JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

SYMPOSIUM

KEMP CONGRESSIONAL STAFF

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PANEL 2
KEMP CONGRESSIONAL STAFF
FROM THE 1980s

JACK KEMP FOUNDATION
WASHINGTON, DC

James Kemp: My name is [James P.] Jimmy Kemp. I'm President of the Jack Kemp Foundation, and we're here in the House Administration Committee, and I'd like to thank Chairman [Daniel E.] Dan Lungren for organizing this for us.

The Jack Kemp Foundation exists to engage, develop, and recognize exceptional leaders. This Kemp Oral History Project Congressional Staff Symposium is a part of our Kemp Legacy Project, where we recognize a great leader for whom the Foundation is named, my dad, Jack [F.] Kemp. These folks behind me were a critical part of Dad's success. Dad encouraged his whole team to be a part of the incredible opportunity that they had during the seventies and eighties to help restore America to become the best that it could be, with an optimistic attitude, knowing that our greatest challenges are met by people who have ideas, who can provide solutions into the future.

Today we stand on the shoulders of not only my father and many others, but these great people who served on my dad's staff, who I got to know when I was a young boy, and I want to thank all of them for being here and [Morton M.] Mort Kondracke for leading our Kemp Oral History Project, which, as I said, is a part of the Kemp Legacy Project. I hope you enjoy this symposium. Please go to the Jack Kemp Foundation at www.jackkempfoundation.org. Thank you.

Morton Kondracke: Thank you all for being here. We'll start with John Mueller, please, and then go over to Sharon Zelaska and then Michelle [Van Cleave] and so on. Say what your name is, what your job was, what your dates were, how you got the job, and what were your first impressions of the Jack Kemp office and Jack Kemp, for that matter.

John D. Mueller: I'm John Mueller. I worked for Jack from January 1979 through December 1988. I was hired as his speechwriter, but kind of backed into being his economist as well.

My first impressions of Jack was that he was a very forgiving guy, because I lived in New Jersey at the time, in Morristown, and I was supposed to be at an interview with Jack in his office, I think ten or eleven o'clock in the morning, but I just figured it would take about three hours to get down to D.C. from where I lived. In fact, it's about four hours, and so I was late for the interview. So I called ahead from a payphone along the way, and Jack was not at all miffed with the fact that I was late. In fact, when I got there, we hit it off very well. So my initial impression with Jack was he was just a regular guy, and that was always his way of operating, I think.

Sharon Zelaska: My name is Sharon Zelaska. I worked for him from June 1, 1977, to February 1996. I was a personal assistant, administrative

assistant, did a lot of anything he wanted me to do. My title didn't make any difference. I was also known as Mother Superior. I was sort of a gatekeeper of the office.

My first impression was that he was very charismatic. I came from the American Enterprise Institute, where I was the office manager, and I just absolutely loved my job. He called me one night and asked me if I'd come for an interview, and I went, "Okay." So I went in for the interview, and before I left the office, I had accepted the job, which I was kind of amazed that I did that quickly. But it went on to be a great relationship for twenty years.

Michelle Van Cleave: My name is Michelle Van Cleave. In 1981, when Ronald Reagan took office, there were many changes in the congressional staff. Some people left in order to go work for the administration, and one of the people that Jack Kemp lost was his fabulous defense assistant, [William J.] Bill Schneider [Jr.]. I had been working with the Reagan campaign. I'd been working with the Reagan campaign through the election and the inauguration, and Bill arranged for me to be introduced to Jack, so I came over for an interview in February of 1981. And I will never forget that interview, because I sat with Jack in his office and he hit me with a barrage of questions, giving me about ten seconds to answer each of them, on as wide a variety of topics as one can possibly imagine. And being a brash

twenty-something-year-old, I had a lot of opinions and answers, and so I guess that went over well enough for him. So he hired me. I came to work for him in February of ’81 and stayed through summer of ’87, and left at that point from the staff, but not from the larger Kemp family.

Mary Brunette Cannon: My name’s Mary Cannon, Mary Brunette at the time I worked for Jack. I worked for him from January through August of ’81 at the Republican Conference and then again from June ’82 until June ’87, when I went to the presidential campaign.

The way I first got my job in the congressional office was I was at a party at the Kemp house. He had a staff party. I was working in the Republican Conference Office at the time, and he needed a legislative assistant to work especially with his district. By the time I left the party, I had the job. So I didn’t have an interview. I didn’t have anything like that at all. He just came up to me and said, “Do you want to work in my congressional office?”

I said, “Sure,” and that was the end. My impression of him was I just admired him enormously. He was a teacher. More than anything, he was a generous teacher, I think, and that was my impression of him then and remains so today.

Richard Billmire: My name is Richard Billmire. I went to work for Jack somewhere in the eighties and left, I think, in the eighties, maybe nineties. I had worked in the Senate, and Joe [O.] Rogers, who had been working with Michelle on a lot of the international economics, had gotten an appointment, I guess, to be executive director of the Asian Development Bank.

Van Cleave: Ambassador.

Billmire: Yes. And he was desperate. He was on street corners trying to find people to replace him and, luckily, I walked by. My first interview with Jack was two questions, because I had worked for a real fiscal conservative who was on the Senate Budget Committee, a guy named [William L.] Bill Armstrong from Colorado, who was not really a supply-sider. Jack said to me, he said, "Well, I've got a couple of questions for you." Of course, he was in a hurry. He said, "I want to make sure you're not one of those country club Republicans."

I said, "No, I've been in three unions."

He said, "Okay. Now, you don't believe in any of that root-canal economics, do you, like Bill Armstrong?"

And I went, "What's the right answer?"

He just laughed and did one of the hits, when he'd hit you in your shoulder and you landed about four feet away from where you had been standing. He said, "You'll do," and that was kind of it. So in getting ready for this event today, I had a tooth recently pulled in the last few days, so if we want to talk about root-canal versus supply-side economics, I'm ready to go. [laughter]

[Merrick] Mac Carey: I'm Mac Carey. I was Jack's press secretary from July 1982 until December 1984, and I, like John Mueller, came through New Jersey political connections like Jude [T.] Wanniski to get the job. I had met Jack a few times before I started the job and they were just pro forma interviews, "Oh, I need a press secretary." I said, "Yeah, I'll be your press secretary," and that was that.

I started on roughly July 1, 1982 in the middle of the TEFRA [Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982] tax increase fight with Ronald Reagan and [Robert J.] Bob Dole. My first day on the job as press secretary, Jack was on the front page of *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post*, and on all three networks. My mom called me up and she said, "You are really, really doing a good job." [laughter] I've said ever since then, the many decades since then, that the easiest job in the world was to be Jack Kemp's press secretary.

[J.] David Hoppe: My name's Dave Hoppe. I was chief of staff and I joined the staff in October of 1984 and left in September of 1988. I had worked on Capitol Hill for about eight years before I went to work for Jack, so I had seen and known him. The boss I had at that time was Congressman [C.] Trent Lott, so I had known him well. But I found him particularly wise because he hired me in the second interview. The first interview I had with him was in the fall of 1978, and it was when Bruce [Bruce R. Bartlett] was leaving. I knew he was smart because he hired John Mueller instead of me. So that was the first indication of how smart he was.

I went to work with him really—Joe Rogers, who Richard has mentioned, was leaving Jack's employ to be ambassador of the Asian Development Bank, and Joe said to me, "We've got to find a chief of staff."

I said, "Okay," so I got some names and put them together, and finally decided, in the fall of that year, that maybe it would be fun for me to do it. So I suggested that maybe it would be fun for me to do, and I'm not sure I ever interviewed with Jack. He knew me well enough from working for Congressman Lott that he either was or wasn't going to do it, so in the end he did.

Marci Robinson: My name is Marci Robinson. I came into the office in September of '85 as an intern hired by John Buckley. Some of my greatest

teachers and friends in life are sitting around this table, so it was probably one of the best moves I made in my life and I owe a lot to John for that.

I stayed through January of ’89 and worked my way up from being an intern to an assistant press secretary to John, to the congressional press secretary and then the spokesman through I would call it the ’88 veep watch and his transfer to HUD, when I then left and joined the Bush administration in another position.

John [W.] Buckley: My name is John Buckley. I went to work for Jack the day after, or the week after—I can’t remember exactly—the 1985 second Reagan inaugural, as his press secretary, and I worked for him as press secretary in the congressional office until sometime in mid to late ’87 when we went over to the presidential campaign, and worked for him in the presidential campaign until March 11, 1988, when Jack dropped out of the 1988 presidential race. I had the pleasure, also, of working with Jack during the 1996 Dole-Kemp campaign, when I was the communications director for the campaign and Jack was the vice presidential nominee. I considered him my only ally in the entire campaign, and friend, besides Scott [W.] Reed.

My initial impression of Jack was that he was an incredibly fun candidate to work with, an incredibly fun politician to work for. There was zero stuffiness, zero pretense. I do remember coming into the congressional office for the first time as his press secretary and it was the day that there

was an article—I was studying up on Buffalo district politics. There was an article in *The New York Times* that day about the Love Canal and fights with Hooker Chemical over superfund sites. I walked into the office, and up above the receptionist's chair was a plaque that said, "Jack Kemp, Hooker Chemical Man of the Year" 1980-something. [laughter] I at least had the good sense to, as quickly as possible, get that down off the wall.

Kondracke: So, two questions which I'll just throw out to you. First, generally speaking, what adjectives would you use to describe what it was like working for Jack Kemp in Jack Kemp's office? Secondly, what were the greatest accomplishments, Jack's greatest accomplishments, your greatest accomplishments during the time that you worked for him? I'll just open it up to anybody who wants to answer.

Hoppe: The word is frenetic. I think rather than one accomplishment, I could list several, but really Jack changed the policy direction of the Republican Party, and part of it was through working with Ronald Reagan, but part of it was through his own personality. I can remember, as a staff member working in the House in the late seventies, watching Jack come down one hallway and watching Republican members turn and go the long way around to their office to avoid being evangelized on taxes. But that's what he did, and it was not only that. It was trying to help the poor, it was

reaching out, and foreign policy. I think that part of the Republican Party's, really, protection, devotion for the State of Israel is because of what Jack Kemp did, not all by himself, but he was a big part of that. So the policy of the Republican Party in the twenty-first century is due in no small part to Jack Kemp.

Zelaska: Frenetic is a very good word. We used to refer to him as Pig Pen, the little character in Peanuts, the one that had the little swirl of dirt around him. There was always something going on around, and I mean that lovingly, really. I mean, he just always had something going on.

Van Cleave: Usually more than one thing.

Zelaska: Many, many things, yes.

Kondracke: Accomplishments?

Carey: Well, I would say the two biggest Kemp accomplishments happened, probably not uncoincidentally, both before I joined the staff and right after I was on the staff, and that was to bring the top margin on tax rate from 70 down to 28 in six years, which is really just an astonishing record. And Kemp, I wouldn't say did it single-handedly. He had a lot of fun, but he the

leader on that, and I think, in part, it goes back to my introductory comments, which is he was a phenomenal communicator, and he communicated to the political system and to the Reagan campaign and the Reagan White House and really made all that happen. It was awful messy along the way, but once it was complete, it was quite astonishing.

Kondracke: Would you say that there are any mistakes, anything that Jack Kemp got wrong?

Billmire: I did want to make a comment on something which I think is very important to understand about the way Jack operated. He was very egalitarian in receiving opinions from almost anybody. We would have these gatherings; that's the only word. I don't know what they were, but you would start on an issue, and there'd be three people there, and it was like fruit flies. All of a sudden there'd be a lot of people there and everybody would be talking, and Jack would be saying X and Y, and he would listen to everyone and he would entertain everyone. The real tribute to the staff was the major players here would be able to quiet that down and get it structured.

So he would get a lot of ideas, which was great, because I worked in the Senate and I was on Leadership Committee over there and Banking, Finance, and Budget Committees, and so I was used to seeing debate cut

off. I was used to seeing two or three people having their say and then a decision being made. This was very different for me. This was the most wide-open—it almost was like graduate school in a way. But then Dave Hoppe, John Mueller, Buckley, Mary, on the local stuff, you'd go, "My god." I remember one of the first meetings, I went, "Oh, this is—what did I do? What have I done?" And I said, "Well, I'll get paid and all that, but—."

But they would then structure it and then there would come a point and then Sharon was the one who would finally say, "Okay, no more people are going to see Jack. That's it." And then if it was an economic thing, you and you would sit with him. Buckley would get called in, and then out would come this very sort of precise idea.

