've ever been in a bathroom of some hotel in St. Louis, Missouri, and I had to get all new clothes. It was terrible.

But I remember the announcement tour not being particularly fun. Frankly, I wasn't accustomed to campaigning. I didn't have to go to Buffalo and campaign. I went to the fun events, where Dad was already a congressman. So campaigning was not something that I particularly enjoyed, and that announcement tour, beside having a plane just for the Kemp family and media and staff, which was pretty cool, and I was hanging out with all older people, that was fun, but going to the campaign stops and having to stand up on stage, and getting sick, obviously, was a bad memory.

It was an exciting time, but I was kind of over it by then as well. I think I wasn't as filled with awe as I was in '80, when I walked into the convention hall. I knew that Dad being nominated to be the Republican nominee was a long shot, so I kind of viewed it as quixotic.

Then my grandma [Lois Main], my mom's mom, flew from California and she stayed with me while Mom and Dad were traveling after that week and they were doing all the campaigning. I was in school and my grandma stayed with me. It was a boring winter for

me because I had my grandma taking care of me, I couldn't play basketball because I couldn't just do it part-time, and I wasn't going to go travel all over the country campaigning. The '88 campaign wasn't a highlight for me. I think I'd been a little bit soured on Dad himself because of the change in the dynamic of just he, Mom, and myself in the house then. So '88 was not terribly exciting for me.

Kondracke: Did your father think that he was cut out to be president or that it was somehow his destiny?

Kemp: I think he did. I think he really saw himself as having the right vision at the right time for a country that just a decade prior had been in a stagflation and he helped create the remedy. He viewed himself as having what it took to carry on what Reagan started. I think he really viewed the progress in Reagan's two terms as the beginning point.

His book that he wrote in the late seventies, *American Renaissance*, he saw himself as the leader of an American renaissance, and I really don't think it was because he was full of himself; I think he had a great respect for the issues that he tapped into, and he believed it was the right formula, and he didn't think it was a formula that he came up with. He had a great respect for the history of classical

economics and the history of our nation and our political system, and he deeply believed that at that moment in history, it was the most exciting time to be alive, and the future was calling and there was so much possibility. He believed that he was the one who had the message for America to achieve all that it can be in building a more perfect union. So, yes, I think he deeply believed that he had what it took, he had the right message, and—

Kondracke: Did he think it was going to happen?

Kemp: I think he thought it would happen. I think he thought the force of his personality and his ability to engage people, I think he thought it would happen because he ran a general election campaign in the primary. He talked about the things he always talked about. He didn't pander to conservatives or to the party base. I think he thought that people would see the force of his ideas and they would see that George [H.W.] Bush tacked to the right for the primary. This is all in retrospect. But, yes, we had no sense that Dad was running just to run or prepare for a future run or something like that. He was running in 1988 to carry on what Reagan had started.

Actually, I remember believing for a little while, until I started seeing the polling, I said, "Oh, my goodness, you're down there with

[Pierre S.] Pete Du Pont [IV] and Pat Robertson and [Alexander M.] Al Haig [Jr.], and [Robert J.] Dole and Bush are way ahead of you." I started asking questions, and clearly that's not what the campaign—nobody wanted to talk about that. Everybody was still positive and, "Oh, yeah, it can happen." I started to think, "It doesn't look like it to me, but what do I know? I'm a high school kid."

Kondracke: Who were his key aides in '88?

Kemp: Charlie Black, he ran the campaign. Ed Rollins was very involved. Charlie Black. I think Roger [J.] Stone [Jr.] was involved significantly. A guy named [Rodney] Rod Smith was in charge of the fundraising. Sharon Zalaska will know everybody. Charlie was the campaign manager. I don't know how much Scott Reed did in '88. I know Scott was with him with HUD. He must have been on the campaign in '88 too.

Then in Michigan you've got Clark Durant. In New Hampshire you've got—who did Judith stay with? My siblings, they had roles in the '88 campaign. They'll be able to talk in much more detail, because Judith went to New Hampshire and Jennifer went to Iowa. Jeff was playing football, so he won't really have much to add, but Jennifer and

Judith, they knew everybody on the campaign and they were very involved. They knew the local people in Iowa and New Hampshire.

Kondracke: Remind me how far he got.

