



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH CLAUDE HOOTON JR.

December 16, 2009
San Antonio, Texas

Interviewer

University of Virginia

Janet Heininger

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[Because of a technical malfunction, the conversation preceding this session was not recorded.]

Janet Heininger: This is a continuation of the interview with Claude Hooton on December 16, 2009, in San Antonio.

Claude Hooton Jr.: I was going through some of these pictures. Is that the one with Jack [John F. Kennedy]? I think that was at his wedding; that's when we were singing there. There's Jack. That was at their wedding. I was giving a toast to the Kennedy ladies and Ted [Edward M. Kennedy] says, "The 'Kennedy ladies,' come on," and he'd pull them down. He used to do that during the campaign. Every time I'd get up, he started to pull on my breeches, "Get through this speech." Jack is trying to get the microphone from me and I'm trying to toast Mrs. Kennedy and the sisters. That's the only picture I have of Jack. That's Ted with [Bill] Clinton.

Heininger: That's nice.

Hooton: That's my wife. This is the day we were going to be the surprise, on Labor Day weekend—We borrowed Jack Fallon's boat, to be a surprise entry in the race. Young Teddy was racing, and Joe Kennedy. The day before, I fell on the tennis court and fractured two of my ribs. We had [Edward M.] Gallagher, his foot was in a cast, and [John] Culver, who couldn't sail his way out of a hot mug of tea. That was the day we finished fourth. We let young Teddy barge us at the start. He shouldn't have done that because it was his son. He was trying to win the whole summer series of that race.

Heininger: Oh, what lovely stuff. But let's go back to Harvard for a minute. Tell me about the cheating incident for Ted.

Hooton: Yes, I didn't even know about it. Bill Frate was a big old lug and just the nicest guy in the world. I think they did it as a lark, you know? It wasn't because of drinking, because neither of them drank in college. Ted rarely had a beer and Bill didn't, so it wasn't something he did because he was out drinking. If I'd known about it, he wouldn't have done that. I'd have kicked his tail. Dudley [Richards] was his roommate, and he said, "Claude, I'm not going to tell him what to do." I said, "Are you his friend?" It was the most stupid thing. But you know, they got booted out.

When he came back, he was a different person. I got him into the yacht club. He had a blackball three times that we voted. We'd go around and he kept getting the blackball.

Heininger: When he came back?

Hooton: Yes. That's the finest club at Harvard. I loved the yacht club. Finally, I said, "Ted Kennedy is the best friend I have. If he's got something that means he's not a decent person, or some reason why he shouldn't be associated with the yacht club, I'd like to know about it." I said, "Whoever is putting that blackball in, if they'd just tell me, because I don't want him in the club if there's something about him that wouldn't make him worthwhile." One guy, Butch, was just a rock-hard, pinched-nose Republican just like his father, and he said, "Well, he's just like a socialist. And his father was a bootlegger." I said, "What does that have to do with Ted? Do you know him? He's been to the mixers. Did he do something that made you think he was not a gentleman?" "No, it's all his family." I said, "We're not voting for his family, Butch. You're voting for Ted. Whatever you think of his family is irrelevant in this conversation." So he got into the yacht club.

Heininger: So it wasn't the cheating incident that he was being blackballed for, it was for his family?

Hooton: His family, yes.

Heininger: Really? Interesting.

Hooton: After the election, I went back to Houston. The River Oaks Country Club was the best one in Houston. My grandfather was a charter member. He said, "God dang, there's nothing out there but a bunch of trees." It ended up the nicest club in Houston. Houston Country Club—I always called them the "would-be's." That's the one that George [H. W.] Bush joined, and Jimmy Baker, who I grew up with. But River Oaks was oil men, and they were all the brokers and the insurance salesmen and the lawyers.

Heininger: So you didn't know about the cheating ahead of time?

Hooton: No.

Heininger: And you would have kicked him if you'd heard about it ahead of time. But his roommate didn't feel he could tell him what to do.

Hooton: Yes.

Heininger: Were you surprised he did it?

Hooton: Yes. I just wondered why he did. Hell, I was a gentleman from the South and I made that clear at Harvard. I flunked two courses and I took them over and passed them. Harvard would not let you flunk out and I never lost my scholarship. One was football. I played football every Saturday. And calculus—I'd never even heard of it. So I got behind and I flunked exams.

Then the dean got me a tutor and I had an 89 on the final. Professor Goldberg, this little guy with glasses who was one of the three men at Harvard that could use the computers at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]—He knew it. I said, "Dr. Goldberg, I made an 89 on the final and you gave me an E." "You just missed too many Saturday courses, Mr. Hooton." I wanted to punch him one.

They didn't put me on probation then, but then I was on the swim team and flunked an engineering course. Our engineering was 7:30 in the morning and I got behind and never could catch up, but I took it over and got a C-plus in it. They changed it. They put it in the architectural school and changed the course, but it was a course I wish I had stayed in. It was interesting.

Anyhow, Ted—I was absolutely flabbergasted. I said, "Jeepers—" And he picked the biggest guy in the class. Frate's about six-foot-three, played football, a big old lug, and you could never mistake him for Ted; he was about three inches taller. That didn't make any sense to me.

Heininger: Why did he do it?

Hooton: I don't have the slightest idea.

Heininger: Did you ever talk to him about it?

Hooton: Never, really. When I ran for Congress, I was at a union breakfast one morning and it was so quiet, and I leaned over to the guy who was the head of it and I said, "It sure is quiet in here. What's the matter?" He said, "I'll get this straightened out." The night before, my opponent had been on TV. "Is it true that Claude Hooton cheated for Ted at Harvard?" "Well, I don't know about that," which indicated I had. So this union guy gets up and says, "Let me just tell you something. Is there anyone in this room who has never cheated?" All of a sudden everybody started talking and it was over. But that's the repercussions I had on it.

Heininger: Really?

Hooton: They thought that I was the guy who cheated for Ted.

Heininger: You were supposedly the guy who cheated for him.

Hooton: When he came back—

Heininger: Well, why did he go into the Army?

Hooton: He had to do something. It was the Korean War.

Heininger: Did he think that it was going to—did he do it on his own accord, because he thought it was the right thing to do, or because he thought that—

Hooton: Oh, I think he probably did it on his own accord. What is he going to do for two years? And I think it also helped his readmittance, that he was doing something for his country and not just being a bum, sailing all summer, and goofing off. I think it helped him in that regard.

Heininger: How did his family react?

Hooton: I don't know, because that was the end of the year, and then I went home for the summer and came back and he was gone. So I didn't see him for two years. I didn't see any of them again; there wasn't any reason to.

When he came back he was a changed man. He made honors grades, I think, his last two years. He stopped by the yacht club. He was in Winthrop House, I was in Eliot [House]; they're right next to each other. He would stop by and we would walk over together. But he was a bookworm, so to speak. He was a different person. I didn't know that much about what his study habits were freshman year anyway, because I wasn't rooming with him. But his whole approach to life had changed. Being an MP [military police], going through basic [training], you know they tried to beat him up two or three times but they picked on the wrong guy. Ted's tough.