I would hope that somebody would talk today about the major accomplishments, and it's, again, tribute to the staff here, Bill Schneider and Michelle on the foreign policy side. Here was Jack, who was a tax rate guy, and that's where all the Jude Wanniskis and other people came in. That's where you would talk to him. But when you would start to look at whether or not the Arab program was going to work in Israel and we were going to get a benefit out of that, all of a sudden, Jack would be out there embarrassing fellow Democrats, "You're going to defend Israel or not? You're going to go along with this or not?"

I can tell you from personal experience because I worked for John [G.] Tower, because Kemp was stirring up the pot over here on what a lot of

people would consider was a minor issue because he was the economics guy. John [W.] Warner, on the Senate side, is going, "Hmm. They might have the votes in the Senate." And you and I would talk about that. And so you can almost go down the list.

I'm not trying to say he was the most important guy that ever came down the pike, but when he would get involved because of his energy, it sent a message also to the other side of the Hill, and I think that was quite an accomplishment. Maybe it was unintended, whatever, but just the force of personality and people like Buckley. Dave had connections, of course, as well as did you, and it had an impact far beyond what you would think. I didn't mean to go on and on, but I—

Kondracke: No, that's okay.

Buckley: Jack's most obvious accomplishments during the period of time that I worked in the office was the Tax Reform Act of 1986, and it was just extraordinary, to go back to Mac's point, about cutting taxes from 70 to 28 percent. It's extraordinary that you had a member of the House minority not on the Ways and Means Committee who could have had such an impact on tax policy in the United States.

But I don't actually think that that was Jack's greatest accomplishment that I was aware of. The Reagan years were years in which the Republican

Party made a tremendous amount of progress in achieving its agenda, but it could have lost quite a bit if there weren't people like Jack who were willing to speak about an inclusive party and weren't willing to stand up against all advice from everybody to talk about broadening the Republican Party and bringing African Americans in, and caring about the cities and caring about things like urban enterprise zones.

I was proud of Jack all the time I worked for him, but I think the proudest moment I ever had was not anything having to do with legislation, but it was when we were in Mississippi and he was running for President. He was trying to raise money at a fundraiser in Jackson, Mississippi, and Trent Lott, who was a close friend of his and a very important ally of his, said, in essence, "Jack, I love you, but for, like, the next hour, shut up about opening up the party to African Americans."

Jack sort of, "Uh-huh, uh-huh, uh-huh," and then went into this fundraiser and spoke for the next thirty-five minutes about opening up the party to African Americans. And I thought there was just something delightfully perverse about Jack's willingness to stick to his own guns, that exactly when he was told he shouldn't do this, this was what he was most motivated to do. That was an incredible accomplishment that he was able to keep that dialogue alive during years in which Republicans knew that the southern strategy was the route to power.

Cannon: A similar situation. I remember being in South Carolina with him once and we were picked up at the airport. This is during the campaign, and the guy who picked us up, the chairman in South Carolina, said, "Okay, you're going to Bob Jones University. Don't talk about Lincoln, don't talk about labor, and whatever you do, don't talk about the pope," because the pope had just been in the U.S. And, of course, that's all he talked about the entire time. He started out by quoting the Holy Father. [laughter] If you told him not to do something like that, he was even more convinced that it was the right thing to do.

Kondracke: Did you have any minorities on the staff? Did he try to recruit minorities?

Zelaska: We did have one, yes, [James] Jimmy Whitehead.

Robinson: And we had interns.

Zelaska: And we had interns, yes.

Kondracke: Yes, he was on the Howard Board of Visitors.

Robinson:: Yes, that was before. We had a number of interns, press interns in particular, from Howard University.

Cannon: But he really played a critical role in getting the Martin Luther King holiday. Deciding to co-sponsor that bill was a big thing, and he was on the Martin Luther King Holiday Commission after that. That really started to lay the groundwork for some of the things at HUD too.

Kondracke: Why did he stay in the House and sort of, at some stage, not go to the Senate or become governor? Did he think he could accomplish more from the House than he could from somewhere else? After all, he did decide to run for President, he thought he could do that, so why didn't he take the normal route up the ladder?

Hoppe: I think there was a part of Jack which was hesitant to take a risk if he wasn't sure the risk was right. Obviously, he took a risk running for President, a member of the House of Representatives, minority party, running for President. The odds over history aren't very good, but I also think he looked in New York and the two opportunities were when Senator [Jacob K.] Javits was running and was primaried, actually, by [Alfonse M.] Al D'Amato. The other one was in 1982 when the governorship was an open race.

In both of those he looked very hard at them, and in both of those he, at the end, stepped back, and I think he felt, in both, it wasn't his time; it wasn't the right time for him to do it. And I think in many ways he was right, in addition to which I'm not sure he would have had any more influence on the things he wanted to achieve being governor of New York or a senator from New York than he did as a congressman from New York who had a national platform.

There's different types of congressmen. There's those guys who are ombudsmen; there's those people who work on their districts; there's those who work on committee work and they're experts in their committee work, but that's really what they do. Jack really had a very, very wide view of what his job was as a congressman. He took that same view to HUD, where he was the only HUD secretary with a foreign policy and a tax policy. Most HUD secretaries figured it was enough to figure out housing, but Jack always had an inquiring mind and a desire to look at a range of issues and he felt he could do it from the House. In addition, he was part of the leadership of the House of Representatives. He had been elected as chairman of the conference, which is the third-ranking member, and so he had some ability to use that platform, especially with a Republican President who he had a good philosophical and policy relationship with.

Kondracke: How did he get that job? I mean, he'd been sort of a back-bencher, even though he was a prominent back-bencher. This is 1981. Kemp-Roth had been the campaign theme of the whole Republican Party in '78, but what was the mechanics of his becoming—

Hoppe: I think, really, they were fairly simple. Look at the Republican freshman class of 1978 and the Republican freshman class of 1980. I remember [John V.] Vin Weber telling me that he, when he was on the campaign trail, used to drive between cities when he was doing his speeches and he'd play Jack's tapes because he wanted to be thinking about how he wanted to construct his arguments. And he wasn't alone. I'm not sure others did it that same way, but Jack really was the heart and soul of the philosophy of those people. In a way, it was very simple for him to take the step from, as you say, sort of back-bencher, to say, "I want to run for this," and he really had significant support.

Now, there was one other thing that happened, and the Republican Party, being a good group of monarchists, the chairman of the conference was the one Republican defeated for reelection in 1980. So the job opened up in a set of circumstances one could not imagine happening, and if the job hadn't opened up, I don't think Jack would have run. I don't think anybody would have run against him.

Billmire: I do want to pass over the thing with Javits and why he didn't run, because I did ask him once, and then I got very involved in political campaigns after that and I worked on the senatorial committee later. I started poking around in old records and things, and what happened—and this is both a strength and a weakness of Jack—he did not want to attack Javits. I think this is a very important point here, that he believed in policy, he was a happy warrior, but he wasn't willing to go after Javits, who had health problems, who had mental problems.

If you read the history, it's pretty clear, and that didn't stop old Al at all. You know what kind of senator he was; you know what kind of guy he was. I had to watch him on the Senate Banking Committee and all his special deals. We had to clean up the S&L crisis because of people like him. The guy should be in jail. But Jack didn't want to take Javits on, and I think that's an important part of who he was, and that the personal ambition to be a U.S. senator, which is a big deal, Jack was a guy who was going to get the policy changed and get the country moving the right way. I do a lot of political campaigns now. You don't run across a lot of people like that.

Zelaska: But he was ready to run if Javits would have stepped down. He was ready, because there was going to be a press conference. The intelligence we had gotten was that Javits was going to retire. He calls this press conference. [Lawrence W.] Larry Casey was standing in the

background ready to bring back the information as to what he decided. He got up there, and I think even his own staff thought he was going to retire. Next thing you know, he says, "I'm running again." It was like, wow, we were ready to go.

Billmire: Jack could have knocked him out if he was mean enough.

Zelaska: Of course he could, but I'm just saying he was ready to go—

Billmire: But he made the choice not to do that.

Zelaska: —but when he got that word, he said no.

Billmire: And I think that's a tribute to Jack.

Buckley: There wouldn't have been a Republican primary for governor of New York. It was Jack's for the asking. Everybody from the comptroller of the State of New York to [Lewis E.] Lew Lehrman were waiting for Jack to make the decision that he made.

I asked him when I first went to work for him, "Why didn't you run in '82?" and his response was, "And leave the Reagan Revolution to go to New York State?" His sense was, at that moment, it wasn't that he was afraid of

running for governor of New York; it was that being governor of New York would have been a backwater compared to being in Washington in the ’82 period.

Kondracke: So what were his duties as the chairman of the conference?

Hoppe: You preside over the conferences. Actually, the duties of those jobs are not all that well defined after you get beyond the Leader and the Whip, and they have specific jobs. After that, the chairman of the conference presides over these conferences as a member of leadership meetings. If the President is of your party, you go down to the White House regularly for leadership meetings. I suppose, from time to time, you may go down if the President’s from another party as well, but for the most part, it was just the organizational group of all Republicans in the House, and there’s no defined list of things that you do.

During this period of time, the first couple of months and the first years in the Reagan administration, it was the forum in which Republicans and the House sort of worked themselves out and tried to pull together, because for Reagan to be successful—we had 192 Republicans. You needed 26 Democrats every day of the week for every vote, and the conference was where we tried to make sure we had 192 people together. Yes, there was a lot of Whip work that went into that in individual people, but what Jack used

the conference for is to try and bring people together and make sure, as far as possible, he could keep that unity going.

Kondracke: Did he talk a lot at those meetings?

Hoppe: No, no, not very much, actually. We often have guests from the administration. [David A.] Dave Stockman was there quite often in the early part of 1981.

Kondracke: Did he get hooted down?

Hoppe: No, actually, that came later, but for the first seven, eight months, he was fairly popular with his former colleagues. That was before any of the press stuff came out in the fall of 1981. Then he was not as welcome a guest or as frequent a guest.

Kondracke: So he's obviously a big booster and a help in getting the '81 tax law passed, but then, by 1982, he's opposing the administration's tax policies, right? I mean, they wanted to raise taxes, and they raised taxes a number of times, and Jack was in opposition to all those tax increases. So he's a member of the leadership and he's opposing the administration on tax. How did that go down?

Hoppe: Well, it was probably a little less antagonistic than one would have thought, because, actually, until the week before the tax increase passed in the summer of 1982, Senator Lott, then Congressman Lott, who was the number-two ranking Republican, was also against it. But he got to visit with President Reagan in the White House, and as I waved goodbye to him, as he headed down, I realized I'd lost that argument. He came back in favor of it, although it wasn't like, "Gee, a revelation. This has got to be the right thing." It was, "I've got to do what Ronald Reagan asked me to." And there were enough people who felt that way that I don't think—there's always some grumbling within the conference.

Kondracke: This is '82, and he ultimately backed TEFRA?

Hoppe: No. Senator Lott, Congressman Lott did, but Jack never did, but because he had others around him in the leadership who felt like he did, that this may not be the world's best deal, but they were going to vote for it, now, there was some grumbling in the conference about it, there's no doubt, as a leader, that he wasn't backing the President, but because you had this difference of opinion, and, in fact, he had a number of members of the Republican Conference in the House in 1982 just weren't very sympathetic to that as well. So there was a core, it felt like—

Billmire: John might remember the numbers. I remember from the Senate side because my senator and Jack were big allies on this. I remember DEFRA [Deficit Reduction Act of 1984] and TEFRA. Which one were we guaranteed three dollars in cuts for every dollar in tax increases?

Mueller: I think that was TEFRA.

Billmire: And I think that that's a real message for today's House Republicans, and you just don't hear it. Nobody on TV talks about it. Nobody writes about it. We've been down this path before. John, you probably know the numbers. Maybe you could write this op-ed. I remember Armstrong said, "I just talked to Jack Kemp."

And I said, "What's the deal?"

He said, "Don't listen to that. It's garbage," or nonsense or something. "They're not going to do those numbers." Just like that.

Armstrong was in the leadership. As the Budget Committee came back, he said, "There's some House Republicans who understand this is just garbage." I think that's a big message for Eric [I.] Cantor and people today.

Kondracke: Was his point that the cuts will never come or—

Billmire: It wasn't going to be cheap. That's correct.

Kondracke: —was it the principal of raising taxes at all?

Billmire: The thing I heard secondhand from Senator Armstrong, sitting there in the office, was the spending cuts, that ratio was not going to be achieved. And as I remember, John, I think they got 81 cents of spending cuts for every dollar in tax increases, not three for one. It was well below parity.