Kemp: Got to Iowa and New Hampshire, not far after that. By South Carolina, I think he was out.

Kondracke: So what did he think about Bush, H.W.?

Kemp: Bush had called Reaganomics "voodoo economics."

Kondracke: He did that in '88, even though Reaganomics had already—

Kemp: No, he didn't call it that in '88

Kondracke: He called it that before.

Kemp: In '80. Right? I'm pretty sure that's right.

Kondracke: You're right, yes.

Kemp: When Bush was running against Reagan.

Kondracke: Right.

Kemp: So Bush, from Dad's perspective, was a mainline Republican, Establishment Republican, who Dad didn't believe that that was the optimistic vision for America that the country needed or that the Republican Party should represent. Dad also honestly felt that the Republican Party walked away from their great history with regard to African Americans, and he believed that the Democrats overcame their horrible history with regard to slavery, and he didn't think that George Bush or anybody else who was running had the legitimacy and the ability to overcome the poor messaging of the party on civil rights and help America achieve what was possible. So I think he respected George Bush, and in 1988 he had developed a significant amount of respect for him, much more than in '80. I'm in '80, if you'd asked Jack Kemp what he thought of George Bush, Dad would have privately been very critical. I think in '88 he would have privately said, "I don't think the vice president really believes this stuff, but he's singing the Reagan tune. He's singing the Kemp tune."

I know that Dad, in advancing *The American Idea* [:*Ending Limits to Growth*]], the book of speeches that he has, that he does a postmortem of the '88 election, he credits Bush with, (a), being loyal to Reagan during Iran-Contra, and the line of H.W.'s that Dad remembers is, "In our family, loyalty is a character strength," or is not a character weakness or something like that. So Bush established that he was loyal to Ronald Reagan. Everybody still loved Ronald Reagan in the Republican Party.

Then the second thing is that on every conservative issue of the day, Bush adopted Kemp's issues. So it was hard for Dad to separate himself except on the issue of racial equality and opportunity, and that was the general election issue that he was using in the primary election.

Kondracke: Not big in the Republican Party.

Kemp: No. So there wasn't enough to separate him from the vice president, but I think Dad respected those things. He respected the vice president's loyalty to Ronald Reagan and he respected his political skill at tacking to the right and seeing the stuff worked. And while I'm sure the vice president never said, "I was wrong," he adopted those policies as his own and that's what he ran on, and I think Dad was

generally pleased that his ideas won the day. I think he was disappointed, because he didn't see the vice president as taking the next steps that were going to be required, but at least he agreed with what was done. But Dad always had great respect for the vice president's career, his service, and his loyalty. So when President Bush asked Dad to join the Cabinet, while he had to deal with his ego a little bit in order to accept the HUD offer, I think he was happy to be a Bush Cabinet member and proud of that.

Kondracke: So how did the HUD offer come about?

Kemp: I don't know the details. I was a senior in high school. I don't remember specifically how it came about. I just know that somehow either the president-elect or somebody in the shop asked if Kemp would be interested in HUD, and I do know that Dad talked to Mom about it, and Dad credits Mom with saying—and I think is in the autobiography I shared with you, that he credits Mom with saying, "If you don't take this, then you are going to be viewed as not really believing in our cities and in fixing what ails our cities. So this is a great opportunity for you." So he credits her with bringing that perspective and encouraging him, and that helped him get over, I think, the damage that had been done to his ego in the primary. He

didn't want to be in Congress anymore, and I don't know what was going on in the Senate. I guess [Alfonse M.] D'Amato was senator from New York, and it was probably not up till '92, maybe he was thinking that he'd lay low and run for senator. I don't know if that was a consideration or not, but, "Well, I've got nothing to do for a few years. I'll do this. It is a great opportunity." And he quickly shifted his mind toward that optimistic, positive—

Kondracke: It wasn't something he sought?

Kemp: No, he did not seek it. He probably sought secretary of [U.S. Department of] Treasury. I wouldn't be surprised if he sent some messages, "Hey, I'd love to be secretary of Treasury."

Kondracke: But you don't know what for a fact?

Kemp: ` He always talked about it, but I don't know if an emissary was sent or a message was sent that he'd like to be secretary of Treasury.

Kondracke: How did he handle the defeat in '88?