That saved his life in the plane crash. Talking about that, I have to mention, as soon as I heard, I phoned the TV station and I couldn't get any word in Houston. I'd heard he'd been in a plane crash. I called Eddie [Martin] and said, "We've got to get up there," and he said, "I made a vow never to play around again. I'm going to be a new man." But he said, "He's in such and such hospital in Northampton."

I started a charity golf tournament for multiple sclerosis. I was co-chairman one year, and I had a good friend at the TV station and he got me the information, so I was on the next plane to get up there. When I got up there, I went to see him. [Patricia] Pat Lawford was on a cot, sleeping there in the hallway to his room, and nobody was getting by her unless she said so. She said, "Oh, it's good to see you." I said, "I just want to see him. Tell him I'm here." "Well, you can go right in, Claude." I went in and he had this plastic oxygen mask on and tubes coming out of everything, his ears and nose. It seemed like he was nothing but tubes. And I said, "Eddie, I don't want to stay long but I wanted to thank you for several of us, that if you're going to do something like that, you did it right here in Northampton, next to Smith College." He took the tube out and said, "Claude, they all went home for summer recess two weeks ago." That's when I knew he was going to make it. Anyway, that was just to tell you that I was there the whole time with him.

I think John and I were his closest, close friends, [John] Culver right on the edge of that, and Tim Hanan was a little bit—He was in law school with him. I don't know why, but we just had a blast together once we got together.

Heininger: Was he your best friend?

Hooton: Oh, yes, no question about that. I loved him with all my heart. He got me on the first retreat I ever went on, freshman year. "You want to go on a retreat?" I said, "What's that?" He said, "Well, you go for two or three days." I said, "Sure, I would love to go." So I went on this retreat and when I came back, I felt as close to God, maybe as I ever felt in my whole life, except when my children were born.

They had intramural boxing and I loved to box, so I went out for intramural boxing and I felt like nobody could hurt me. I won four fights in a row, TKO [technical knockout]. Nobody got in the ring with me and I thought, *God, I've got a fortune right here in my fists*. I got into the finals with [Hugh] Chick Chandler, who was captain of the wrestling team, and he TKO'd me in the second round. He didn't knock me down. I was mad as heck. I saw those dots that I had seen on the ski slope for about two seconds. I was shaking my head and the ref came over and he said, "Are you all right?" I said yes. I was shaking my head to clear it. "Fight's over." I wanted to punch him. I thought I was kind of winning at that point, but apparently I wasn't.

That retreat gave me a confidence that I'd never had before. I knew God was really with me then. Ted Kennedy got me there, in the religious area. He's probably had the most profound effect on me as far as Catholicism and being a good Catholic and going to confession and communion and those things. I don't have to go to confession much anymore; I don't do anything that's any fun anymore.

His faith has carried him through so much. If I had had lost three brothers, I don't know what I'd do. I just wanted one, and he lost all three and kept on swinging. That's the way I've tried to live my life and I think he did. You get up every morning and do your best, then you sleep well at night. If you screwed up, you screwed up. Harry Truman once said in an interview with the *Saturday Evening Post*—I used to sell those when I was a kid. This reporter said, "When you were President of the United States, Mr. President, weren't you concerned that you would make the wrong decisions?" "You're dang right," he said. "But if I made a wrong decision today, I'd make the right one to correct it tomorrow. That's what an executive does." And that's really true. That's the way you get through life, is not be afraid to do anything, to make those decisions. Go on and get it done and if you made a mistake, correct it. I think that's Ted.

One of the things about getting up and singing—Neither one of us worried about making an ass out of ourselves, because pretty much that was very easy for us. We used to get up and sing at college, at the girls' dances, at a bar, or wherever we could get a chance, and somebody listened long enough before throwing us out. We loved to sing together, because we had a routine of *Heart of my Heart*, [*Won't You Come Home*] *Bill Bailey*, and we did *Everybody Loves Saturday Night* in seven languages. Some were not quite correct. But everybody loved that.

We were over in Berlin when Bobby [Kennedy] and Ethel [Skakel Kennedy] were over at the Berlin Wall and all. We were going to the Common Market countries, five of them. We went to Paris first and spoke with Paul-Henri Spaak, who was a father of the Common Market in Europe. I'll never forget it; I can still see it—his house/apartment was kind of dark. Here was this guy trying to achieve something: He wanted to have the United States of Europe, so they could compete fairly with us. I thought, *Man, this guy's a dreamer*. We started there, and of course the Common Market became the United States and Europe.

We went to Israel and had an incident there where Ted spoke at the University of Jerusalem. I got home in Tel Aviv that night. I had a friend who was a reporter in Houston and he said, "What's this about the riot at the university?" I said, "What riot?" He said, "Well, hell, it's all over UPI [United Press International] and AP [Associated Press] news, about the riot, when Ted spoke at the university." I said, "There was no riot. I don't know what you're talking about." Well, apparently what had happened, before Teddy even got there—"No, they gave a standing ovation," I said. "Hell, they loved him." He said, "That's not what the AP says." Well, some kid had a "Go home, Kennedy" lipstick sign outside of the auditorium before we got there, and some other students came and said, "What are you doing? That's not the way we treat people here." They took his sign away from him and tore it up. That was the riot.

We went from there to Berlin, and went to the Wall. It was something else.

Heininger: Did you also go to Poland on that trip?

Hooton: Poland, yes.

Heininger: What was that train like?

Hooton: It was like being under guard of the KGB [Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti]. We went to Vienna and we couldn't fly in because the radar of the planes wouldn't work in Russian, so we had to take the train. I'll never forget, they woke us up to check at the border point, and Ted was in the upper bunk. I looked out the door and there were two KGB guys in the hall. This is 3:00 in the morning; they weren't out there smoking a cigarette.

We went to Częstochowa and saw the Black Madonna. That was our first day in Poland. They brought around this tray. I thought it was ice water, you know—wine glasses. I took a swallow. It was pure vodka. We were going from Częstochowa up to the capital of Poland, Warsaw. It was in a blizzard. We had a car with a driver from the embassy, Ted and I, and we'd pulled off the road to let the others catch up. We had a car full of reporters in their Volkswagen, and another car with some embassy people, and so about three or four cars. We had gotten out ahead of them. We couldn't turn around on the road and we went a little further and thought maybe we'd see a road, you know? Finally, Ted says, "Why don't we just turn around out here in this field? Heck, that's frozen. It's not going to be a problem." That's Ted, I mean, "Just turn in here and turn the car around." We got stuck.

Heininger: Of course. *[laughs]*

Hooton: We were in a blizzard and we're two or three hundred yards from the highway, so nobody's going to see us. I didn't want to say, "I told you so," but you could tell by my expression, that's exactly what I thought. We looked around and this old truck came by. It looked like a World War I truck. You could barely see it in the snow. We were 100 yards, or 50-something—I don't know how many yards off the road—on a dirt road, and there are these two guys that we found—"How are we going to get it out of here?" "I don't know." The Polish driver didn't speak English. He knew "Yes, sir; no, sir," and that was about it. I said, "Let's just look in the truck." We looked in the truck and he had a big rope. They finally pulled us out and we got to Warsaw. But on the way, the press people had had a bad accident and three of them got killed trying to follow us in that snowstorm. That happened to us in Latin America one time.