Mueller: Actually, there were spending increases for every tax increase. Yes, Jack didn't think the cuts would materialize, and I think I mentioned in the first panel that President Reagan actually made a note that he thought that Jack was being unreasonable. It was a three-for-one deal. What's not to like? But in fact, Jack was right about it that the tax increase would materialize, but the spending cuts would not.

Billmire: The reason I bring it up is because we hear about Jack and tax cuts, and there are his critics that say supply-side, deficit doesn't matter. That's the real Jack Kemp, but at a crucial point. And we're in the same place right now. Whether it's the committee or it's going to be next year

when Obama tries to do a big deal, we're at the same place, and Jack saw through it. I think he wasn't a fiscal immoderate.

Hoppe: I'd like to add on this, though. Tactically, Jack was willing to do things he didn't agree with in order to achieve the goal he thought was the right one, and the best example of that was in December of 1985 when the House passed their version of tax reform, which had nothing to do with tax reform and it ended up having two votes a week apart. The first vote they lost, the second vote they won and Jack was against it, and part of the group that defeated the first vote and part of the group that helped it succeed in the second one.

The bill hadn't changed from one week to the next, but he realized and had had discussions with the White House and people on the Senate side in that intervening week. He believed, to achieve the bigger purpose, which was the significant tax reform we got in '86, he had to be in favor of this, he had to keep the process moving. This was a bill he didn't like. Substantively, it was not good tax policy.

Kondracke: Is he the one who persuaded Ronald Reagan to come up and talk to the whole House Republican Conference to get—

Mueller: Yes, there were various strategies he was trying, but certainly a key part of it was to get Reagan there. It was a big gamble on Reagan's part to come before a hostile Republican conference. Jack had a full-blown revolt on his hands because he had persuaded the House Republicans the importance of a low top rate, the importance of increasing the personal exemption in 2000. I know that was in the [Daniel D. "Dan"] Rostenkowski bill and it was only as a result of Jack getting Reagan on record that he would oppose any bill with a tax rate above a certain level. It was 35 percent. We actually were able to do it lower than that, and certain other criteria that enabled him to get enough votes to move it forward, and that was actually an excellent example of Jack's leadership against really pretty tall odds for someone who's head of the Republican Conference and his folks are in full revolt, but he got enough of them to go along to pass the bill and to keep tax reform from dying, and, in fact, go on to succeed.

Kondracke: So what would you say his relationship with Ronald Reagan personally was like? Did he see Reagan very much?

Hoppe: I don't think he saw him personally one-on-one very much at all.

Kondracke: Because he had worked for him way back when he was a football player.

Hoppe: Well, but very few members of the House, and I suspect not many members of the Senate, saw Ronald Reagan one-on-one. That was not the choice of the White House staff as to how Ronald Reagan worked with people unless they wanted Reagan to complete the sale, as I pointed out with Congressman Lott a little earlier. In fact, as the number-three member of the leadership, he was a regular at the White House at the meetings, and Jack was never shy about making sure his opinion was known at such meetings, so Reagan got to see a lot of Jack and hear a lot of Jack.

Kondracke: So has anybody gotten any feedback as to what the White House staff thought about Jack Kemp back in those days?

Hoppe: I could tell you anecdotally, because it was somebody they knew they had to deal with. The anecdote I'll use is the final execution of the tax cuts in 1986 and I remember that [James A.] Jim Baker and [Richard G. "Dick"] Darman came up to visit to Jack, and they sat on his couch and explained to him what they were going to do, and how they were going to get there, and what things they thought they had to get done to get it done, because they knew that Jack was important to getting those things accomplished.

I'll add one more anecdote, and that is the Senate Republicans in 1985 had passed a budget that had Social Security cuts in it, and Congressman Kemp and Congressman Lott thought this was not wise, and they were among the group of people that did not support that in the House, and thus some of the Senate Republicans felt that the House Republicans had cut off their legs. As I recall, there was another meeting where Jim Baker came up to discuss with Jack this terrible thing. Actually, it was Congressman Lott and Congressman Kemp at that time. I remember that meeting. It was not as happy a discussion as the tax discussion was.

Billmire: When the liaisons would come up, and Mac and John, you remember all of them, and Marci.

Kondracke: Who were the congressional liaisons at the time?

Billmire: Well, there was the guy who's now the chief strategist for [James R.] Rick Perry, [David M.] Dave Carney. He was a House liaison. They always had a phrase, "You Kemp people." "You Kemp people." Whatever went wrong, it was, "You Kemp people." The Senate was the same way. It was just like, "Oh, we can't control this guy."

The key to the point is—and I did want to make this comment. Somebody needs to say it because everybody's humble. This is about the

Kemp Foundation. We talked about leadership skills. If I've learned anything at all from having worked with everybody and been in all these campaigns and done what we've all done, if you want to be a leader and you want to get going, the model that Kemp had, the way he ran the office and the quality of the people that he hired, that's what made him so intimidating to people in the House, particularly, because—I mean, I'm not saying everybody was a genius. It was hard to prevail in an honest debate because not only did we have a great—I mean, look, Jack Kemp once said to me, "I'm smart enough to hire people smarter than I am," and you go, this is a guy who's going to succeed. And then he would put Buckley with the press and Mary would handle all the—who was that one, Doug—

?: [Douglas L.] Doug Turner.

Billmire: Doug Turner. She would keep the hounds at bay and John—and I think in terms of the Kemp Foundation and that whole thing, if we could get a message to the leaders of tomorrow, it's to use this staff model, don't stint on staff. Have the strongest staff you can get because you will be able to win then, and if you have weak staff, you're done.

Buckley: I don't ever want to disagree when somebody is paying a compliment, but working for Jack, he was really smart, I mean, and one of

the things that you learned very, very quickly about Jack was he was so intelligent, both as a political strategist, he knew ultimately where he wanted to end up, but most importantly, he had this genius for being able to come up with the simplest argument to get you to yield to his point of view. It was remarkable, for somebody who was at times put down as a jock and a dumb football player, how incredibly quick his mind was. I mean quick wit, but also how quickly he could get to what was the argument that would carry the day.

Billmire: I'm sorry if that came across the wrong way. I dealt with a lot of pompous morons who were U.S. senators, and then to run into a guy like this who was so unassuming about his intellectual powers and his reading. I mean, do you think these senators read a book? I mean, please. And Jack was reading four books at the same time, and his ability to handle arguments, and what John said, get it to a simple point. Everybody here, whoever wrote a speech for Jack, other than Mueller and Buckley, I used to write these speeches for him when the Secretary of State would show up, and I'd give these speeches to Jack, right, and he'd look at them and he would make notes in the borders. After doing a bunch of those—now, Mueller's speech, he would make notes on and actually give them. So I said, "This is my job; I've got to do it." And I would go after speech after speech, and he would—more notes, and he'd never say anything other than,

"Greetings, Mr. Secretary." That would be the part of my speech he would use. [laughter]

So one day I actually had it, and Michelle was there, and I actually gave him a speech which said, "Good Morning, Mr. Secretary," and was blank. [laughter]

And Jack went, "What's this?" And [George P.] Shultz is sitting there. He goes, "What's this?"

I said, "You only use it for notes. Now you have room." [laughter]

I'll never forget. We're driving back. He said, "Could you drive with me?"

I said, "Okay," and he had, what, a Thunderbird, didn't he? And we're going across in the middle of Independence Avenue, he just stopped. He said, "What was that about?"

And I said, "Well, Jack," I said, "am I fired?"

He said, "No. Maybe you get a promotion for that." [laughter] That was Jack.

Kondracke: When was this?

Billmire: This was what, Michelle? Eighty—

Van Cleave: It was probably eight-five, eighty-six.

Kondracke: So what kind of a speech was it to the Secretary of State?

Billmire: Well, they would always have opening remarks, and Shultz was there as a witness.

Kondracke: At a hearing?

Billmire: Yes, at a hearing.

Kondracke: Foreign Ops Committee. I see.

Billmire: Yes, and Shultz would come up and make his weak arguments for a weak foreign policy, and Jack would just—a frank and open exchange of views.

Kondracke: Well, speaking of that, Michelle, talk about his differences with George Shultz. I mean, he wanted to get him fired, right?

Van Cleave: Well, could we talk about some similarities first? Because I think that much of the conversation here, as was typical in working in the Kemp office, talked about taxes. We were always talking about taxes,

economics. Actually, Jack's major assignment was to chair, for the Republicans, anyway, the minority, the Foreign Operations Subcommittee, which was that subcommittee responsible for all the foreign assistance programs the United States had worldwide, all of our relationships with international organizations and military and economic assistance.

What that meant, in practice, Mort, was that Jack became President Reagan's lieutenant in advancing the Reagan Doctrine. The Reagan Doctrine was such an important part of Reagan's presidency. You'll recall that much of the '80 campaign had to do with the "Peace through Strength" theme for dealing, from a position of realism and strength, with the Soviet Union on arms-control matters and on Soviet influence and active measures throughout the world. So when Reagan came to office, one of the first enormous policy and legislative battles that the administration had to engage with the Congress was over El Salvador and Central America.

I recall my first day on the job, not quite as dramatic as Mac's story, but my first day on the job was to walk into a Foreign Operations Subcommittee hearing, where then Secretary [Alexander M.] Haig [Jr.] was presenting the administration's first testimony ever to the House requesting supplemental assistance for El Salvador. So walking through the door, this was a major Regan initiative to support El Salvador, later the "Freedom Fighters," the Contras in Nicaragua, elsewhere in the world, in South Africa. It was beyond that.

The interesting part that Jack brought to this personally was a very integrated world view that said that economic freedom and political freedom go hand in hand, and his advocacy for "Freedom Fighter" was something that came from the heart, and it was an easy thing for him to be able to do to speak with conviction to the importance of the Reagan Doctrine. So his legislative responsibility to deal with all these foreign assistance programs became the platform from which he became really a spokesperson for what President Reagan wanted to accomplish. So there they were, hand and glove, beginning of the first Reagan administration.

Billmire: And here's where the Cleaverness came in. There are a bunch of things nobody's ever talked about with Jack Kemp. When [Corazon] Aquino, the transition from Aquino, when stuff in Romania, if you remember, when the country was going one direction or another, and one of the proudest moments was his effort to get the U.S. involved directly with Solidarity in Poland. The administration said, "We can't give any aid to those people."

Jack Kemp realized—he was very smart about this—David [R.] Obey, as you know, he was the head Democrat on Foreign Ops, and Jack knew if he played him just right, Obey would throw up his hands and say, "Okay, if you can't get the administration on board with you, Jack, I'll let you do whatever you want." So Jack would push this stuff through. We actually got—what was it—$30 million to Solidarity, ambulance supplies, and all of that, and

these are little things you don't hear about on the foreign policy side because Jack was very Cleaver at playing off Obey. He was in the minority.

I hope someday, whenever they write the book on Kemp, they take Michelle's point. This is another whole side, and, frankly, there's some tension there because the Jude Wanniskis of the world and the like, all the economic types, said, "Okay, that's all fine and good." But when [Benjamin "Bibi"] Netanyahu came to Washington, who did he talk to in the House? He talked to Jack, and so on down the list.

Van Cleave: Another part of the wonderful part of being able to work in Jack's office, someone on the first panel mentioned all the football players that would walk through the door and all kinds of interesting personalities that would walk through the door. We also had international personalities who would walk through the door, so that Jack would meet with all sorts of interesting people: Jonas [M.] Savimbi, who headed up the UNITA [National Union for the Total Independence of Angola] movement in Angola. He would meet certainly with the Israeli leaders, [Yitzhak] Rabin. He had several meetings with him.

People would just come to meet with Jack. He had the great opportunity of meeting Natan Sharansky when Sharansky first came out of the Soviet Union. It was something that was fascinating and wonderful to have the opportunity to engage with so many different interesting people

from around the world. So that was another big part of Jack's role, but it was all a description of why it was he was an important leader in the House.

He was third ranking in the leadership, but that also has meaning in that he made a point of being on the floor, engaged in all the major debates that came forward from the MX missile, where he learned a great deal about the technical aspects of that, to be able to speak knowledgeably to arms control measures, to a whole variety of things. He was always the guy down in the well prepared to speak because he was a leader, and I think that goes some way toward explaining why it is that I understand—and Sharon, tell me if this is right, but I recall there was a time when we were informed that Jack Kemp got more mail than anyone in the House, except for the Speaker then, [Thomas P.] "Tip" O'Neill. So it was another burden on staff, I suppose, to answer all that mail.