Kemp: He handled it with characteristic grace. He was certainly not angry. He handled it with humor. Humor was always a big part of his family, so he handled it with humor and would make fun of how few votes he earned. I think he saw it for what it was. The vice president was operating from the strong base, much stronger than his as a congressman. "The party Establishment was lined up behind the vice president, and the vice president co-opted my issues. I wasn't saying much different than the vice president was. So it's not my time." That's how he handled it on the outside. He was never bitter. He handled it in a manner that is very consistent with what he taught us. When you lose, don't be bitter. Don't say anything bad about your opponent who beat you. I think a lot of the characteristics that he learned from team sports and football, and a lot of what he was taught from his parents when I'm sure he complained as a little kid, "My older brother Tom beat me at this," "Well, work harder. Do better." I think that was the ethic that he brought to the aftermath of the '88 loss. But I do think it internally had an impact on him that was very significant.

Kondracke: This was kind of his first defeat. He lost football games, obviously, but—

Kemp: This was a big defeat. I think that internally this really hurt him. Externally, none of us saw it and he put up the front that he knew he should. I think internally it was a blow that was hard for him to deal with, but not too hard, because I think with some of Mom's encouragement, he quickly pivoted to his next challenge and opportunity and took it on with a great attitude and a lot of ideas, so he was able to move on, but he did view this as his opportunity, and he knew that he wasn't going to be running in '92. He looked at his age. I don't know what all he was thinking. I don't know what he was thinking, but I do think internally it hurt him.

Kondracke: The pattern of the Republican Party is that you have to do it more than once. So did he think he was going to run in '96?

Kemp: I think it's hard to think eight years down the road, and I think at that time it was hard for him to think—he knew a lot could happen in those eight years. I never heard him talk about 1996. Now, I went to college in 1989 and I was gone. He loved being HUD secretary. He loved doing unexpected things as a HUD secretary and being a unique, distinct Republican in a traditional Republican administration. I would imagine that he thought about '96, and I know he set up a PAC [Political Action Committee] to consider a run in '96. They set that up

after [William J.] Clinton won in '92. During these years, I'm probably less of a reliable source on what he was thinking and going through, but he didn't talk to the family about running in '96.

Kondracke: Ever?

Kemp: He didn't gather the whole family and say, "Hey, look. I'm gearing up for '96."

Kondracke: So there was no 1988-like process that went on in 1996.

Kemp: 1988, I don't remember a real process.

Kondracke: Well, I mean, he got a manager.

Kemp: He had a PAC for '96, but I think it was pressure. I think '88, he really wanted to do it. I think leading up to '96--'93, '94, '95, lots of people were talking, "Okay, Jack, this is your time," and I don't think he had the fire in his belly. I think '94 really helped take the fire out of his belly, even though the Republicans were swept back in. I think he felt like, "What has the party become? This isn't the party

that I helped build.” I think there are lots of interesting, complicated relationships within the Republican Party, with Newt Gingrich—

Kondracke: What was his relationship with Gingrich like?

Kemp: Well, Gingrich was there in the seventies and eighties.

Kondracke: He was a power way back in the seventies.

Kemp: Yes. They were young Turks. This ties back into part of the problem that I had with Dad. Newt Gingrich was a friend. Trent Lott was a friend. [John Vincent] Vin Weber was a friend. But all these guys were not friends the way I came to understand what it meant to be a friend. They were political allies and friends and colleagues, and yet they weren't friends the way I saw Dad with Sam Nunn or Henry Nowak privately.

I mean, times changes. It's hard to really put a finger on it, but Newt Gingrich became so focused on getting the House [of Representatives] back, I guess, and going against Washington, he built up Washington as the enemy, and Dad didn't like that strategy of identifying what we are against. Dad wanted to talk about what we're for.

I think he saw the Republican Party moving outside of that framework, and it troubled him. I know his relationship with Newt changed over those years, and they still were friendly, but I don't know if it was a rivalry. Things changed over time, and Dad felt like the Republican Party was moving away. I do remember him saying that he felt like the Republican Party had moved away from where his vision for the party was. He felt like the party left him. He didn't feel like he left the party, but he felt like the party left him. I think it's actually a little bit of both. I think he did leave the party. His ideas were developing and evolving. He certainly wasn't in a position where he would even consider leaving the Republican Party and joining the Democratic Party, but I remember during that time he would talk about the party with some disappointment.