Anyway, when we got into Poland, Ted went to bed and I went out to see what the nightlife was like. There was a bunch of Germans, and I spoke German. I'd been there in the Army, so I spoke a little German. "*Guten Abend. Sitzen Sie!*" So I sat down. They were from East Germany and they said, "Some of us are not so poor as they say," because they were obviously—the women had jewelry and everything.

Then we went to Berlin, and we went to this dinner that night. Willy Brandt had—There must have been 20 guys, all in black tie, all Germans, except General [Lucius D.] Clay was there, and someone else with Bobby, because it was in Bobby's honor. It was kind of a banana-shaped table, so you could see everybody.

This place, they're all smoking cigars. Earlier that day, Bobby had been to a meeting, and they started talking about what the United States had to do for West Berlin, and he just said—this was at a breakfast—"Excuse me, gentlemen, I think there's been some misunderstanding here. I

didn't come here to have you tell me what the United States could do for West Berlin. I came here to tell you what the U.S. is going to do for West Berlin." I thought that was so—At any rate, Ted said, "We ought to get up here and sing." So we got up and did our number and Bobby was glaring at us and he said, "You know, Ethel told me that letting you guys join this tour was a mistake, and she was right, but maybe if I got up there and sang with you, we could make this go away." Ted looked over at him and said, "You know what, Bobby? That would be the second mistake." That got a big roar from all of them.

Then we went to Paris and then to Ireland. I lost his clothes. We went to Bonn and Bobby had joined up with our tour, and they had all these bags piled up. Ted had to go do something, so I said, "I'll go get our bags so we can go on to Paris." I went down and I saw his bag and my bag, and I forgot he had a hang-up bag, so it disappeared. We got to Paris and his hang-up bag was gone. We were going to go to a dinner for the economists, with rib roast. I said, "I don't want to spend my night in Paris with economists. I don't care a damn about the French economy; I'm worried about what's happening in Texas."

Ted said, "Oh, we have to go, Claude. We have to go." Before we went to the State forum, I went by this young man who said, "Of course you have your black tie?" I said, "No. What do you mean, black tie?" "Oh, Mr. Hooton, you *must* have a black tie." I had to go rent this tux, and I had about an hour to do it. The breeches were about to here, and the sleeves on the coat—nothing fit. I had to roll the breeches because they had a big crotch. I hid that under the cummerbund. Ted had his tux, of course; it was tailor-made in silk or something.

We stayed at this hotel his mother had told us about—His mother was a great economist—and it was lovely. It was an old hotel just off the Champs-Élysées. We stayed right near the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile, and it was about half the price of the [Four Seasons] Georges V. We were the first ones there and had a drink. Then Yul Brynner came in wearing his tux, which was immaculate, and his gal, and I said, "I didn't know he was an economist, Ted." He said, "I don't know." About another 30 minutes and the room was filled up with all these guys in their tailored suits. Meanwhile, we realized it wasn't the economists; it was just a party that [inaudible] had for us. It was some kind of party. The caviar and all the dishes—It was just lovely.

We got to know Yul Brynner a little there, and later on we went to his house in Switzerland and had lunch with him, and he took us around the yard and showed us all his flowers. He had asked people not to send cut flowers, but something that he could plant and grow. He said, "This was from So-and-So." All these people had brought the potted plants.

He took us out on his speedboat, which was beautiful, the mahogany and all. It had three cockpits and everything. Out on Lake Geneva.

Heininger: Wow.

Hooton: He said he and his wife used to go across the lake and do 60 miles an hour or something. I fell in love with the guy. I asked him, and he said he would rather do a western than any kind of movie. He loved to play a cowboy, which made me love him even more.

Then we went to Scotland. Grant Stockdale from Florida had been at the convention. Jack [John F. Kennedy] had made him Ambassador to Ireland. The guy was a good guy. Ted had asked if he

could go riding. We were there only a day or two, and he was still in the same suit he'd been wearing since I'd left all his clothes. They saddled up some horses. We didn't have any riding clothes. We were all in suits and ties, and Grant had on his overcoat and I had on a coat that was Ted's father's—when I got to Washington Ted said, "You don't have an overcoat?" I said, "No, I have a raincoat." "Claude, it's going to be cold in Europe, so he went into the closet and brought me one of his father's coats, one of those velvet-collared overcoats, which kept me warm. But not in Poland. It was so cold out there in that field.

We get to the gate at the embassy and my horse wouldn't go through. Ted had told him, "Well, he's from Texas," and what a great rider I was, and all this baloney. I wasn't going to deny it. But I can't get this horse to move; he wasn't going through that gate. So they came back and Ted comes around and slaps him one on the fanny and *boom*, off we go at a full gallop. The next thing I know, he stops because there's a huge hedge or something there, and I go flying off the front. My favorite suit was—Ted comes up through the snow and starts laughing his head off, he and Grant. I tried to get back on and of course the snow had gotten on the saddle and I was covered and wet. It was like trying to get on a greased hog. Anyway, we got back. He got even with me about his suits. We had some times.

Grant Stockdale, when Jack was killed—That's in my book. We were in Washington. The day after, I went over to his office and he had gone when Lyndon [Johnson] came to joint session. I was with him when he heard the news of Jack and everything. I'd gone up to Washington. We were all going to go to the Harvard–Yale game. [John Varick] Tunney went to Yale and we were going to have a night in Washington and go up for that game that weekend.

I was sitting at his desk. My wife Libby [Hooton] was with me and had gone to the hotel. I'd gone over and said, "I'll see what the program is." Teddy was on the floor; He was presiding in the Senate. He was a freshman Senator. Anyway, Ted's secretary came in and she was in hysterics. We'd just seen him the night before, in Houston. We'd gone to his dinner. I'd bought \$5,000 worth of tickets; I was doing better then. She said, "The President's been shot, the President's been shot." I said, "Don't make fun of that. That's not a joke." She said, "Claude, I'm serious. It's on television."

I'd just seen him the night before. I said, "Ted shouldn't come back to the office, in my opinion. Hell, the press will be all over this place." At that point we didn't know if he'd been shot in the leg, or what. I sat down on the corner of the office building. I went down there and sat and waited. He came back in the car. Senator [Daniel K.] Inouye was in the seat right next to—Ted was in the back. He got out and I said, "Hey, I think probably you shouldn't go back to the office because it's going to be jammed up with reporters in a matter of minutes." "Claude, I have to go back and see if I can get Bobby." So we went back to the office very briefly, and none of the phones were working. Just *bzzzz*—you couldn't get a phone. I said, "Let's go by the house and maybe it will work better."

Milton Gwirtzman had a car and so he drove us from there over to Ted's house in Georgetown, and we went in. None of Ted's phones worked. Joan [Bennett Kennedy] wasn't there; there wasn't anybody at home. I said, "Let's go try the houses down the street."