Kondracke: So he knew the details of every Foreign Ops appropriation was on the floor?

Van Cleave: Oh, heavens, no.

Billmire: "What is this?" You'd give him the numbers. He'd go, "What is this?"

And you'd go, "Well—."

And he'd go [demonstrates], circle two things in red, and, "Here," and that was it. He'd say, "Okay, what do we have to do?"

Van Cleave: But his voraciousness in reading was impressive.

Billmire: Yes.

Van Cleave: It certainly was not only in the foreign policy arena, but the material that would come to me, I remember he would read something and he'd have these big circles. He'd put your initials on it and then it would come to you. Sharon or someone would make sure the right person got these materials as they came out of his office day after day after day, and this stuff would just land on your desk.

So then what are you supposed to do with it? Well, the answer is you recognize that if it's circled, then you need to get back to him. You need to go into the office and you need to say, "I read this and here's what I think," or, "We have now compiled this and it's going to lead to something else." It wasn't just ignored. There was action to be taken if you got something like that. I mean, they talk about [Donald H.] Rumsfeld's snowflakes in the Pentagon, which is also something that I lived through, but Jack was a lot like that. Before there were snowflakes, there were Jack's little enigmatic notes that would come out all the time.

Kondracke: So you were responsible for knowing what the details were of line items in the Foreign Ops budget and you were supposed to tell him if something was important, and then he would tell you what he thought was important?

Van Cleave: Well, just the boring end of this is that the President presents a budget. The budget request includes line items for a variety of things. There's a markup in the committee of the President's request. If there are special issues where the member wants to advocate making changes, that's the opportunity to do that in the subcommittee through this line by line by line by line several days' long markup of the bill. Then it would go to the floor. Now, the good news/bad news is that we didn't pass very many foreign aid bills. They ended up getting rolled into continuing resolutions, and so there was some hand-waving a bit that went on with that.

Billmire: What Jack would do—not to interrupt—Jack would have ideas in his mind and he would say, "Can we use this to advance an agenda item?" We would come up with ideas, all of us, because, as Michelle was saying, there was foreign policy, there was economic policy. So I would torture poor John Buckley about revision of the World Bank and the like. He's still suffering. But Mueller would get involved, Buckley, everybody would get involved. I

mean at the local level we would work. Mary and I would work on some stuff back home. But here was the point. He had ideas and these things were vehicles, and even though they never got to the floor, he had an opportunity to advance his agenda.

Cannon: On social policy and foreign policy and economic policy certainly, but one of the major things he worked on in Foreign Ops, and one of the pieces of legislation that still has his name and was in effect for a long time was the Kemp-Kasten Bill to defund organizations that supported forced abortion in China. It wasn't his only issue, certainly, but on social policy, he also was strongly willing to take those issues on and be a legislator. It wasn't just on Kemp-Kasten, but there was a bill to defund Planned Parenthood that was the Kemp-Hatch Bill way back when that was kind of like the [Michael R.] Pence Bill now. So he didn't shy away from those issues either.

Buckley: If part of your question, though, is what was Jack's working style substantively on some of these things, I think Jack, when he traveled by himself, he would come back with a big batch of things and give them to Sharon, and they'd be sort of parceled out. I bet this was the same with Mac. When he traveled with a press secretary because he was doing some kind of an event, you'd become that carrier of parcels. What would often

happen would be he'd sit on an airplane and he'd go through *The Wall Street Journal* and he'd tear out an article. He'd circle something and he'd say, "Ask Michelle about this." And he'd find some story in *The New York Times* and it would be like, "Give this to Billmire and have him get back to me on X."

You would be sort of a switchboard operator, where he was basically relying on his staff enormously, probing everybody to be as current with things as him and then, substantively, I think he was relying on the staff for the detail work, but the big picture was always carried by him. He knew where he wanted to be, and in that way he was very similar, from everything I know and have read, very similar to Ronald Reagan, where he knew where he wanted to be and he had the big vision of things, but he did rely on good staff to get stuff done.

Kondracke: CODELS [Congressional Delegations]. He must have done a lot of them. He must have traveled the world while he was chairman of, ranking on Foreign Ops.

Billmire: We had a road trip. It's not *Animal House 2*, but Buckley can speak for himself. [laughter] You remember that lunch.

Buckley: Well, Richard and I have missed out on riches because we had an idea after a Jack Kemp CODEL to Europe to write the screenplay to *National Lampoon's Congressional Delegation* because it was sort of like that. But Jack actually didn't travel all that much.

Billmire: No, this was [unclear].

Buckley: He went on a few major trips in the eighties.

Zelaska: Yes, there weren't that many CODELS that he went on. Maybe two, three.

Mueller: One to Europe and one to the Far East.

Buckley: But they weren't CODELs. Those weren't CODELs. Those were actually funded by [unclear].

Billmire: They weren't taxpayer funded, so let's be clear on that.

Hoppe: He did some of that where they were funded by other foundations or others really as a setup to one of the questions you know is going to be asked of a House member who's basically been seen as an economic policy

person, "What do you know about the world?" I know that his colleagues in the House advised him to go from the Defense Subcommittee on Appropriations to the Foreign Ops because it was a chance for him to be involved in those issues which people had to believe—

Kondracke: His presidential boosters?

Hoppe: Yes, and also to be the chairman of the Foreign Policy Subcommittee in the Dallas convention, in addition to which, basically, we worked a situation on the—the only issue on the economic policy one was tax cuts and how we did it, and we worked at a situation where it came down to a comma. Senator Lott knew that he was going to win and we had the votes to win, so he didn't need Jack babysitting that. That was already done, and this was a chance for Jack to show the breadth of his knowledge.

Kondracke: This is '84 convention.

Buckley: Jack met with Margaret [H.] Thatcher, met with Chancellor [Helmut] Kohl, met with President—

Billmire: And Manfred Warner, [Ferdinand] Marcos, Prime Minister [Yasuhiro] Nakasone of Japan. Because the French are the French, he was

not able to actually sit down with [François] Mitterrand. He had to meet with Jacques Attali, the chief of staff, because he was just a House member. But his international travel in the period ’86, ’87 was directly to get ready for the presidential campaign and he very much made the most of it. He had a very good working session with Margaret Thatcher, a lot to talk about, especially on things like East Berlin.

Billmire: I really remember him in East Berlin. I mean that’s why the trip was good. We went over the border. We were in the bus, and, of course, those thugs out there, the East German soldiers, were making threatening gestures. And if you remember, there was a man in a sort of an iron cage, John, right at Checkpoint Charlie, and Jack looked at him and it was—with Jack, he wasn’t a real emotional—he wasn’t a drama king. He just wasn’t at all, and you could just see—we got over the border and he saw this, and it was like all the words, all the speeches became very real. You could just see the guy.

Buckley: Ambassador [Rozanne] Roz Ridgway was the ambassador to East Germany and she invited Jack to a luncheon. There was a Communist Party apparatchik at the luncheon who started talking with Jack, and Jack just locked in on him because he was so curious, and it was, “So, let me see if I got this right. You have people two miles from here who have the freedom

to choose the jobs they want to do, the work they want to do, and the freedom to move the way they want to move, and you keep people here in prison. How do you live with yourself?" And the guy answered like a dialectician trying to deny everything, but Jack just—it just blew his mind that he was actually talking to somebody who would defend keeping people in prison the way the East Germans did. I think it was very much eye-opening for him.

Billmire: And that was the one thing we talked about, what kind of person was he and how to work for. And at one point, there were the State Department—now let's be frank—State department weenies were there and Jack was dealing with them, and I'll never forget, this is another "I'm about to be fired."

Jack said, "Well, technically, how many political prisoners are there in East Germany?"

And I'm sitting there and I go—I hadn't had enough sleep, or Buckley made me drink too much beer or whatever earlier, and I just said, "The whole damn country." Everybody stopped talking. You know, one of those things where you go, "Yeah, the whole damn country."

And Jack turns and looks at me. We get back on the bus. I go all the way to the back of the bus, dry-eyed in the corner. Jack gets to me, puts his arm around me and goes, "Richard," he said, "I want to make sure this is

a good trip for you, and if there's anything I can do to make you comfortable, you just let me know." [laughter]

Hoppe: Isn't that the one you came home in a separate plane? [laughter]

Buckley: We did, yes, for different reasons.

Billmire: And I locked you in your room somewhere and you couldn't get out for hours. But anyway. [laughter]

Kondracke: But he did, he did want to get George Shultz fired, so talk about that.

Van Cleave: Well, I think that it's not so much that he wanted to get George Shultz fired, but that he was disappointed that the Secretary of State was taking the positions that he was taking on certain policy issues and thought perhaps it would be useful to have a change in Secretary of State.

Kondracke: That sounds like the same thing. [laughter]

Hoppe: And the difference is?

Van Cleave: Because again, as has been said before, there was nothing personal in the way Jack looked at George Shultz. As a matter of fact, I think he liked him as an individual. Again, now timing is important in this. This was in 1987, as I recall. This was a time when there were many things in the Reagan presidency that Ronald Reagan had come into office in order to achieve that seemed to be going off track, and principal among them was the détente policies and arms control interactions with the Soviet Union. And what had happened was that at Reykjavik, the President had engaged in conversations with [Mikhail S.] Gorbachev concerning the possibility of striking a deal whereby there would be some delay in U.S. development of strategic defenses in return for sharp reductions in nuclear weapons.

Fortunately, from Jack's standpoint, that agreement was not struck, but soon after, the President also put forward—the administration put forward this Intermediate Nuclear Force Reduction Treaty that would call for the elimination of the intermediate-range nuclear forces that the United States had put into western Europe in return for reductions, again, on the Soviet side. This had come after enormous struggles. In 1983, we had major discussions in this country about a nuclear freeze and demonstrations, and having made it all the way through there to be able to deploy these weapons into western Europe, now it was almost as though the Reagan administration was doing a 180, saying we're going to pull them out. The discussions, not to get bogged down in the details, really had a lot to do with the lack of

ability to verify the current stockpiles of Soviet weapons, much less their reductions. It had to do with the philosophy of arms control, about whether or not we should trust the Russians in engaging in this kind of a deal.

Kondracke: Was Jack against arms control in principle?

Van Cleave: I think that he found a distinction between engaging in arms control for the sake of arms control and for dealing with the Russians from a position of strength.

Billmire: He understood leverage. I mean, he'd say things like, "Well, fourteen minutes to Moscow. I mean, you want to give that away?"

Van Cleave: In any case, the ratification, or the potential ratification of this INF agreement was happening at the same time we had a review of the ABM Treaty [Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty], where the Russians had been involved in lots of violations of that treaty, and the State Department, then led by Secretary Shultz, was short-shrifting this ABM Treaty review in order to not give fire to those who were saying that the INF Treaty was not verifiable. This is a lot of history, a lot under the bridge, but Jack's position was this was a deviation from where President Reagan came into office and what he wanted to accomplish. So one of the things that he did in the course of his

presidential run was to suggest that maybe we would be better served having different leadership at the State Department and, in that fashion, called for Secretary Shultz to step aside.

Kondracke: Was he closer to [Caspar W.] "Cap" Weinberger, who was having struggles with George Shultz too?

Van Cleave: Yes, I think that, here again, Secretary Weinberger was trying to hold the line on defense spending, where Ronald Reagan came into office saying, "We need to correct for all of the losses during the Carter administration, build up U.S. defenses." That started on an upward slope and then there were cuts in the defense budget. It started to go down, and Weinberger was trying to hold the line and not entirely successfully on that.

Mueller: There was also an overlay of economic issues. Shultz had been instrumental in our going off of the gold standard in 1971. Shultz was kind of a villain in Jude Wanniski's book, so there was this economic overlay to the foreign policy issues.

Kondracke: Just on the gold question, once tax reform and all that was established, Jack wanted to go back on a gold standard and was famous for

spouting off about the gold standard, but the Reagan administration never seemed to have taken it seriously. Why?

Mueller: Well, he took it seriously enough to follow through on the Gold Commission's recommendations. The problem was that the executive director of the Gold Commission was Anna [J.] Schwartz, the coauthor with Milton Friedman of the monetary history that I've stated, so it was an arch monetarist treatise, essentially. So there were two votes on that commission in favor of gold and the supply-siders themselves were in disagreement about what the nature of the gold standard should be, and so that was the main reason, I think, that it never happened.