He was also very conscious of how much—the '88 campaign had debt. That was another big issue, is that it wasn't well managed financially and there was debt that he had to raise money to deal with. So the prospect of raising the amount of money through that PAC to get ready for a run, he was not enthused about doing that. It was a combination of forces that led him to make a decision not to run in '96. Again, I don't know enough about what he was actually going through. He didn't discuss it with me much at all, and I was gone. I was not in D.C. anymore.

Kondracke: Where were you?

Kemp: I graduated from Wake Forest in 1993. In fall of '93, I'm a graduate student at Wake Forest, playing my fifth year of football, my final year of eligibility. Spring of '94, I go to London for a semester with Wake Forest, and I get a call asking me if I want to go to training camp with a Canadian League football team in Sacramento. So I go from London to North Carolina, back to Wake, where I train to get ready for football. I go to Sacramento. I spend the year in Sacramento. During my '94 off-season, I go down to Atlanta and I try out for the Scotland Claymores of the World Football League. I get cut. I go back to Bethesda, stay there for a month. Go to San Antonio, Texas, early, May '95. So the Sacramento team moved from Sacramento to San Antonio, so now I'm in San Antonio, Texas, for '95. So, '94-'95, I'm in London, Sacramento, Atlanta, a little bit of time in Bethesda, San Antonio.

Kondracke: What was in San Antonio?

Kemp: The Sacramento Gold Miners CFL football team moved to San Antonio. The owner of the team moved to San Antonio. We played in

the Alamo Dome. We'd been playing in Sacramento State Stadium in Sacramento. Then I stayed in San Antonio that off-season. So I didn't come back to D.C. So, '94-'95, I'm pretty much gone and on my own, and enjoying that and not terribly in touch with Empower America or what Dad's doing.

Kondracke: When did you come back?

Kemp: San Antonio off-season, that's late '95. I'm in San Antonio. All the U.S. teams disband in the Canadian Football League because the Cleveland Browns decide to move to Baltimore to become the Ravens, and the best American CFL franchise is in Baltimore, and there can't be two teams in Baltimore. So the Baltimore CFL team, called the Stallions, disbands. All the U.S. teams disbanded at the same time because financially everybody was struggling, so all the U.S. players on those teams get put into a draft, and I get drafted by Montreal. So I went from San Antonio. I probably stopped in Bethesda for a month, worked out some, and then I go to Montreal for '96.

When he gets nominated to be Dole's vice president, I'm outside my teammate's apartment and he yells out the window, "Hey, Kemp, your dad's on CNN. He's going to be the vice presidential nominee."

I said, "No, he's not. Dole doesn't even like him."

"It's on CNN."

I said, "They're coming up with a new name."

"No, they said it's already decided."

I said, "Well, I think my parents would have called me."

"Would you just get up here and look at the TV?"

So I went back up to the apartment, and sure enough, the decision had been made, and I'm thinking, "Man, I must have really made Dad angry. He doesn't even talk to me anymore." But it was done very secretively, and I just know they didn't call me in Montreal and tell or consult me, which was fine. So that was a big surprise to me when that happened. I was up in Montreal and really felt isolated, which was kind of nice.

Kondracke: Did you feel estranged in some way from your father?

Kemp: I think during my twenties, yes. I was out of college and I was on my own. I can't speak for Mom. My impression was that there was never any doubt, again, about their commitment to one another, but I was disappointed in their marriage. I'm certainly old enough now to have opinions, and I knew what I was looking for in a potential spouse, and I was learning about the type of boyfriend/husband that I wanted to be. I didn't have great respect. I had great respect for

many of Dad's good qualities, but one of the most important things, I thought, was the way he behaved as a husband, and I didn't have great respect for the way he was a husband to my mother, who I was very close to and loved very much. I didn't feel estranged. Dad never would do anything obvious to make me feel that way, and he was proud of me. I talked football with him, but I was pretty much done talking to Dad about anything other than football or generic stuff, and I had a chip on my shoulder against Dad. So I wouldn't say that I felt estranged, but I certainly did not feel close to him.

Kondracke: And yet here you are running the Jack Kemp Foundation and you were his partner in Kemp Partners, right?

Kemp: Yes.

Kondracke: So how did you reconnect?

Kemp: So I played football through 2001. I got married in 1998. I married Susan Adeletti in 1998.