We take off on the left side, and I was on the right side, and we were ringing doorbells. I got two where nobody answered, and on the third one, somebody answered for him and I heard the conversation: a little old black lady saying, “My missus say, ain’t nobody coming in this house if she ain’t here. I don’t care who you is or what you need, but you ain’t coming in this house.” I said, “It’s Ted Kennedy. His brother is President.” She said, “He sure do look like him, don’t he?” I said, “Yes, he’s his younger brother and we need to get to a phone desperately.” “Well, I guess she won’t find out nothing about it. You come on.”

We went back in the kitchen—she was ironing back there—and the phone was under some stairs that came down so the kitchen help would go upstairs. So Ted was on his knees on the phone, and he finally got through to Bobby, which was a miracle. He talked about half a minute and he just went like—And I knew that Jack wasn’t going to be with us anymore. Then we went over to the White House.

Heininger: Bobby told him?

Hooton: Yes, Bobby told him. Bobby loved his brother too. They were as close as any brothers could get, very competitive with each other. They loved the competition and loved each other. We got over to the White House and couldn’t get in. Then we finally figured out to pull the door. At this point, we still—I didn’t know how he had gotten shot. Nobody knew anything yet, but they just knew he’d been killed. I just couldn’t believe it. I was just in Houston at the airport. They just loved Jack down there.

Prior to that time, when Ted was in Washington that summer, I was thinking about running for mayor. My father-in-law told me up front I would never run for Congress again if he supported me, and so I didn’t. But then the mayor was really a bad mayor, so I thought maybe I might run for the mayor, and he wanted me to run, and the polls showed that the guy could be beat. I said, “I’m not doing that without Lyndon’s support.”

The night I went down to file, Kenny O’Donnell called me from the White House, “What the hell do you think you’re doing, Claude?” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “Lyndon Johnson just left my office, absolutely furious. You’re running for Congress? You can’t run for Congress.” I said, “Kenny, I don’t care what Lyndon thinks. I appreciate your concerns, but I’m running late. I’ve got to get down there and register.”

I got a call from Jack during that campaign. It was our anniversary, my wife and I, and I promised her I would not be campaigning, that we were going to dinner at the club and have a dinner to celebrate our anniversary. We were headed out through the kitchen and the phone rang. “You promised me. Don’t pick up that phone, you promised me you wouldn’t.” I said, “Let me just see who it is.” I heard, “Mr. Hooton? Just a moment please.” Then I heard, “Hooton, what’s happening down there?” You know, it was the President. We talked a while and he said, “Debate him.” I said, “Jack, I have been trying to debate him since I opened my campaign. He refuses.” He said, “Well, debate an empty chair.” So that’s what I did, I debated an empty chair and I lost.

When I hung up the phone, she’s standing there. “Who was that?” I said, “That was the President of the United States, dear.” She said, “Oh, is that Jack?” We sat in his box at the inauguration, at the parade, and we were also in his box at the inaugural ball. This guy was sitting next to JP

[Joseph P. Kennedy], his father, and it was supposed to be my seat. I was standing up in the back. I don't know, maybe it was a friend of JP's. I'm not going to ask him to leave. Well, it turned out he was a great imposter and there was a picture in *LIFE*, with my wife sitting next to him. Six months later, the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] came by. "Did you know So-and-So?" The security of that was just amazing to me, how that guy got in there.

Heininger: Well, we see that that can still happen, can't it? *[laughs]*

Hooton: Yes. We were talking about Grant Stockdale—Ted went up to the Cape and we went back and after the funeral, we had a wake at Ted's house, talking about the good times with Jack. Then the next day it was addressed in the joint sessions, so Ted went and I went by his office and waited for him. He came in and he really looked like a whipped dog. I said, "What's the matter?" And he said, "You know when they played *Hail to the Chief* and Lyndon walked out, I finally realized that Jack wasn't here anymore."

So we started talking about Jack and he got in a knot and stuff. It was sort of a continuation of the wake, and we were laughing about it. That's what you have to do, you know? Rather than just sit there and cry. Jack wouldn't have wanted that under any circumstance. Then Grant Stockdale walked into the office and he looked like hell and he said, "What are you doing? How could you be laughing at a time like this? What's the matter with you people?" I said, "Well, hello, Grant. We were just wondering if you got in OK and everything." He said, "I just can't believe it." And he walked out of the office.

That night, I went to the Jockey Club for dinner with Fernando Parra. Fernando had a house in Mexico, in Acapulco. We all stayed there after the election. I was invited to go down with Bobby and all—but my father-in-law said he thought it was time I should get back to Houston and get to work. Anyway, I was there with Fernando, and Grant Stockdale came over and he looked like walking death. And he was a jovial kind of guy, but he was just a whipped dog. He said, "Claude, could I come by and see you after you finish dinner, at the hotel?" I said, "Sure, Grant." He said, "I just have to talk to somebody." I said, "Sure, Grant."

I got back to the hotel and as soon as we got there Libby said, "I don't want to be up all night. This is about all I can handle." Albert Thomas was her father's first wife's closest friend, so he had gotten us a lift back out to Texas on some private plane. But Grant came up and he was in tears. He said, "Excuse me, but I'm just—I can't handle it." We talked a while, and I'm trying to change the subject, getting back to the good, and I said, "Jack wouldn't want to see you crying like this." He turned to me and said, "Heck, if somebody wants to get you, they'll just trade their life for yours, is all." I said, "That was his attitude, Grant. Hell, he went out at the peak of his career."

Grant said, "Can I just sleep here in your tub?" I said, "Grant, come on now, you need to get back and get some sleep." He said, "Well, would you come down to Florida with me? I just can't do it." I said, "Grant, my wife is a wreck and she wants to go back with the children." No, we hadn't had any children yet. He said, "Oh, Claude, I beg you." I said, "All right, Grant, let me ask Libby." It was about 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning at that point. So I went in and asked, and she said, "Oh, Claude, you know—" I said, "Sweetheart, Grant is begging me, and I told him I would, and if you want to, go back to Houston, but I made a commitment and I think he needs

me.” She said OK. I told Grant, “All right, I’ll see you at the plane, Grant.” He said, “Oh, thank you, Claude, thank you.”

We got out to the plane, checked in, checked the bags, walked out, and then boarded—it didn’t have the ramps on it. We got out there and Libby saw the plane. It was a Boeing something that had crashed—two of them had crashed in the last couple of weeks and they hadn’t found out what was wrong. She saw the plane and said, “I’m not getting on that plane; it’s just been too much.” And she just broke into tears and went into hysterics. Grant is headed out and he’s up on the top of the steps. He looked back, and I thought, *Jeepers, my wife’s gone to pieces here. It’s Grant, but on the other hand, I love my wife. I love Grant, but there are certain responsibilities that come first.*

I went up to Grant, went up the steps. Grant said, “Come on.” I said, “Grant, I can’t go.” He said, “You promised me, Claude, you promised me.” I said, “I know, but look at my wife. She’s in hysterics. She won’t get on this airplane; she’s terrified. And I love her and I need to stay with her. I’ll get down to Miami as soon as I can get her home and get on the next plane.” He said, “Oh, Claude, I really need you.” I said, “Grant, I’ll see you in Miami, pal. Get on there.”