Billmire: The other part of the economic stuff, very important, somebody mentioned the whole urban policy and the poor, etc. What Jack also tried to do internationally, given Foreign Ops, was reform the World Bank. He hated the fact that when the IMF [International Monetary Fund] would go out there and try to get countries to change their economic policies, the poor would suffer the most. And this, to me, is probably as significant as tax reform in the U.S. and probably worked better. I hate to say that. He was able to get the Baker Plan started, which led to privatization around the world. I mean, we look at China now and there are lots of problems and China's a terrible enemy and adversary, as far as I'm concerned, but the idea that you would

have capitalistic practices around the world was unheard of, and Jack's the one who got that started, very clearly.

Kondracke: Now let's start talking about the 1988 campaign and the lead-up to it. When does the planning start for 1988?

Hoppe: I think some planning started, as I said, if you were looking at his allies in the Congress—

Kondracke: Who were? Who stuck with him throughout '88?

Hoppe: Lott, Weber, [Cornelius H. M.] Connie Mack [III].

Carey: [James. A.] Jim Courter.

Hoppe: Yes, Jim Courter.

?: [Christopher H.] Chris Smith.

Connor: [Daniel E.] Dan Lundgren.

?: [Newton L.] Newt Gingrich.

Hoppe: There are more than that. A good handful. If you look at the 1980 platform and the question of who might be the vice presidency, some of what was done in the lead-up to the platform in 1980 and Jack's role in the platform in 1980 was to help raise Jack's profile.

Kondracke: Basically, Kemp-Roth.

Hoppe: Kemp-Roth, that's right. But Jack actually, I think, was chairman of the Defense Subcommittee in 1980, but once again, because we had really gotten to the point with the platform where the draft that had been written had what Ronald Reagan wanted in it, which was Kemp-Roth, so the success was baked into that, so there was thought process from at least that period on in 1980.

As I said, 1984, the platform once again reflected an opportunity, and Congressman Lott was chairman of the platform in 1984, so he wanted to give Jack as big a boost as he could through that and wanted to help serve his purposes for four years hence. So there was at least a thought in mind back as early as 1980. Now, to say that that was a formulated plan would be going way too far because it wasn't, but certainly Jack had it in mind, his allies had it in mind, and they were looking for the potential of something happening there.

Kondracke: But it definitely seriously begins leading into the ’84 convention and then—

Carey: I think it was percolating along since the late seventies and I think there were vague threats of running against Reagan in the late seventies, as incredible as that might seem.

Kondracke: That was a [Arthur B. “Art”] Laffer-Wanniski idea which Jack rejected, right? He wouldn’t play that game.

Carey: Yes, but it was still raising his profile and pushing. I think one of the reasons he never ran for governor of New York and senator from New York is he had a national base and he was gearing up for a national run.

Buckley: And the non-congressional part of the gearing-up, the hiring of political staff really got under way during the creation of the PAC following the ’84 race in a very bizarre way. Now, the first primary of 1988 was the Black, Manafort, Stone and Atwater primary where Lee went off in one direction and Black, Manafort, and Stone went in a different direction in support of Jack. I came in in January of ’85, having been the deputy press secretary for the Reagan-Bush campaign. I think Dave coming in as A.A. in

December of ’84 was really part of the “Let’s get everything geared up to run for President.” By January of ’85, Jack really was running for President. He may not have made that decision to go, but he was doing everything he needed to do, including—

Zelaska: And certainly the scheduling at that time.

Buckley: —early travel, yes.

Hoppe: It was to prepare for a positive decision, which I would argue was not made until the next year, but there were—

Kondracke: The decision was made in ’86?

Hoppe: Yes, in the spring of ’86, and in the end ultimately involves, more than anybody else, your family. So I think that’s the time at which they all sat down and sort of hashed it out and decided, “Okay, if this is what you want to do, we’re there. We’re happy.” But you can’t start then when you’ve got the situation we had within the Republican Party, which is—

Buckley: Sitting Vice President.

Hoppe: —a loyal Vice President to Ronald Reagan, somebody who you knew Reagan was going to support. Nobody had to wait to find this out. This was not a shock. Reagan didn't insert himself, but it was clear he wanted his loyal Vice President to succeed him, so you had to have a lot of things moving in your direction before then if you were going to be competitive.

Kondracke: So who is the political core group and how does it get formed up, the strategery group?

Hoppe: It was [Charles R.] Charlie Black [Jr.] and [Jeffrey L.] Jeff Bell and Roger [J.] Stone and Scott Reed, and, in a sense, Jeff was sort of the link to the policy side because Jeff—

Mueller: [unclear].

Hoppe: Yes. And so what Jack wanted to do, "If I'm running for President, I want to run on ideas. That's it. I want to run my day is what I want to do, what I've done, what I want to do." Because like he said to me ad nauseam, "Elections are about tomorrow, not yesterday. Not what have you done; what you're going to do for me."

And you also had, however, a senior fundraising group, which was his brother [Thomas P.] Tom [Kemp], who was very instrumental in trying to

make sure they were helping to raise the money and doing things sort of—[Richard J.] Dick Fox from Philadelphia was a part of that group. Vin Weber sat in with that group. In fact, both sides, actually, Vin and—

Buckley: Hiring of [Rodney A.] Rod, Rod Smith.

Hoppe: Yes, Rod Smith. And so, if you will, that was the group of people, but you had Tom, and Jack had enormous faith in Tom. Tom was Jack's older brother who he'd looked up to all his life. Tom was an extremely successful businessman, a wonderful human being, and Jack just had faith in him. In a sense, Jack's father died young enough that Tom was almost, in addition to a brother, almost a father in some ways to Jack, in terms of the relationship and how Jack took the things Tom was saying. So he wanted Tom to be involved, and Tom sort of found his niche and where he fit. Tom went out and made speeches for him in Iowa. One memorable speech—where was it in Iowa?

Mueller: Ames, Iowa. Are you talking about the gold standard speech?

Hoppe: Yes, in Herbert Hoover's hometown, where he said, "We're not Hoover Republicans; we're Reagan Republicans."

A guy, afterwards, said, "This is where Hoover was born." [laughter] Scratch that speech.

Kondracke: Who was the advance person on that one?

Hoppe: I don't think it was me.

Buckley: There was one other person whose name should be mentioned, the hiring of John Maxwell, who came in to run the PAC, and John Maxwell was an Iowa guy. Scott Reed ended up running Iowa, but I think it was after John was out of the picture. John was hired in '85 and, I think, left in '87, and was someone who was hired for his Iowa organizational skills, but we discovered, I think, over time, he didn't have great Iowa connections really anymore.

Kondracke: So what was the strategy, though? I mean, here you have a sitting Vice President who, as you say, is going to be supported by the President. What was the channel to victory or the theoretical channel to victory?

Buckley: There was a new development in presidential campaign in l988, which was the jockeying to be the first to go among the states, and it was

Michigan. I think Michigan ended up being, for Jack, a tremendous trap, because very early on he had some very fervent supporters in Michigan, Clark Durant and—I mean, a number of people who were very fervently for him, and they let Jack believe that Michigan was a state that, because of his politics, coming from Buffalo, Michigan was like one big congressional district for Jack, that it was a state in which he would be able to do well in.

They moved up the first test, which was essentially a statewide straw poll, into August of 1986, so before his congressional reelection in '86, there was already an early contest. The strategy really was win Michigan or do well enough in Michigan. There was a belief that he would have enough support in Iowa to hold his own, do well in Iowa, but then win the New Hampshire primary.

So if you had to say what was the strategy, it was win the New Hampshire primary. But how do you win the New Hampshire primary? You win the New Hampshire primary by having been set up in Michigan. And what ended up happening was Michigan was an incredibly detailed caucus straw poll, and two candidates, one of whom had an enormous organization, the Vice President of the United States, and could spend a lot of money on it, and then, ultimately, [Marion G.] Pat Robertson, who came in with the fervor of the evangelical base. Jack got outmaneuvered in Michigan very, very early and, in essence, the first building block of the strategy wasn't there for him to stand on.

Hoppe: I think there are two other things in addition to that. One was that Jack believed, as people listened to him, they would realize that he was the rightful heir of Reagan's policy, and not that Jack had done it, but that if you're going to follow a direct line from what Ronald Reagan did, Jack Kemp was there. That was it. And the second one was there was a feeling—I mean, I think this is fair to say—a number of quarters, not necessarily just Kemp anyplace else, that if somebody beat the Vice President anywhere, he was gone. It was just gone. He could never put it back together. That proved to be untrue, as Iowa showed.

Kondracke: Do you think he really, really wanted to be President?

Buckley: I think he really, really wanted to be President, and others really should weigh in on this because I think everybody probably has their own idea. My sense is that the moment Michigan didn't happen, he was no—

Kondracke: This is way back in '86.

Buckley: Way back in '86. The moment Michigan didn't happen, Jack was no longer running for President to be elected President; Jack was running for President to make sure that the ideas that he believed in were a part of the

party's debate. He'd worked himself in a corner. He had to run for President at that point, even though he wasn't a declared candidate until the spring of '87. But I really believe that the moment Michigan turned out to not be what he thought it was going to be, at that point he wasn't really running to be elected President; he was running to get his ideas elected President.

Kondracke: But this is in hindsight. You didn't have any sense of this?

Buckley: This is in hindsight. This is just a belief that—Jack was sophisticated enough to know how hard it was going to be to beat the Vice President after Michigan, and I'm certain, by the time he got into the period a year later, the period in the 1988 campaign that we're kind of in right now for the 2012 campaign, where debates are happening and frontrunners are being chosen, and he was no longer in that tier with Dole and the Vice President, and then with Pat Robertson sort of capturing the evangelical base, he was squeezed out at that point. I think at that point he was running not because he thought he could win; he was running because he wanted to make sure his ideas had a voice.

Cannon: Yes, I think it was really at Michigan, certainly, but also the Ames straw poll in—

Buckley: Summer of ’87.

Cannon: —1987, which was in September that year. And it was, I think, when we had a hope that his organization and the support of pro-life community and social conservatives, which was important in Iowa, that that would be helpful to Jack vis-à-vis Dole and Bush, who were not known for that. And then when Robertson came in and basically swamped that straw poll, I think that was the moment at which the path to victory really became very—

Buckley: There was no clear path.

Cannon: There really wasn’t one, because we couldn’t out-conservative Pat Robertson on anything that would draw a distinction at that point, I think. I do think at that point he became more just thinking ahead, what were the ideas that he wanted to get out there more than the tactics of the campaign.

Kondracke: So how did his political staff, campaign staff, relate to the congressional staff?

Cannon: There are only a couple of the congressional staff who actually went to the presidential campaign.

Kondracke: But how did you connect? I mean, did you do things on issues to help the campaign? Did you tee up issues in order to—

Cannon: Very fine line. Very careful.

Hoppe: Jack was Jack. The issues were the issues. They were always the issues, so you didn't have to change anything. I mean sort of they were what they were. Did we tee up anything in terms of what happened on the House floor? We really didn't have the power. The Democrats were in the majority. But having said that, John was sort of—all things economic John had, and while Michelle was gone—I think by summer of '87?

Van Cleave: Yes.

Hoppe: We still had—I mean what Jack believed in foreign policy and defense policy was there and people knew it. I knew everything that was happening in the legislative office, and if there wasn't somebody else they could ask, they could ask me. John and Mary had just been there and had gone over. There was not much of a divide because, once again, Jack was

running on ideas, and those ideas were his ideas and they had been his ideas and they were going to be his ideas. So in a sense, you almost didn't have to do it. Just generically that's how the whole thing went together.

Buckley: This was not a campaign that lacked for substance, and so the congressional staff was an incredible resource following all rules of the Federal Election Commission and the House of Representatives, and what congressional staff can do and what campaign staffs have to do.

Kondracke: Everybody's working after hours.

Buckley: Exactly.

Cannon: Or on vacation.

Buckley: But I would say also this was maybe an advantage of being a congressman running for President. This was a small family. It was a small and tight-knit family, and it was not like you had a power center in the home state and a power center in the Senate office or the governor's office. I mean, it was a group of people who were used to working together on substantive issues. So I think the campaign was powered by everything that Jack had done in advance of the campaign in terms of his ideas. You never

really had to question where is Jack going to fall on this particular issue. He declared himself on every issue, and you had tremendous resources from the congressional office being able to help us show that.

Kondracke: So Charlie Black and [Edward J.] Ed Rollins and the others were basically running the congressional—I mean were the political machine?

Billmire: It wasn't the normal tension that existed between the congressional or Senate office or gubernatorial office and the campaign. You see a lot of that. It was all done; fait accomplit. I mean, all the blanks were filled in. He said, "Message: it's all done. Raise the money, get the votes, build the coalitions." So that tension I just didn't see.