Kondracke: Where did you get married?

Kemp: Fourth Presbyterian Church. Susan grew up in East Longmeadow, Massachusetts, and grew up Catholic. She's the youngest of four children. When she went to Boston University, her parents stopped going to Catholic Church, so she stopped going to church. When we met, she had to interview me. She was a reporter and she had to interview me. I turned the interview around because I was interested in this young gal who was a sports reporter.

Kondracke: You were playing?

Kemp: I was playing for the Sacramento Gold Miners, and she was a reporter.

Kondracke: For?

Kemp: She was a reporter for some little town outside of Sacramento called Marysville. I don't remember the name of the paper, but it's the *Marysville* something.

So she was covering our training camp. This is a funny story. She was trying to string for the AP [Associated Press], so she talked to the PR guy for the team and she said, "I need to know what are the

good stories. I'm trying to string for the AP. What are some good stories that I can see if I can get picked up at AP?"

So Tim Griffin gave her some ideas. "Yeah, we got this kid, Kemp, who's fourth-string quarterback, but his dad played in the AFL and NFL, and his brother just finished playing in the NFL. His dad's the politician Jack Kemp."

She made the connection that there would probably be interest in Buffalo for this story. She'd already interviewed me once because she had to interview all the quarterbacks during training camp, but now training camp was over. I was back in Sacramento. So Susan got a time set up with me to interview me, and we sat down underneath a tree near our practice facility. So it wasn't the normal environment. It wasn't the locker room. She wanted to do an in-depth interview. She asked me, she said, "Okay, so your dad was a successful NFL quarterback. Your brother just finished an eleven-year career in the NFL. You are fourth-string on a Canadian Football League team in Sacramento, California. Why are you doing this?"

And my answer was, "I believe that God has a plan for my life."

But before I could finish my answer, she interjected, "You believe in God?"

And I said, "You don't believe in God?"

She said, "No. Who believes in God?" So she had lost her faith through her years at Boston University, where she says she didn't know anybody who believed in anything, really. And I clearly did have faith. So at that point I turned the interview around on her, and we had a long conversation.

She ended up writing the story, but it got stolen by another AP writer out of San Francisco who saw the idea. He stole it and wrote it, and she wrote hers anyway, but it didn't get picked up by anybody.

Our relationship was built on our interest in spiritual things, and we wrote letters to one another, even though I moved to San Antonio, she moved to Alaska, but we fell in love writing letters as she was reading Pascal's *Pensées* and *Mere Christianity* [by C.S. Lewis] and reading the Bible all the way through, trying to determine if she could really believe in God or not and in Christianity.

So there's no doubt in my mind that I was committed to finding a wife with whom I would share faith. That was the most important thing to me to hold in common, and certainly significantly, because I didn't see that happen with Mom and Dad. So Dad and I were not estranged, but we certainly weren't close through the nineties.

Then Susan and I got married in 1998, and to Dad's credit, he embraced Susan, welcomed her wonderfully. He always had a graciousness about him, and he made this girl, who could have been

overwhelmed coming into a famous family, made her feel at home, and that went a long way with me.

Susan didn't want to get married in her home town because she wasn't Catholic. She made the decision to be Protestant. Actually, both of us. I said, "Honey, if Catholicism is the true church, I want to be a Catholic. I've never looked at Catholicism." So together we went and talked to Father [Paul] Scalia and had a great conversation with him.

Kondracke: Who's Father Scalia?

Kemp: Judge [Antonin] Scalia's son. He's a priest of a church in northern Virginia. And we went to talk to Rob Norris, the pastor at Fourth Presbyterian Church, and we took all the questions that we had about Christianity and we kind of threw them at these spiritual leaders. Susan and I, as well, decided that we were Protestant believers, and she decided she was not a Catholic, so she didn't want to get married at home. She said, "Fourth Presbyterian is really my church." And by this time she had left Alaska and moved to Maryland to be close to me, because I was living in Washington, D.C., during my off-seasons.

Once I went to Canada, I couldn't stay there during my off-seasons, so after '96, I came back to Washington, D.C., and lived with friends of mine in Georgetown each off-season, and I was a substitute teacher. I wanted to get into education, so I thought that being a teacher and being a football coach would be a great life. So I was substitute teaching, living in Georgetown, and Susan left Alaska in '97. She wanted to come back to the East Coast, and because of me, she moved to Maryland and so she started going to Fourth Presbyterian Church, so we decided to get married here in Bethesda.