I got back to Houston and we got in late in the evening. The next day, we were getting organized, and Ted’s office called and said that Grant had jumped out of a 13-story window, to his death. I talked to his wife from the hotel that morning before, and I said, “Grant is a mess and he needs some help and he needs you.” She said, “Oh, he’s just putting on a show.” I said, “No, he’s not. He’s really a mess. Would you meet him at the airport?” She said, “Oh no, I never meet him at the airport.” I said, “He needs you.” I don’t know whether she met him at the airport or not, but that was the end of Grant Stockdale. That was the finale that week.

Heininger: Oh, my gosh. That’s a tough thing to live with.

Hooton: Yes, I loved Grant. He was a good guy. Jack was always saying, “Get your gut in, Grant,” just kidding him all the time. He loved Jack. You know he had made him Ambassador and everything. He just couldn’t believe it. It just didn’t register. It was like his whole life was over. He got to be Ambassador to Ireland, a choice Ambassadorship, and then Jack got shot and it was all over, just like it was all a dream, I guess, to him.

Heininger: How did Ted react to Jack’s death?

Hooton: Well, I mentioned that he came back. He knew he had to see his mother and father.

Heininger: He then flew up to Boston and told his father, didn’t he?

Hooton: Yes.

Heininger: He’s the one who told his father.

Hooton: Yes. His father, at that point, had had the stroke. The nurses said that day they had a walk for him to exercise. He’d never gone but to one end of the pool, and they said that morning, he walked all the way around the pool, and that was the only time he ever did it. He knew.

You asked, “How did he react?” Well, he’d just lost the guy he loved more than anybody in the world. You don’t cry. I didn’t cry until the cemetery, when Air Force One flew over and dipped its wings, because I had been on that plane with Jack.” That’s when I cracked up. We were laughing through our tears that day that he came back from the joint session.

I was in Ireland with Ted after that and this guy who was a barrister had gotten a guy off who had been wrongfully committed to prison in England—Ethel had a friend, [Dorothy] Dot Tubridy, who said there was a gentleman who wanted to talk to Ted about the assassination. We were in Dublin, and Ted had so many meetings, he said, “Would you meet with the guy?” He was in the same hotel, so I went down to meet with him. I went into the room and he had the Warren testimony all spread out around tables and chairs and everything, from the Warren hearings. He went through it step-by-step, how [Lee Harvey] Oswald had gone down a month before with the head of the KGB in the United States, to Mexico. He had gotten out of Russia when nobody could get out of Russia, married a Russian girl and gotten her out too. Then he’d gone back and come back to this country. They knew all about him, that he was a possible threat. He said he thought that the Russians had been responsible for it, and he made a legitimate case, going step-by-step. We spent three hours, three or four. At the end he said, “But what do you do, go to war with Russia, with the atom bomb? I don’t know what you would do if it’s true.”

I went back and told Ted and he said, “He’s dead and gone, Claude. It doesn’t make any difference now. It’s over.” That was his attitude: just put it behind you. You can’t second-guess. After that, there were so many plots, just like Chappaquiddick. You’d just go berserk—You don’t go down that road.

Heininger: Did you have a sense that he believed that Oswald had acted alone?

Hooton: No.

Heininger: Or did he just not want to think about it? Jack is dead, there’s nothing to be done.

Hooton: Yes, Jack’s dead. Whoever killed him—Oswald was the guy—*he’s* dead, so where do you go from there? My thinking was that—J. Edgar Hoover hated the Kennedys. He had no control over them. He had control over Lyndon. He and Lyndon were big buddies.

I was going to tell you the story about the mayor. I went up to Washington to talk to Lyndon. Ted made an appointment for me and we went by to see Lyndon Johnson, when he was Vice President. His desk was up on a little pedestal thing, so he’d always look down at you. We went in and he said, “Sit down, boys. What can I do for you?” I told him that I was thinking about considering the mayor’s race, and I wasn’t going to do it without his support, because I felt he hadn’t been very supportive when I ran before. “No, I had to make some personal phone calls when you ran for Congress,” he said. “I had to phone folks. That Republican might have beaten you.” I went around Houston to all my friends, and it was, “Claude, I’m sorry. I made a prior commitment.” You know, it was unbelievable. I had a heck of a time trying to raise money.

“Run for mayor? That’s a dead-end street. You know, Albert Thomas is dying of cancer. Just get a little house over in his district and we’ll get you up here. We need young men like you in this Congress.” Well, Albert Thomas was my father-in-law’s closest friend, so I’m going to move in

next to him and run for Congress? Anyway, he said, “You boys had lunch?” “No, sir.” “You just sit down over here.”

They brought us lunch and during the lunch he said, “Ted, do you think I can get your brother down to Texas? John Connally and Ralph Yarborough done split the state apart, and he’s the only man living I know that can get them to work together. I was thinking maybe in August or November.” Ted said, “August, no, I doubt it.” Lyndon said, “Then November, you’re getting out of session.” Ted said, “I don’t have anything to do with his schedule. Ken O’Donnell does that, and that’s who you need to talk to. If you want my opinion, I think August is not as good as November, because sometimes we remain in session longer, and it’s very difficult to make schedules work.” Lyndon said, “Thank you, Ted.”

He had the Congressman and his father here from San Antonio. They had been waiting. They were supposed to have lunch with Lyndon. He put an arm around him. “This is Claude Hooton from Houston. He’s going to be joining you one of these days in the Congress.” I’d already made a promise to my father-in-law that I’d never again if he supported me. And he did and he worked hard. He went door-to-door and everything else. Anyway, Jack went in November.

But I’ve always felt that the FBI knew all about Oswald, and he and Lyndon just said, “Well, maybe he’ll miss,” rather than having a guy on the son-of-a-bitch and having a 24-hour watch on him. They knew he was KGB-connected and everything else. Some say the mafia, but I’m convinced that J. Edgar Hoover knew that guy was there with a rifle, and might kill Jack, and did nothing at all about it. And I’ll believe that until the day I die. Because he had Lyndon like this, with his womanizing, but he didn’t have that on Jack, although Jack had done some womanizing. After he married Jackie, he wasn’t womanizing. Anyhow, that’s that part of it.

Heininger: How did Ted react after Bobby died?

Hooton: I sat in St. Patrick’s with him for two days. I was on the ranch, and I flew up to New York and we had lunch together. He was almost numb in a way, you know? *What the hell is this about my brothers?* First Joe, then Jack, and Bobby.