Kondracke: Did Jack do what he needed to do to raise money, or as much as he could do?

Zelaska: No.

Hoppe: It wasn't his favorite part of the day.

Zelaska: It wasn't, no. He would be given a list of names of people to call. He hated, hated to ask people for money. It was not one of his strong suits. So Tom filled that bill a lot, his brother Tom.

Buckley: And sometimes you know when a campaign is snakebit. His single biggest fundraiser to raise money from the New York financial community took place in a disco on the Upper West Side of Manhattan on the day of the 1987 crash, and so all the people who were to come to write their checks, they were showing up looking like their dog had been shot. [laughter] They were so miserable. So some things we were snakebit.

Mueller: I think there were two things, too, on the issues. We talked about assuming that Jack was the heir apparent to Reagan. Jack's and Reagan's last big initiative success was the '86 tax reform, and, in a sense, to run on being rewarded for that defied what I think Dave was saying earlier about being backward-looking, it being about the past rather than the future. There wasn't any new domestic economic policy initiative, at least on the fiscal side.

Having said that, [Pierre S.] Pete du Pont [IV] was running against him, and in that sense, the '88 campaign was a referendum on the future of the party, which is still being played out today here in Washington, because what Pete du Pont was running on was to deep-six the Reagan-Kemp

strategy, which was to combine a low-rate broad-based income tax with a downsized but balanced Social Security system. Pete du Pont was running on phasing out Social Security through privatizing it, replacing it with private accounts, and shifting from the income tax to a so-called consumption tax, which amounts to a tax which is only on labor income, and that's a debate we're still having today in the party.

Jack took the position then against du Pont to stick with the Reagan-Kemp strategy. The party has shifted since the mid nineties toward the du Pont strategy, basically, and I think that's at the root of much of the Republican Party's electoral problems today.

Kondracke: But Jack got sort of waylaid into a debate with Pete du Pont on the economic side and had the religious conservatives pulled away by Pat Robertson.

Mueller: Yes, it was a debate he had to have, actually, but it's one that seemed inconclusive to people who couldn't sift out who was right.

Kondracke: So were there any attack lines at all on George Bush?

Buckley: Not delivered by the candidate. [laughter]

Billmire: You're sitting next to him right there. [laughter]

Buckley: I was trying to win the election for the candidate. [laughs] I was told by [Max] Marlin Fitzwater sometime afterwards that the Vice President, when Marlin would come in to sort of give him the newspaper clippings in the morning, that the Vice President would look up and say, "What did the little S.O.B. say about me today?"

But Jack did not want to win negatively. He was allergic to doing that. He wanted to win positively. I think it was very much his upbringing, the kind of person he was, the kind of person he'd been raised to be. You would try to goad him to attack and he'd just kind of –it just wasn't him. I think he wasn't actually running for President thinking he could win. I think that at whatever point he thought, "I'm not going to be elected President," then at that point any chance of getting him to attack just for the tactical advantage went out the window because he wasn't going to do it just for a headline.

Kondracke: I've seen articles quoting you as saying, "Now he's really going to start tearing things up." [laughter]

Buckley: Yes, unfortunately, that was the one article Jack didn't read. [laughter]

Robinson: But there were also moments when he would have a stack of newspapers on his chair, and John or someone would say something that we knew he wouldn't consider. Well, anyway, we would cut the article out before he had a chance to read it, and his paper would look like [unclear]. [laughter]

Buckley: So then I didn't have two people saying, "What did the little S.O.B. say?"

Kondracke: So in other words, there were people who tried to goad him into attacking, and he wouldn't.

Robinson: No, I don't think he even liked it when his—he would chuckle, but I don't think he celebrated his staff being on the offensive. On the other hand, John was just so funny that it was hard to get angry in any way.

Hoppe: I remember after the convention in '88, Jack said, "I'll do what you want. Tell me where you want me to go. I'll go and give speeches and anything I can to help." He was doing some, and he came back after one of them and he said to me, he said, "I'm giving these speeches and I realize about halfway through, I'm not talking about Bush anymore; I'm talking about me." It was always, "Bush will do this." And it was, "Bush will do this

and this and this and this," and it was all the things Jack had been saying up to the point of leaving the campaign about what Jack Kemp would do. And in truth, there actually wasn't all that much difference between what Bush was saying that he would do and Jack, because it was following on Ronald Reagan.

Buckley: And, Dave, this was also really important in terms of where Jack's thinking was. After New Hampshire but before South Carolina, because South Carolina was kind of the last hurrah, but in that two-week period—I think it was about two weeks—Jack had to wrestle with "Do I endorse Bush or do I endorse Dole?" And I remember having a conversation with him late at night on an airplane, in which it was, "Of course I'm going to endorse Bush, because with Bush you've at least got a chance that these ideas are going to be seen through, whereas if I endorse Dole, there's no chance that any of these ideas get pushed through."

Mueller: And it was the era of "Read my lips."

Billmire: But wasn't it about the time, wasn't Dole talking about putting the Kemp people in cages? Was that right, John? [laughter] Remember that famous line?

?: There was a lot of tension.

Kondracke: Something about airplane crash or something like that.

Billmire: I just have a question because I never know and—

Mueller: Supply-siders—empty seats on a bus that went over the cliff or something like that.

Billmire: What about Jack in thinking about being V.P.? Did that ever happen? I don't know. I think I was gone then.

Kondracke: Yes, I was going to ask that too.

[Crosstalk]

Kondracke: Did Jack have any hopes that he would be V.P. in '88?

Cannon: Yes, for sure.

Kondracke: Was there any effort to promote that among the Bushes?

Hoppe: Not in an organized way like some others did, I found out later on.

Kondracke: Like?

Hoppe: [James Danforth] Dan Quayle very aggressively pursued this and pursued it with the right guy, Jim Baker. But Jack, I mean Jack was always available, said, "I'll do anything to help," and he was saying good things about Bush and that sort of thing. But where it really came home to me was at the convention and Jack gave a speech Monday night. Monday night was Reagan night at the 1988 convention and Jack gave a speech about the Gipper, and it was a very nice speech and well received.

Kondracke: Written by?

Hoppe: John.

Mueller: Yes, and if I had to rewrite it, I would write it differently because it was an encomium to Reagan and it should have been sucking up to Bush. [laughter]

Hoppe: That night, I mean, it was a good speech and people liked it, and I remember the next morning we were out at god knows what, six-thirty or

seven, all the press people were there just doing press after press after press after press. And about mid morning, we had David [S.] Broder scheduled, and Broder came in and he said, "Betting up where I is that you're going to be Vice President."

Now, shortly after that, you started hearing that people were being called by Bush and told that they weren't going to be Vice President, and so this was about nine-thirty or ten in the morning. And it got to be eleven, then it got to be twelve, then it got to be one, then it got to be two, and we'd had no call. Jack was going around doing the—because we had a full day of press stuff scheduled doing this, that, and the other thing.

Zelaska: And they started circling, the Secret Service, around him, and things like that.

Hoppe: And we heard that they're planning to go to Buffalo and so the Secret Service has been told plan something to go to Buffalo. What are we going to do? Where are we going to do it? That sort of thing.

Kondracke: You were told this by Secret Service?

Hoppe: No, we were told this by press people who said Secret Service had told them.

Robinson: It was an enormous circus at that time for the veep watch, mainly because Bush wanted to keep it a surprise. It was more a reflection of Bush than, I think, of Kemp and a relationship with Kemp.

Kondracke: Bush people were putting it out to—

Robinson: I'm not so sure if it was just more of rumor.

Billmire: Tower had told me—I never told you guys.

Kondracke: John Tower.

Billmire: I had worked for John Tower, and Tower had met with Bush at the Vice President's house, and Quayle had done a really good job fighting [Samuel A.] Sam Nunn on arms control. I don't know whether he had good talking points or Marilyn [Tucker Quayle] prepared them for him or whatever, but Tower talked to me and said, "It's going to be Quayle." And I ran in to Jack and I couldn't say anything, and Jack was still—

Kondracke: This was at the convention?

Buckley: At the convention, though, that Monday I ran into [Stuart K.] Stu Spencer. I was working for CBS at that point and I ran into Stu Spencer, who started asking me a series of questions, like, "So what's your contract with CBS like? Are you available if Jack gets the nod?" And he was saying it in such a way that, like, the unmistakable message was, "I think it's going to be Jack." And I remember calling you and saying, "I just talked to Stu Spencer. I think it's going to be Jack."

Hoppe: I think you were down to a very small group of people, and all the other people who were potential sort of odds-on favorites, [Pietro V. "Pete"] Domenici was always mentioned at that time, those sorts of things, they were out, and you were at the point of time where there were a few people who thought about Quayle, not a lot—he was a bit of a surprise—and Jack. And Jack was always on the short list for people. And I remember we were about two-thirty or three that afternoon. We were basically done with what he was going to do before he went back to the convention that night to do stuff on the TV stuff, and we were sitting there and the call came in from the Vice President.

Kondracke: So the call comes finally that it's Quayle, that it's not you. At what time?

Hoppe: Three o'clock?

Robinson: It was right when Bush was flying in to make the—

Hoppe: Yes, it was fairly later in the afternoon, but around that time, three o'clock, three-thirty. I remember Jack sitting on the phone, and where I was situated in the room, I happened to be facing him. And he picked up the phone. He said, "Oh, thank you, Mr. Vice President," and I just saw his eyes go like this.

Robinson: And then he [unclear]. And then he said, "It's Quayle."

Hoppe: [William J.] Bill Bennett tells a great story. Bill Bennett and his wife [Elayne Bennett] and Jack and Joanne went out for dinner that night before they went to the convention stuff. Bill Bennett's wife said, "You've got to really build Jack up tonight. This has been a long day, a sad day for him, I'm sure."

So we get there and Jack's thanking the waiters, he's in the kitchen, he's saying, "You've got to support George Bush. He's going to be the greatest President.'" He said, "Jack's out there campaigning for Bush and I'm supposed to be building him up?" Yes, was there sadness? Absolutely there was. Having said that, "So it's gone, it's done. What's tomorrow?

What's coming up? What's next? Where do I go next?" And that was very much who he was.

Buckley: No door closes but another one doesn't open, was his belief.

Connor: He said that all the time and he meant it.

Zelaska: Remember we talked about the fact that they still had an opportunity for him to take his congressional seat?

Kondracke: Yes, I was going to ask about that.

Zelaska: And I don't remember the reason. I mean, he could have run for his congressional seat again, and I don't remember what conversations went on about that or anything. I mean, as far as I knew, he was not going to be a member after December. Do you all remember?

Hoppe: I mean, I think he just got to the point where—

Mueller: Did he announce when he ran for President that he would not seek his seat again?

Hoppe: Yes, but things could have been done—I mean, as I recall, the New York primary was, what, in early September—

?: September, yes.

Hoppe: So you could figure a way to do things. But I just think he just said, "This is no longer where I am to do things I need to do." It wasn't going to be Ronald Reagan being President, it was going to be George Bush, somebody who really had a slightly different point of view about life and where to go in politics, and things he wanted to do and his agenda. And going back to being a member of the House when for basically two years he had not been a member of the House of Representatives, you don't take travel like that. Yes, he had friends and close allies and that sort of thing, but you are no longer a member of the House of Representatives. I think going back under those conditions is very difficult, and I think Jack realized it.

?: He had given up his leadership post too.

Hoppe: Yes, he had given up the leadership post.

Kondracke: Oh, he had given up his leadership post, yes.

Hoppe: Yes, when he announced for the presidency in the spring of ’87.

Mueller: I mentioned that I would have written the speech differently in retrospect, and I remember reading something in the paper. A reporter asked Bush when he made his decision, and he responded, “During the speeches,” meaning the speeches that Jack and others had given, but Jack especially, and if it had just been crafted not to be so much about Reagan, a little bit more about Bush— [laughter]

?: So it’s all your fault, John.

Mueller: It’s my fault. [laughter]

Kondracke: I want to ask the press people here. Kemp’s image. What did you think his image was and what did you think he had to tweak in order to make him President?

Buckley: I mean, reporters instinctively like Jack because he’s exactly the kind of politician that reporters like. He’s genuine, authentic, says what he thinks. But I think most reporters thought that there was a gravitas issue, that the way Jack carried himself was like a member of Congress, former

professional athlete, but not like a President. So I don't think there's anything any of the three of us could have done to have gotten him to change in any way. I do remember working with Sharon to try and get some different suits for him and some different—

Zelaska: We did talk about that, yes, and I called a guy who came to the office and made his suits for him.