So Dad welcomed her beautifully into the family, and I really appreciated that.

December 31, 1998, Susan had Jonah, our oldest. In 1999, I was traded to Toronto, where I played my last three seasons.

Economic reality that Dad had been teaching on a macro level—Dad was horrible, by the way, at teaching micro personal economics. He was not good on personal economics. He wasn't good at managing money, and he didn't pass any of those skills on to me. I wasn't profligate; I never spent a lot of money. I didn't need very much, but I wasn't making very much and now I was married and had a kid, and life was hitting me in the face. Dad said, "What are you going to do?"

I said, "Well, I don't know. I need to find something other than substitute teaching and making a hundred bucks a day when I do that."

He said, "Well, come work for me. I've got all these boards I'm on. You can still work out during the off-season." Because at that point, in 1999, I had established myself as a competent CFL quarterback. I wanted to be an NFL quarterback. I was angry that—I wasn't angry. I was disappointed that I didn't become what I'd assumed I'd always become. That idea changed in college some because I didn't start for four years, and only started eight out of eleven games my last year. But I was disappointed that I hadn't become an NFL quarterback, so in 1999, I'd established myself as a solid CFL quarterback, but nobody said, "Kemp, you're our guy."

So I'm in Toronto competing with Jay Barker, who won the national championship at University of Alabama, for the starting job, and I beat him out. Then he beat me out. I'd play a bad game. Our coach played yo-yo quarterbacks. So during the off-season, Susan and I came back to Washington, D.C., and we were renting a little carriage house. Dad said, "What are you going to do?"

I said, "I don't know."

He said, "Come help me manage these twenty-two boards that I'm on, and I get requests nonstop to join boards. It's great, I'm

having a ball and learning a lot, but it's a lot to manage. I can pay you something and you can still work out." I still wanted to make NFL. I thought that I could. I was twenty-seven, twenty-eight, and thought I still had a chance if I had a couple of good CFL years. A bunch of CFL quarterbacks went to the NFL—Doug Flutie, Jeff Garcia, Warren Moon. So I didn't think it was out of the realm of possibility.

So that was a great deal. I went to Empower America every day and I'd work with Dad, and I sat right next to [Lawrence] Larry Hunter, who was Dad's speechwriter and chief economist at Empower, and I worked closely with J.T. Taylor, who was president of Empower America, and I started to get to know the people in Dad's political orbit at the turn of the century. I wasn't angry at Dad; I'd been kind of disaffected and I was hardened, I think, in my relationship with Dad. I disabused myself of the idea of having a good friendship with him, and that was disappointing. I wanted to have a good friendship with my dad as an adult, but I realized, no, it's not going to happen. And I was fine. I got the point where I was getting okay with it. He was generous to me. I needed some money, and my dad was willing. He was a generous guy and he didn't need to pay me what he was paying me, but he helped me out. So I enjoyed that off-season working with him.

I went back and played football another year, and he loved coming up and seeing his grandson and seeing me play football, and I had a great year in 2000. So I was kind of building up my hopes that I'd get a shot with the NFL again. So the next off-season, I went back to the same thing, worked out and worked at Empower America for Dad personally, not for Empower.

2001, I went back, and now we had our second child. Marco was born February 2, 2001, so my last season, 2001, we had two children. So Dad was generous. It was clear that he needed help. I'd developed a relationship with J.T. Taylor, and it was fun to be able to make fun of Dad with J.T. Taylor, who worked for him and knew what a pain in the butt Dad was, but how great it was to work for Dad also. He was dynamic and you never knew who was going to come in the office. He had [William] Bill Bennett there, and I loved being around Bill Bennett. [Peter] Pete Weiner was there. It was a fun place to be working.

So, 2001 off-season, I'd now been there for '99, 2000, and this third off-season is when the dot.com crash happened. Dad was on a lot of dot.com boards. He was the ultimate advocate for entrepreneurial capitalism, and he was having a ball, all these guys coming up to him with great ideas. So he'd have me take it to Fair Capital and Thomas Weisel Partners and [Joseph G.] Joe Fogg [III] at

Westbury Partners, all the people who he knew in the financial world, and I'd test these ideas that people would say, "Hey, can your dad join the board?" And I'd learn how they looked at these companies.