I remember, on the train going down, I was back with the family in that last car, and the Reverend [Ralph Abernathy]. He was supposed to have been with Martin Luther King. He had on Levi’s when everybody had on coats and ties and we were all dressed for the funeral. He had a Levi hat on, and a Levi jacket, and he said, “Mr. Steve [Smith]? Nobody can see Bobby. He’s on the floor back there. We need to get him up so they can see him.” Steve Smith looked at him and he thought a minute and he said, “Reverend Abernathy, you’re absolutely right. Why don’t you take care of that? You look like you’re dressed for it.” I wanted to kiss Steve. You know, that man-of-the-people stuff.

That night, there was a little white cross I thought was so much like Bobby. Ted walked through that train and they were telling him, “Ted, you’ve got pick up the flag. You’ve got to pick up the flag.” I wanted to hit him in the mouth. What do you mean he had to pick up—He doesn’t have to do a damn thing. He’s got three brothers who have given their life for this country. Who the hell are you to tell him what he has to do?

When [George] McGovern asked him—that's the thing McGovern did. I was with him at the Cape when McGovern called, asking him to be Vice President. He had the speakerphone on, so Angelique Voutselas and I could hear. McGovern said, "Ted, I need you. It's this country we're talking about. I need you. You've got to run with me. You owe it to the country, Ted." I was livid. Ted said, "I'll get back to you." He went out on the lawn there at the house at Squaw Island, for about 20, 25, 30 minutes. Angelique and I were in tears. *How could that son-of-a-bitch dare talk to Ted that way?* I was so angry. I didn't like George McGovern anyway. I'd had to try to campaign for him. He was just a fool. Anyway, he came back and decided not to do it. Then we had to fly down with the owner of the New York Yankees.

Heininger: George Steinbrenner.

Hooton: George Steinbrenner, in a Lear Jet, going down to the convention. Going down, we were concerned about whether they'd be throwing tomatoes at Ted because he refused to run with McGovern. I mean, we were kind of joking and laughing, saying, "You ought to take some Kleenex with you just in case."

We got into Miami, and Joan had gone there earlier with his sister and brother in-law, who were supposed to be watching out for her. We got in the limousine and she had on a dress that was down to here and she was smashed as a goat. She could hardly talk. We went on over to the convention and Ted said, "I'll get Bobby—" that's the brother in-law— "to come pick her up. If you'll stay in the car with her, I'd appreciate it." He went into the trailer, and Joan wanted to tinkle. *[laughs]* *What am I going to do here?* I said, "Joan, you just have to hold it in. I understand Bobby's coming to get you and you can pee." *[Imitates her slurring response]* Finally he did come and picked her up.

I remember in the trailer, Gary Hart had a big fuzzy head and I had to talk to him for three or four hours, off and on. I can't understand the man. He was so cocky and so *yuk*. But then, everybody in that convention nominated themselves for Vice President. It was unbelievable.

At the convention, we all had our coats and ties and were all dressed, and the women were wearing hats and everything. When it came time for the Vice President's nomination, Ted was supposed to go out on the stage. I went behind the stage so I could watch and see what was happening. I looked out on that crowd and it looked like hippie heaven, I mean, it was unbelievable. There wasn't a coat and tie in the whole room, in that whole convention hall.

They didn't throw tomatoes at Ted and I was relieved. Ted came back and I said, "It wasn't as bad as we thought, was it?" He said, "No, but I was holding hands with some jealous SOB's." The ones who didn't get the nomination—Hubert Humphrey and whoever, I can't remember now.

Heininger: Tom Eagleton, initially. Tom Eagleton had been the running mate initially and then, was it Hubert at the end?

Hooton: Oh, I knew Tom. Ted loved Tom. I used to walk across the yard when I was in Washington with him. They were real close friends. He was a bright guy, a great sense of humor. I thought he was a great choice and Ted did too. I saw Tom in San Francisco after that break about him going to therapy. It was in a movie theater. McGovern had said, "Boy, he's my man."

That doesn't mean anything to me. I'm behind him 100 percent." Well, just before that evening, he'd announced that Tom had decided not to run. But I saw him and I talked to him briefly. The poor guy was nothing but sweat and he was shaking like this. They just destroyed him on that.

Heininger: He was a good man.

Hooton: He was a good man. Anyway, McGovern—Thank heavens he didn't get to be President.

Heininger: When you look back on it, how would you have compared Ted's marriage to Joan, to Jack's with Jackie [Kennedy Onassis], and Bobby's to Ethel?

Hooton: Well Jack and Jackie—I was up at the Cape when they came back from their honeymoon. We were at the dinner table. Mr. Kennedy loved them both so much. He was so happy to have them there. "How was the honeymoon?" Jack said, "Oh, it was great." And Jackie said, "Well, it wasn't all great." JP goes, "What happened?" "Well, your son is a U.S. Senator, but when we tried to get across the border, coming back into this country, they kept us for six hours in customs." JP said, "Oh!" Jack said, "Oh, Dad, it was only about five hours." [laughter] They were so cute. You know, a little girl who's happy, who's about eight or ten years old, and it just shows all over? That was Jackie to me. I just wanted to hug her like a little girl all the time, and she was taller than I was, maybe. I just loved Jackie.

That particular night, JP turned over to me finally and he said, "Claude, I know a Professor Earnest Hooton at Harvard. He's an anthropology professor. Is he any relation to you?" I said, "Well, Mr. Kennedy, during the Civil War, the good Hootons stayed south." Then he said, "Oh." And that's the last word he said to me.

Jack and Jackie, at the inauguration. My wife and I were sneaking out. JP had a party, and my table date was Kim Novak, with a diamond that big. We were coming back, and Jack and Jackie were coming. "Hey, Claudie." They looked like the king and the queen; they were so beautiful together. We turned around and he came in, "Well, this is what we worked so hard about. You have a great time tonight."

When I was in the viewing box, I had a derby I bought. Ted said, "No, we're wearing black tie," so I didn't get the tails. I wanted a top hat so bad, but then they decided it was going to be black tie, no tails. When we got to Washington—that's another story. I was in the stands with my derby on, and Jack looked back and he pointed.

Ted didn't have tails either, so we had to try to rent tails two days before the inaugural ball. No, it was the day before. Anyway, we went down in Washington and found this tux-rental place. We went in and they had boxes stacked high. There must have been 20 people putting tuxes and stuff in boxes, tails. There was a little Jewish guy behind the counter. I said, "Excuse me, sir. We're in town here for the inaugural ball and we don't have any tails. Could you rent us a couple of sets of tails?"

"Sets of tails? I got these tails coming from Miami, from Chicago, from all over the country, to have tails enough for this event. And you want to rent them here the day before?" I said, "Yes, you see my friend here is Ted Kennedy; he's the brother of the President." The guy said, "Hey,

Al! This one says he's the brother of the President. How about that one?" Then he turned around, looked up and saw Ted and he said, "It *is* Ted, isn't it?" I said, "Yes, it is." So we got some tails and they didn't fit too well, just like my tux at the last minute.

Heininger: I was asking you about Jack and Jackie versus Bobby and Ethel versus Joan and Ted.