?: Suits that fit. [laughs]

Zelaska: Suits that fit. They were the right length. He couldn't go and buy something off the rack. And people complained about the length of his suits; they were too short sometimes. So we had a tailor come in and the guy worked with him for years and years after that, including when he went to Empower America, he would come. Had his shirts made and everything.

Buckley: But as Mac said at the outset, it was really easy to be a Jack Kemp press secretary because the guy was a fantastic interview. If you put a reporter who was skeptical about Jack in the back seat of a car with him between the Manchester Airport and Nashua, or something like that, the reporter got out, like, sort of excited about having spent time with him. So

he had a magical quality unlike any other politician I've ever seen in terms of just reporters gravitated to him.

Robinson: Yes, I agree with you. He was also so out for the little guy, that reporters just genuinely loved that about him. And we overlooked one issue that he really championed, which was human rights. I even think he viewed economic policy through that lens and it was sincere, and he did actually get emotional about human rights. Armando Valladares, Netanyahu, Sharansky, all these people were dear to him because of what they did, but because the campaign was never really—he didn't allow the campaign to be about Jack Kemp. It was more a cause-oriented campaign, unlike—well, how do I say this diplomatically? Having served then as [Robert A.] Bob Mosbacher's press secretary and walking the hallways of the Commerce Department in the first Bush administration, you'd be hard-pressed to walk into an office without finding a handwritten letter from George Bush going back to 1960 where it was really about the connection to the man. I think what really propelled the party forward at that time, and even Bush, was the fact that Kemp was able to shape the debate and contribute to it from purely a genuine concern for the country, for the little guy, and a very cause-oriented approach to campaigning.

Kondracke: So he's into foreign policy. He's clearly the Reagan policy guy revisited, and yet there's this lack of gravitas, if you want. I mean, even though reporters liked him a lot, he wasn't quite taken seriously. I mean, there was just this edge of—

Robinson: He was.

Buckley: He was absolutely taken seriously for what he was, which was an intellectual force within the Republican Party. On the separate issue of was he taken seriously as someone who is going to beat a sitting Vice President, the majority—

Kondracke: Or was he presidential?

Buckley: That's even a third issue. I think at the outset of the campaign, reporters handicapped Jack and thought he had a good shot and he was treated accordingly. Over the course of '86 and '87, as his political prospects declined, the seriousness with which he was taken by reporters declined as well. I think in the final months of the campaign, before he got out, it was clear that reporters were rooting for him as a person. Reporters wanted Jack to fight because they wanted him to get into the game because

they liked him on a personal level, to a degree that reporters don't generally like politicians.

Kondracke: Practically every article that I've read about the '88 campaign has a quote from Ed Rollins, and it's saying, "We can't get the guy to shut up." Now, what was that all—

Robinson: Let me just give you an anecdote. There might be some truth to that, but, I mean, I remember when Kemp was not put on the ticket, and I was sitting next to David Broder. It might have been a Sperling Breakfast or something in New Orleans. I don't even remember what it was, but he turned to me and he said, after Jack was done talking, "If we could take Jack Kemp's brain and put it—." Now, this is not a slight to Dan Quayle, but "Put it in Dan Quayle's head, we would have a great ticket." I mean, everybody really respected his intellect and the fact that he was going to fight, not give in, not get angry. That was another quality that he had. He had righteous indignation, but not personal anger.

Billmire: He fought bad ideas; he never fought bad politicians.

Robinson: Yes, it was never personal.

?: But he did talk too long.

?: He did talk too long, yes.

Hoppe: I mean, Jack never finished a speech before the third time he said—this is my last point. At twenty minutes he would say it, at thirty minutes, and at forty-five minutes he would say it, and then at fifty or fifty-five minutes he would be done. So he meant it. He just meant it a half an hour later.

I literally remember being in North Dakota at a state function. It was a state party fundraiser at noon in North Dakota in October of '84, and it was a low-ceilinged hotel ballroom. Jack talked and he talked and he talked, and one of the *Post* reporters who was with me, the guy says, "Ah," about thirty minutes in.

Jack had said already, "Just one more point to make."

And he says, "I think he's losing them now." Fifty-five minutes at a luncheon speech. Fifty-five minutes.

Ended up, and the guy turned to me. He said, "You know, he got them back. He had them at the end." And in the sense, he talked, he said everything he wanted to say, but if the crowd wasn't with him, he would keep going because he could sense them and he wanted them to be with

him the way in football. You want them to be with you to help you move the ball down the field. He never spoke as short as he should have.

Cannon: John and I, in our office in the campaign, we would take turns traveling with him out on different trips. We had a list—I don't know if you remember this—on the back of the door of the things we didn't want him to say anymore, Moses, Maimonides, and things that we just knew were dear to him, but we could see in these little forums that we'd be in, that the eyes are glazing over and people don't know what he's talking about.

Buckley: We once were in Red Bluff, Iowa, I think is the name of the town, and he did one of those things where he gave a great speech, and then he gave it again, and then he gave it a third time. And the mayor, at the end, said, "Well, thank you, Congressman Kemp. Those were three of the best speeches I've ever heard." [laughter]

Van Cleave: A similar experience with him in Tel Aviv, where he was giving a speech at the rollout of the Lavi fighter. I remember it went on for quite a while. I ended up riding back on the airplane, back to New York, sitting next to, as it happened, Senator Tower, who said to me, "You know, you should really tell Jack that he should not talk so long and it really is not necessary to recite for the Israelis their entire history," which he found to be so

fascinating. But irrepressible. That was the other word, frenetic, but also Jack, personally irrepressible is the word that comes to mind.

Mueller: Jude Wanniski had a good way of turning a phrase, and he had a phrase for what we're doing right now, and that's what he called the Churchill's Valet Syndrome, and the word picture you wanted to put in your head was that Churchill's valet knew that he drank too much, he had to be put to bed and so forth, but he was still a great man. But the idea was Churchill's valet was too close to him to see his greatness. And I think what we did at the beginning is closer to assessing his greatness. What we're doing right now is indulging a little bit in camaraderie of the Churchill's Valet Society, but I don't think any of us—

Kondracke: It's all part of the picture, and I must say that you're drawing it very well. Did he want to be HUD secretary, or how did the HUD secretary thing come down?

Cannon: Yes, I think he did want to be HUD secretary. Right before we left the congressional office, he would talk about, "Maybe these are my wilderness years." Anything Churchillian, including what we're doing now, was something that Jack loved very much. But I think that he did want to be HUD secretary and he was intrigued by the possibility of what he could do

there, and he had laid the groundwork for it in Congress. Legislatively he had accomplishments and credibility, and I think he did want it.

Zelaska: He had a backup plan, which was he had already signed with the Washington Speakers Bureau, so he was ready to go there and do that, and then he had made plans with Heritage Foundation to go over there.

Mueller: Did he actually have an office there?

Zelaska: Yes, he did. Yes, a very small office and lots of boxes and everything. We never even got unpacked before he got the word that he was going to be HUD secretary.

Robinson: Wasn't he out in Roslyn or something at that time? Where were we when he was waiting to find out?

Zelaska: No, we were at Heritage.

Robinson: Heritage. Was that where we were?

Kondracke: So he actually moved into Heritage?

Zelaska: Yes, we had actually moved into Heritage when he got the call.

Kondracke: So did he intervene with Jim Baker or somebody, or how did he pass the word that he wanted to be—

Zelaska: That I don't know.

?: I don't know.

?: That was Charlie Black.

?: I mean, I think there were—

Kondracke: Charlie Black?

?: Yes.

Connor: Charlie talked to [Robert M. "Bob] Teeter and—

Kondracke: Charlie talked to Bob Teeter?

?: Yes.

Kondracke: That's how it—

Robinson: You should talk to Charlie about it, but that's how I understand it.

Billmire: And the great irrepressible—the Texans used to tell me, because I was still working a lot in Texas, they knew I was a Kemp guy, and they'd go, "He's driving Baker around the bend." I mean, somebody would bring up Albania, so the HUD secretary would start addressing the fate of four political prisoners. He knew their grandchildren and the name of their dogs. Baker would sit there like that, and Jack just wouldn't shut up. He was engaged on every thing.

Kondracke: I would take it Israeli policy would be a special—

Billmire: Oh, and that really got Baker. But that's another thing. I wasn't involved in that, but the cabinet meetings, and what Kemp did in the cabinet and how they reacted to it.

Kondracke: Is that in anybody's memoirs that you've seen? There are these stories about Jack. Somebody said that Jack had his fork in everybody else's plate.

Billmire: Well, that's right. That was [unclear].

Kondracke: But the special animus or whatever between Jack and Baker, has that been documented someplace?

Van Cleave: We'll have to look into that and get back to you on that. [laughter]

Robinson: I don't think anyone really—I mean, there was kind of that troika with Bush, Baker, and Mosbacher. Mosbacher was a very genuine and honest guy. He was a business guy, he wasn't a political guy, so things kind of had to get done quickly. But he would come back quite frustrated from cabinet meetings. On the other hand, to his credit, he would say, "Jack drove everyone crazy, but I love Jack." The nice guys appreciated him.

Kondracke: So did he consider a run in '96 or not?

Carey: What about '92?

Kondracke: Would he have ever challenged Bush?

Carey: Would he have ever challenged Bush?

Connor: No.

Carey: No way?

Robinson: No, but at one point, there was a little bit of, "We should replace Quayle with Kemp." There was a bit of a swell for that, but it never really went anywhere. And I think Kemp realized that Bush really wanted a Vice President kind of the way Bush was, a loyal guy who is going to be very Bush-like—

Hoppe: The personalities—

Robinson: —and it wasn't going to happen.

Hoppe: There was no way. Those two personalities wouldn't have—I mean the weekly luncheon the President and the Vice President have, Bush would have skipped it on a regular basis, "I'm sick today, Jack. You'll have to do it yourself."

Kondracke: But what about running in ’96, one more run?

Zelaska: I don’t think he—I’ll tell you the truth. We had such a burden from the ’88 campaign financially. The day we finally paid that off, it took us ten years, almost ten years to pay—

Kondracke: How big was the debt?

Zelaska: I can’t remember. Mostly it was legal fees and things like that, but I don’t remember how much it was, but took us maybe eight years to pay that off, and that was such a downer to him. I don’t think he wanted to consider doing anything—

Mueller: I think the fundraising was a big factor. I believe Jack announced in March of 1995 that he was not going to run for President in 1996. In fact, this set up the scheme to get Jack selected the head of the Tax Commission by Gingrich and Dole, and I think that Jack wanted to run for Vice President, be selected for Vice President. He did not want to raise money or jump through all the hoops needed to run for President. But Jeff Bell and [David M.] Dave Smick had this idea that he would head this Tax Commission, would present a plan that the Republican candidate could run on and win on

in ’96, and this was the idea. But then [Malcolm S.] Steve Forbes ran on his flat tax and things got kind of complicated, also with the way the Tax Reform Commission actually turned out, what proposed. But Jack had already, I think, had enough of specific presidential politics and announced early in ’95 that he was not running in ’96.

Kondracke: So was he surprised that he was picked as the Vice President in ’96, or was he—

Zelaska: Oh, I think he was a little surprised. I mean, I remember the way it came down. I was sitting in my office, and he called me and he says, “I’m going to tell you something. You can’t tell anybody.”

Buckley: I knew he told somebody after we told him he couldn’t tell anybody. [laughter]

Zelaska: He says, “You can’t tell anybody,” he says, “but I just got a call from Senator Dole and he says they’re looking into me.”

Then he hung up and I went, “Oh, I can’t tell a soul about this. This is so exciting.”

Then he called me back about fifteen minutes later and he says, “You’re going to get a call from—,” and he gave me the name of the lawyer. “And

they want all of my tax records and all my financial stuff." And he says, "Do you have it?"

I said, "Yes, I've got it right here." I don't know why I did, but I did.

And he says, "Well, be prepared. You're going to get this phone call." Somehow, though, word had started to get out and reporters were circling the block. We were at Eighteenth and I [Street] at the time.

So I got all the paperwork together and I did get the call from the guy, and he said, "Can you meet me at our office at seven o'clock?" or something like that.

I said, "Fine." So I didn't know how I was going to get all this material out of the building, because I was supposed to leave the next day for San Diego. We just thought we were going to go there and just be a part of the convention and that was it. I put it all in a suitcase and walked out the front door in front of all those reporters and just pretended like I was going to the airport to catch a flight and that was it, but I went right to the lawyer's office with all the materials and sat there for hours going over everything.