Then 2000, everything went through the floor, and Dad's net worth—he was very interested in his net worth at this stage, so that was kind of a scorecard. So he was ecstatic, but then 2001, the floor fell out and he went, "Whoa!" J.T. and I had been talking to Secretary [William S.] Bill Cohen and his staff, and they set up the Cohen Group. They said, "You guys really should do this for Jack." J.T. wanted to get involved in the private sector. He'd been at the Chamber and chief of staff on the [Capitol] Hill, and he'd worked for Dad at HUD, and now he was running a policy shop and he wanted to get in the private sector. So we said, "Well, let's start a consulting firm."

I was under contract, supposed to go back in 2002 and play for Toronto, and I thought I was operating from a position of strength. Turns out I wasn't, and they didn't renegotiate my contract and meet the demands that I'd placed on them. We now had two kids and we'd bought a house.

Kondracke: Here or there?

Kemp: Here, not there. So life had gotten serious, and they said they didn't need me. I thought they'd call me back. 2001, I had an up-and-down year. Nobody from NFL ever called. So I kind of faced the reality, I'm thirty years old, my wife and I have two kids, and I don't want to be schlepping them back and forth. "You know what, Dad? I enjoy working with them." And I'd gotten to, I guess, the place in my relationship with them where I was fine with him being a work colleague. I was never ashamed to be his son. I never had a complex about it, and I have one even less now, obviously.

But I said, "You know, what can I do? I've played football for eight years. I majored in History at Wake Forest. I'd love to get in education." But I talked to some people in education, looked at teaching and going into administration, and I didn't really feel like going back to school, and I didn't see any way to make any money there. So I said, "Well, J.T., let's do this. You run Empower America and I'll set up Kemp Partners, and when the time's right, you'll come over and let's build a business."

So I started setting out to build a business, and Dad invested in it and gave us the seed capital and gave me and J.T. some equity, so we started Kemp Partners.

Then throughout the eight years of Kemp Partners, I would say there's no doubt Dad and I mended our relationship throughout the

time of Kemp Partners. I talked to him. I went in and had conversations with him. I didn't dredge up the past. That would have been counterproductive, because he was not good at looking backwards and being self-critical, but he never disputed the fact that he was far from perfect. So we had some great heart-to-heart conversations through the years, as well as building the business and disagreeing about how to build the business, and ultimately I was right about a few key issues that he and I disputed each other professionally on, and that earned his respect for me. We were never best friends, but I had gotten beyond that hope. We got to a very good place in our relationship and it was a privilege to be able to, (a), work with him and, (b), take care of him when he was sick. From a spiritual perspective, his faith changed certainly when he was sick.

Kondracke: He was diagnosed when? Describe the process of the illness.

Kemp: So in retrospect, we were working for a client in Israel, Raphael Industries, and we were in Israel for meetings in 2008, middle of 2008, maybe fall. Sometime in 2008. Dad had been complaining about his health. He'd had a knee replacement and he couldn't ski anymore. He'd had his knee replaced because it was bone-on-bone

and no cartilage. His health was unbelievable. This guy, he hate horribly on campaign trails. It's legendary. Doritos, hot dogs with mustard, Coke, Diet Coke. He didn't take care of his body. He didn't exercise. He hated lifting weights. He hated exercising after his football career. The only thing he liked was competition. Tennis. Skiing was great, but tennis was it. He hated golf; too slow. But anytime he got a physical checkup, he was fine.

The only issue he had is that he always had these skin things popping up. So throughout his sixties and seventies, maybe even as early as his fifties, he would have things burned off his face and arms.

So in 2008, we're in Israel and it's just Dad and myself on this trip. He's complaining about his back. "Jimmy, my back's sore."

"Dad, there's a masseuse in the hotel. Why don't you go see a masseuse."

Turns out it was a Russian male masseuse (sic), and this is in fall 2008, I think. Poor dad. Turns out the cancer, the melanoma, had already eaten away at his bones. This masseuse worked him over like Dad was the athlete he was, not the seventy-two-year-old man with cancer. Obviously, we didn't know he had cancer. That really negatively impacted Dad's health.