Hooton: Yes. I think Jack and Jackie had a unique relationship. Jack played around some later on. But to see them together, they were just a joy to be around. They both kind of lit up. I know they loved each other; there wasn't any question in my mind about that. When we took Jackie down to Greece to announce the engagement, Ted and I were chaperones. We went out on Ari's [Aristotle Onassis] boat. I liked Ari. He was absolutely a 180-degree guy from Jack. He liked to drink and talk, and we sat on the stern a couple nights with him, talking about life.

I thought Jack Warnecke, who was a friend of mine and dated her after that, he'd been—He was a very successful architect, a good looking big guy, won the Rose Bowl, undefeated at Stanford. I didn't mean to diverge on that, but people said, "How can she do it?"

Well, that's kind of the way I felt when we were going over there. We got into Athens and then had a ride on the airplane out to this other little island. Ted and Jackie and Ari were already there. Then we took a boat from that island over to—was it the *Christina*? His boat. He worshiped Jackie. It was like, "My baby." I did a cartoon for him.

Jackie wanted to go see all the ruins and stuff around. One night, he came back and—He always wore white—he had mud up to here on his whites, and he was about half wet. What he had done was—They had gone aground, and to show off in front of Jackie, he'd gotten down and pushed the boat off. He had a crew of four, but you know.

That morning, we swam. He swam four miles a day. Ted and I and Ari swam over to this little island. He said, "I want to show you something." It was where their vegetable garden was, and the tomato plants. He walked over and he picked out a tomato, handed Ted one, handed one to me, and he said, "Taste that, the best tomatoes in the whole world." I did and they were. I still say that tomatoes in Greece are better than any I ever had anywhere.

I got to liking him. He told me he was a fatalist because one night he had a ship loaded with freight and there was some freight tied on the deck. They were going through the seas in a gale, and the bow would go under. Some of the things on the deck had apparently broken loose, so the captain sent four men down to latch it back, and they went through one of those big waves and all four of them were gone, just washed overboard. They're steaming into the gale, so they couldn't go back and look for them. Ari said, "On the third wave, I looked and there was a guy standing on the deck, one of the four. He said it just wasn't his time." He said, "God did not take him. It wasn't his time." You can imagine that boat, going into the wind.

Heininger: Right.

Hooton: How did that guy get back? So I really enjoyed talking with him and I liked him a lot. He said, "Have you seen my pool?" We were back on the stern and there was a dance floor there, so you could dance if you wanted to. I said, "No, I haven't." He said, "Let me show you." He goes over and pushes this button and this floor slides back and stops only about that far. In

Greek, he said something I'm sure quite appropriate for that kind of thing happening. He had a crew of 28 or something. He went off and he came back with some pliers. It was chain-driven and the chain had come off. He reached down and got the chain back on the sprocket, in his whites, and he had a rag there and he wiped off his hand and put the pliers over on the table. He said, "Now," and pushed the button and it goes on back. That's why I liked him. He reminded me a little of my grandfather. He was a man. You didn't talk about it; you just got it done if something needed fixing. You don't sit there and complain and moan; you just fix it.

We were sitting at the table one night at dinner. I was sitting next to Jackie. We used to eat up on the deck. We had caviar and I love caviar. Jackie was having caviar, and Ari was having sea urchins, you know those spiny things? They were orange in the middle, I remember. Jackie said, "Look what he's eating, Claude. Can you imagine that?" And of course he loved being the guy that eats sea urchins when nobody else did. I took a taste and I wouldn't eat one again.

But anyway, they were kind of cute together; not like Jack was, but in a whole different relationship. Jack and Jackie were more like equals, and Ari thought Jackie was a queen. He put her on a pedestal so high. I know he loved her to death; there wasn't any question about that. I think Jackie loved him for what he could do for her. She can walk in the park and everybody thought she owed it to be nice to him. There was a crowd everywhere she went. Fernando Parra—She went down to Acapulco after Jack was killed. He said, "We tried to go to Mass, and there were a thousand people. Jackie couldn't even get in the church." And that's what he gave her: some privacy and a way to get on with her life.

Ari, when his son died—he had a daughter who was a screwball. I felt sorry for her. His son was his crowning glory. When he died—and I was on that plane when we were on the boat, a little push-prop seaplane that crashed into Athens Airport and killed his son—I think that just broke his heart. His eyes got all droopy, you know, at the end. His daughter didn't like her father. It was like his life had gone. I think that's what ended up killing him. They said, "Oh, Jackie's going to get a divorce." I don't believe that. They can talk that all they want to. I don't believe that. I don't think they were in a bad marital situation. That's just my opinion.

But anyway, the difference between the two was a remarkable difference. But I think Jackie was happily married to Ari, too. Jack was gone—There wasn't anybody like Jack. President of the United States. His wit was incomparable. Nobody ever had a wit better than Jack Kennedy. He was just fun to be with. And the brothers, to be with them, they were just fun to be with. If people say something nice to me now, if I look sick, they say, "What's the matter?" Or they say something like, "Oh, you look so nice." That was not the friendship we had. It would be like, "Did you notice that tomato juice on your shirt collar there?" And there wouldn't be any tomato juice. Any way he could get a little edge in.

Bobby and Ethel. Bobby having an affair with Marilyn Monroe is a joke. Ethel would have killed him! *[laughs]* I just thought that was the most ridiculous story. If you had said that Jack did, that may have been, but Bobby, never. I loved Ethel very much, and Bobby, and the children. He came to Houston one time. He was on a college tour. I went with him hunting with Lyndon. He was at Texas and SMU [Southern Methodist University] and he said to meet him at Bryan, because Lyndon was going to take him deer hunting. He said, "I thought you'd like to go." I said, "You bet." I met him up in Bryan about midnight; I don't know why it was so late. Lyndon had

arrived and he was shaking hands with everybody at the airport. Every Texan there got his hand shook that night.

We got on a plane, Bobby and I and Lyndon—It was a Beechcraft, one of the old twin-tailed Beechcrafts—and flew up to his ranch. On the way up, I was sitting here, Bobby and Lyndon. Lyndon said, “You know, that brother of yours has got a good future ahead of him, Bobby. It’s just his elocution needs some work.” I thought, *My God*. Bobby looked over at me. I just couldn’t believe that Lyndon was so egotistical to say that Jack needed some work, because unlike Ted and I—You know, their accents were so different.

Anyway, we flew out and we got in there about 1:30, 2:00 in the morning. Lyndon showed us around the ranch. There wasn’t anybody there but the three of us. There were no maids, no one. We get to bed, finally, about 2:00, and at 4:00, Lyndon says, “Time to get up boys, time to get on the road.” *Oh, jeepers*. My eyes were burning and everything. We get dressed to go downstairs and Lyndon’s in the kitchen cooking breakfast: scrambled eggs and some sausage. He came in and brought two jelly jar glasses full of Jack Daniel’s in his hand. It’s 4:00 in the morning. To get up like that—My eyes, I thought I burned them out. I drank a little of mine, and Bobby said, “This is too good to waste,” and poured his back in the bottle.