Kondracke: So, John, do you know from the inside what—

Buckley: I mean, I know from the inside that Dole—it was really coming down to a few people, including [Francis A.] Frank Keating, the then governor of Oklahoma. Right? Do I have that right, Oklahoma?

Hoppe: That's right.

Buckley: And Jack. And I remember Dole called Scott Reed and said, "You need to have a conversation with the quarterback." It was really, "Is there anything that is going to hurt the ticket if Jack is chosen?" So Scott and I, we had to go hide in the bottom of a station wagon as somebody drove out of the Dole campaign garage over here, and meet Jack in the garage of the Key Bridge Marriott. Jack got snuck into the Key Bridge Marriott.

Zelaska: Was Joanne with him?

Buckley: No, it was just Jack.

Zelaska: Because at some point Jack and Joanne met with the Doles. It was that night, I thought.

Buckley: And there was like sort of a preliminary conversation of it's basically, "All systems are go. I mean, this is serious. Are you willing and ready to do this?" And he said yes. And then I think things moved really quickly—

Zelaska: Very quickly.

Buckley: —at that point. By that time, we went out to Russell, Kansas, and we had to send a private plane. We had to send a detour plane. Oh, we had to send a detour plane to New Jersey—

Kondracke: You mean a decoy plane.

Buckley: A decoy plane, pardon me, to New Jersey to Christine Todd Whitman's local airport.

Billmire: Oh, my heavens.

Buckley: It was basically just to throw the press off the scent. And picked up Jack and flew he and Joanne to some little tiny airport out in western Kansas. Happily, they got stashed in a hotel room that night, some little motel in—

Hoppe: I was going to say, there's only three. [laughter]

Buckley: Yes, exactly. And then the next morning we brought them into Russell for the announcement. After everything we had been through, that

was my happiest moment ever working with Jack, was opening the door to the hotel room and having Joanne and he be sitting there. He'd gotten the call and this was it. Now he was on the ticket, which was really, really fun.

Kondracke: There's so much history between Dole and Kemp. How did this ever come off?

Buckley: I think it came off because Bob Dole did an assessment of his own chances against Bill Clinton, a President who was running for reelection in a time of peace and prosperity, and he looked at the slate of potential Vice President candidates and there was only one person he thought who could excite the Republican base and also be someone who could change the dynamic of the race. It was not a completely dissimilar impulse to John [S.] McCain thinking Sarah [L.] Palin would excite the race, the difference being that Jack actually was substantive and—

?: Intelligent.

Buckley: —had a real track record.

Kondracke: Okay. Is there any story that you haven't told that you're just dying to tell?

Hoppe: Yes.

Kondracke: Okay. Good.

Hoppe: I was on the floor with Jack, and Arnold [A.] Schwarzenegger was coming to visit the office, and Jack had never met Arnold Schwarzenegger. So there were a series of votes that were on the floor, and I had gone down. So we're coming back to the office and Jack's obviously excited. I mean, you could tell. When he was excited, his whole body just sort of shook as he walked and everything.

He comes through the door, bursts through the door into his office, and Schwarzenegger is standing there in his suit. Jack throws off his jacket and lays down on the floor and goes, "Schwarzenegger, let's wrestle." [laughter] And Schwarzenegger's looking at him like this and his eyes are this big, and he had no idea what to say. He's just looking at him. Jack said, "Come on, come on." Finally, Jack got up and shook his hand. It was the strangest meeting I've ever seen in my life, but it was quintessentially Jack.

Billmire: Remember that time with the—he was watching the screen, debate on the floor, and they were doing the weeks, national this week, national that week. You were up there and I'm in the back sitting right next to

Michelle. And I hear you sort of yelp because Jack is looking at the screen, and somehow they announced it was going to be National Soccer Week, like, next week before National Football Week. And I hear Dave sort of yelp and then he goes, "Richard, catch him!" And Jack was going down the hall. I could not catch up with him.

Kondracke: Oh, he went to the floor.

Billmire: Went to the floor and he gave this speech about, "In soccer you're on a field. In football, you're in a stadium. Soccer goal, football score," and so on. And then the final line, where he put everything together, economics, politics, foreign policy, he said, "Look, got a lot of problems in Europe. High, high unemployment rates, terrible foreign policy, weak with the Soviets, and you know why? In football, we use our arms, and in soccer you only use your legs." [laughter] And my job was to take the—you try to get the speeches taken down. I had to call Dave, and Dave intervened and we were able to get all that taken down.

Kondracke: Taken out of the record.

Billmire: Taken out of the *Congressional Record*.

Kondracke: But he got in trouble for it anyway.

Billmire: Yes, he did.

?: He called it a socialist sport, right?

Billmire: A socialist sport, exactly, exactly.

?: Don't even have a quarterback.

Carey: European socialist.

Kondracke: Mary, any favorite story?

Cannon: Oh, gosh.

Billmire: How many?

Zelaska: I can tell one on Mary. Well, it's not on Mary, it's about Mary. Back to what I told her about at lunchtime, we were at HUD at the time, and Jack, for the first time in his life, had a car and a driver, and he wasn't really used to that. But when he got in the car, he had to sit in the front seat

because he didn't want to sit in the back, and he was always playing with all the buttons and driving his driver just absolutely crazy. He'd get in the car, and for the first time in his life, he had a car phone. Cellular phones weren't big back in those days, but he had a car phone, and he couldn't wait to pick that phone up and start calling the office and talking about things, you know. And this one day he calls me and he goes, "Well, where's Scott?"

And I said, "Well, he's in his office."

"Where's Bill?"

"Well, he's over there."

"Well, where's Mary?"

"She's in the back seat of your car." [laughter]

Connor: We had a lot of travels like that.

Zelaska: That's the way he was. He just wanted to talk, you know, and he didn't always pay attention to what he was saying.

Van Cleave: Well, on that theme, I've got one then. Jack gave a lot of speeches, and as Richard was saying earlier, one could give him talking points, but the speech usually had nothing to do with talking points. He had an intuitive feel for audiences and for what would appeal to people and how to reach people. I think that was part of his genius as a politician on one-

on-one or with an audience. So he would get into a speech and it would inspire him.

So I had the opportunity to give him some talking points for a speech that he was to give at Annapolis to all the midshipmen, who were all assembled in the auditorium there, gymnasium, actually, are sitting in this gymnasium. He's to give this speech to the entire group. I went to take notes, and accompanying him to this speech was his younger daughter, Judith, who was beautiful, sixteen-year-old girl, long hair, just gorgeous. So Judith is sitting down in the front row and there are all these midshipmen, and Jack starts the speech, and he is talking about all of the wonderful things, policy issues, but mostly inspiration, about the importance of taking leadership in life. It was wonderful and they're eating it up, and he gets to a point where he's trying to express something where he started saying, "It's important to be all that you can be."

Well, back then the Army had a slogan saying, "Be all that you could be," and there's this groan that went up. So he realized that this was not the right refrain to use as he's working into this speech, so he starts working it around a little more and he said, "I believe in life. We should aspire—." I can't at all do him justice, but, "Aspire to achieve great things and that's what I tell my son Jeff when he's on the field. I say, 'Just get out there, do it all, give it your all, go all the way.' And I tell my younger son, Jimmy, when he's out there, 'Go all the way.' And I tell my daughter Judith, 'Just to

go all the—.'" And then he realized. [laughter] And she's bright red. It brought down the house.

Kondracke: So I've ended these these other panelists saying where do you think Jack Kemp should be seen in history, but I'm actually going to just ask you for any final reflections on what your experience was like with Jack Kemp and what it was like to work for him and so on. So, John, sum up.

Mueller: Well, I basically said what I thought in the first session, which is I think that for his place in history, I think Jack is the one politician, at least in the last century, who has done more to change the course of federal policy without having been President than anyone else. Other than that, it's apparent from the discussion today just how much fun it was to work for him.

Kondracke: Michelle. Nobody has to do this, by the way, but if you—

Van Cleave: Well, following on to John's theme, really, and one that's been developing here, I think we all felt that it was a privilege to get to work for him, and not because he was perfect and not because he didn't have his foibles and not because there weren't lots of times of frustration, because there were all of these and then some, but in my personal experience,

working for Jack was a deep privilege, and it was easy because I knew what he thought, and I knew how to write for him and I knew how to work for him because there was a clarity of his thinking about what was important and his values and the ideas that he thought were important. So that part of being a member of the Kemp staff translated into being a member of a Kemp community that endured well beyond the campaigns and very much became a part of our lives.

Billmire: This is a darker note, but I think what bothers me now, I got into politics and campaigns after that, and as you know, I do a lot of opposition research, and this is not about me, but I just want to tell you I see a lot of different people. I work in governors' races and U.S. Senate races and etc., and I guess what troubles me, and it's not that the grand old days of Jack Kemp and all these wonderful people and wonderful ideas and excitement and all that, because there were exciting times, too, I guess what I'm troubled about now is that there is a way and there's going to come a point—maybe we need another October 2008 to get people sensible. We don't have a Jack Kemp in either party now who is not going to take cheap advantage.

I won't go into the idiots in the White House and what they're doing, but I just don't see that out there. I don't see it at the governors' level. I've worked very long and hard for [James R.] Rick Perry. I've worked very long

and hard for [Willard] Mitt Romney. All these other people have done similar things, but I mean the message I get, as reinforced by everything I've heard today, is Jack was a very unique person and that maybe meant he couldn't be President; it meant he couldn't be governor; it meant he couldn't be a U.S. senator, because he was about ideas and changing the course of history, as dramatic as that sounds.

But you tell me who's out there doing the same stuff, whether it's social policy in China, whether it's the tax code, whether it's foreign policy, arms control, human rights. I just don't see it. I challenge anybody to give me a couple names, because I can tell you pretty quickly that kind of guy may not be right now unless there's another crisis. We may not see his like again for a long time, pure and simple.

Hoppe: I loved working for Jack. I've got one brief anecdote. Jack used to tell us that he knew how bad a day it was by whether one or all three of Sharon, John, and I, had gone to church at noon. [laughter] If we were all three gone, he knew it was a really tough day. But it was the most stimulating, the most frustrating, and the most wonderful work experience I've ever had in my life.

Buckley: I'm proud to have been a Jack Kemp Republican. I'm proud of the association of working with Jack. Jack was the best person ever to work

with as a politician. All the things that made me frustrated with him, not being willing to attack and all those things were, of course, exactly the essence of why he was so great.

We were talking a little bit earlier about can you imagine today a situation where you would have a Kemp and a [Robert W. "Bob"] Kasten [Jr.] and a [William W. "Bill"] Bradley and [Richard A. "Dick"] Gephardt working together across party lines in order to do some major initiative. I think, to be fair, there was a generation of politicians that Jack was associated with that we're mourning the loss of having a lot of them no longer a part of the political environment. But Jack was really special and an amazing fun guy to work for.

Robinson: I agree with everything said. He also gave me a chance. I was a kid when I came into that office, and he was a great teacher, as were a lot of people at this table, and he did care about teaching and bringing people with him on whatever mission he happened to be on. But it was easy to believe in the, quote, unquote, "cause" that he fought for because almost always it was the right thing to do, and he really did approach life in that way, even when he didn't have the political support to do it. If a particular special-interest group said, "Well, we just can't fight this fight. We've used all our chits," he would say, "I'm going to keep going." And he did that time

and time and again. So it was easy to admire him as a younger person and, frankly, it was probably one of the best jobs I ever had in my life, for sure.

Carey: I would say the most interesting thing to me about Kemp is how he took a very narrow political base, an outlying western New York congressional district, and was in the minority in the House of Representatives and then came to—I don't want to say he dominated American politics, but he came very, very close to dominating the political and policy debate for many, many years. Now, that base was a little too narrow to get all the way to the White House, but it was just remarkable by energy, force of personality, drive for fame, drive for all the things he had. That's a very, very narrow—it wasn't even a New York City district. It wasn't even a California district. And that, to me, showed that there was a remarkable amount of energy and will and power just driving him forward, and I'm just kind of surprised he never became President.

Connor: Well, of course, I agree with everything that has been said about Jack's qualities and his contribution. I think he would want to be remembered as a patriot. I think he was a patriot. There's no one really, I think, who can compare. Speaking personally, like Marci, I started out—it was my very first job. I worked for him for twelve years, the first twelve years of my career, and nothing can compare to working with him. He was

fun. He was generous. It was exciting to be around him and all the people that he surrounded himself with. So I think the country misses him and there really isn't anyone like him.

Zelaska: Quite simply, I was always proud to work for him.

Kondracke: Okay, thank you so much. This has been wonderful.

[End of interview]