Dad went on to campaign for [John] McCain, Elizabeth Dole, and others at a pretty significant pace. He rode bus in North Carolina for

Elizabeth Dole for, I think, two days, and he was uncomfortable. He didn't complain very much, but when we first knew something was really wrong, my wife and I spend Thanksgiving with her family, so I was up in Massachusetts, but I talked to my family on Thanksgiving. My sisters were in Bethesda for Thanksgiving, and they said, "Dad couldn't sit at the dinner table at Thanksgiving." His hip had deteriorated so much that it was like termites had eaten through the bone. So he couldn't sit upright.

Kondracke: Normally this is excruciating.

Kemp: Dad's pain tolerance must be really amazing.

So he had to be sitting reclined in his chair in the family room, and he didn't eat any food and he was depressed, and it kind of soured the whole Thanksgiving. He couldn't figure out what was wrong. He called an orthopedic doctor and said, "I got to get checked out. Something's wrong with me." So they thought it was—what did they think it was? They gave him some shot. I can't remember what they thought it was. Man, I'm surprised I can't remember.

Anyway, I come back from Thanksgiving, from Massachusetts, and finally after a few days, they said, "You need to get a biopsy. You need to get checked out." So somehow they made the

recommendation to an oncologist, so it was first week of December 2008 that he was diagnosed with poorly differentiated cancer of unknown primary. They didn't know it was melanoma, and they never did find a spot on his body. I don't know what we suspected melanoma right away, but it should have been obvious because he always had these things on his face. So December 2008, he's diagnosed, but Israel was the first hit that I now reflectively see as the place. But for a guy who didn't complain, he was complaining an awful lot, which wasn't a lot, but throughout the fall, he was just not comfortable, and people could tell.

Did you see Fox News' thing on conservatism?

Kondracke: Brit Hume?

Kemp: Brit Hume. Apparently this is the last long interview that he sat for. You can look at his face, and I said to my wife, "Wow. You can just tell." So I don't know what the date is. I'll ask Bona when that was, when he sat for that. But the doctor said that this cancer's been in him for a number of years. They couldn't tell you how many, but he had this in him for a while.

What I was saying is that from a spiritual perspective, Dad was changing those last—from 2007 on, he was much more reflective and

considerate of Mom. He never became totally considerate of Mom, but he became more—

Kondracke: What does that mean?

Kemp: In any relationship we are considerate of one another.

“Excuse me, please. I need to use the restroom.” Dad used manners out in public, but he had no manners at our home. The rules applied to all of us, but they did not apply to him. He could burp at the table. He never was over-the-top disgusting, but he ate food too fast and he’d have to belch, and he would. Mom would said, “Jack.” And he’d get a smirk on his face. But it went beyond that. He did not think he was not considerate towards Mom. He taught me to be considerate and respectful of women and open doors for them, and he didn’t do any of that stuff for Mom. As I became an adult, it’s part of what I think bothered me about him, that there was an inconsistency there. So he seemed to recognize that a little bit more his last few years.

Mom and Dad had an incredible fifty-year marriage full of all kinds of stuff, and at the end, they really dealt with a lot of their issues. I saw that happening and I encouraged it. I specifically talked to him and encouraged him on that front, and I told him much more clearly, when I saw him being inconsiderate, and I think he respected

my view more. He was more conscious of it. So their relationship, all relationships are dynamic, and theirs changed, and I think changed for the better the past few years.

He was considering his mortality and thinking about spiritual things, and by the time he was sick and dealing with the everyday treatments, the hydration, he didn't enjoy being cared for, his faith had deepened, and I don't have any doubt—this could be wishful thinking, but I don't have any doubt that at the end of his life he believed that he was a sinner and that the blood of Christ covered his sin, and that he repented. Whatever it means to be a full believer, I believe that he was at the end of his life, and that was really a process that took place over the last three years. He met with Rob Norris regularly, and I think he talked about Christian Science more with Rob than anybody else. He didn't talk with us about it.

So it was an incredible privilege that he let me help him when he was sick, and I'm so glad, and I have no doubt that God had me right where I was, working at Kemp Partners with Dad, and I was uniquely positioned within our family to help Mom and Dad through that period, and now it's a privilege to be able to run the Foundation and help preserve the great work that Dad did and take it into the future.

Kondracke: Stop.

[End of interview]

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