We took a little tour of the town, the rice silos down by the railroad, to show off to Bobby. Then we went out to get in the deer platform. It was built on top of a derrick, like a windmill derrick, and it was about the size of this room right here, if you squared it off. Well, I’ve been hunting deer since I was a kid. You had deer blinds for two people, or you had some brush, or you’d sit in a tree, but this had a sofa there, a sofa there, a sofa there, a sofa there, and over each one of them was a Weatherby Magnum rifle, the most expensive but the most accurate. I had two or three of them myself. It had a bar over in this corner and a little one-man elevator that took you up.

We got up there, and then it had his doctor and the doctor’s wife, a red-head, good looking, who was supposed to be his mistress, Lyndon, Bobby and I, and then the ranch foreman, and two blacks. They were serving the drinks. Lyndon, about an hour into it, went to sleep over on his sofa, and Bobby and I were still looking for deer. All of a sudden, “There’s one, there’s one, over in the plowed field. There’s one over there. Get the gun, get the gun, Bobby!” I looked out there. It must have been 200 yards away. It looked like a little bitty doe or something, a rabbit. It certainly wasn’t a buck. “Shoot him, shoot him!” He said, “No, that’s too far for me.” They said, “You get him,” to the foreman. I can’t remember his name. *Bam!* He missed. *Bam, bam!* About four shots. The poor thing finally started limping off. He had finally hit it and went down to kill it. Later on we went out and it was a little doe. It was tragic.

Meanwhile, they all went to sleep and Bobby said, “I see a buck.” I looked down. They were all over here and we were over on this side. I looked out and there was this eight-point buck, really a good buck, about 75 yards down. I said, “Get him, Bobby. That’s a keeper.” He got the Weatherby down. *Bang!* I said, “Shoot him in the neck, Bobby.” That’s what I was taught early on. That’s the quickest, most painless way that you can shoot a deer. *Bang!* He hit him right in the neck, and boom, down he went. “What happened? What, what, what?” I said, “Bobby just got his deer.” He said, “What do you mean he got his deer? What do you mean?” I said, “He’s down there.” “No!” “Yes.” So he went down and he had his buck.

“Well you get two deer stickers here in Texas. We’re going to go get you another one.” So we went over to another part of the ranch. We’re going along in the car, Bobby and I in the station wagon with the two blacks, and Lyndon is with the ranch foreman, and the doctor and his wife in the other Jeep. Bobby said, “Wait, there’s one.” And there was a nice eight-point buck, probably about 75 or 100 yards, in kind of a tree grove. We stopped and we signaled to Lyndon’s guy to stop. *Bang!* Down went this deer.

We had to drive up here and then down this road to get over to that spot. When we got out there, the deer was not dead. He was down on his haunches, but his eyes were wide open, and you could see that Bobby’s shot had gone just across the back of his neck, enough to make it bleed a little but not much, and that was it. “Get the gun and shoot him, Bobby. Shoot him.” “No, no, he’s dying. No, don’t shoot him.” Shoot him, don’t shoot him, shoot, don’t shoot, for about five minutes.

Lyndon finally said, “Get over there and get your knife and cut his neck. Get that dang deer before he runs off.” “Well, my knife ain’t been sharpened,” and, “I forgot my knife.” They were afraid to go near that deer. The deer finally gets up and starts staggering off. “Shoot him, Bobby, shoot him.” “No, don’t shoot, he’s down again.” Shoot him; don’t shoot him.

Bobby and I took off, and finally the deer started kind of trotting, so Bobby and I got a rifle and we start running after him. We must have run a mile. The deer was still kind of stunned, so he wasn’t really moving that fast, but we got off in the brush out there and the deer stopped. I said, “Now’s the time, Bobby.” The buck was stopped entirely and that’s when you have to shoot him. That’s when you get a clean shot and they go down and don’t know what hit them. Bobby aims and, “*Click.*” There was no ammunition in the rifle. I just couldn’t believe it. We were running and running. So I went running back to the car—It took me another 20 minutes—got back, and Bobby said, “He went in the brush over there and I think he’s gone, Claude.” Because he couldn’t move, because I would have never found him in the brush. We went over and we couldn’t see any blood or anything. We got back and, “We’ll get the dogs. You’re going to lose that buck.”

But what happened when Bobby had shot that Weatherby—They were high recoil, and he got a—we call it a scope scar. He was bleeding and we taped him all up and I said, “How does it feel?” He said, “It only throbs when I breathe.” Then he had to get on a plane and go down to Houston and talk to George and Herman Brown at a luncheon at the Houston Club, the most conservative group. They were Lyndon’s boys. They financed him. They made more money in Vietnam than they’d ever made in the history of the company. Bobby had to go down there and do that. I told him, if he ever wanted to come really hunt deer in Texas, that we’d do it right.

He was down again—a roommate or classmate of his at UVA [University of Virginia] Law School, was from Dallas, and he flew down to Houston. The next day Bobby—They wanted him to go see the rodeo. They had the rodeo going on. He asked his friend, “Could you guys go get my bag and meet me at the airport? I don’t know how long this is going to last here.” “Sure, Bobby.”

Well, his friend, on the way back, stopped in the five-and-ten-cent store and bought these lace panties that were about a dollar-and-a-half, and some perfume that was about 35 cents. He

doused the panties in the perfume and when we packed Bobby's bag, he stuck those in with a note from Bonnie Bell, about the wonderful night in Houston she would never forget and so forth. We thought he would find it, but he went from there to Florida and he was tired and Ethel unpacked the bag. The next time I saw him in Washington he said, "Claude, have you ever heard of a federal investigation?" He was Attorney General. He said, "Your subdivision in Georgetown? Wait until we get through with you, pal."

So I loved Bobby. I went skiing with him up in Tahoe, him and the Secretary of Defense and his wife, Ted and I, Bobby and Ethel. Bobby smoked cigars, too. He loved cigars. He was the smallest of the brothers. He played football at Harvard on pure grit, but I think he had a small guy's personality. Because he was smaller than a lot of the guys, he found he had to be bigger and stronger, and smarter and brighter. So he worked very hard, but Ted's the hardest working guy I ever knew: two briefcases full of stuff every night.

I stayed with him during the [Robert] Bork hearings. I was home from Europe and I was staying with him. Every morning at 6:00, he had three or four aides over there briefing him on that day's hearing and the questions. And I went to the hearings and I saw Bork and I just thought, *My God, that's a Supreme Court Justice? He looks like he should be a hippie or something.* He had that freaky looking beard. I couldn't stand him, just looking at him. Then I heard what he had to say and I just couldn't believe what he was saying.

During that, Ted and Chris Dodd and I went to lunch over at a little restaurant that was close by the Capitol. Ted was dating this girl then and she came to lunch with us. We got back after lunch and Ted had to go in the hearing somewhere. Melody Miller, who worked for Ted for years and years, a good lady, pretty as a picture—Melody said, "What happened over there at the restaurant?" I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "They just called me, the press did, about Ted and Chris and all, making love on the table at the restaurant with a girl." I said, "Melody, come on, you're joking." "Well that's what they just said over the phone." It didn't come out, but that was the kind of stuff they were trying to pull, which was a joke. We split a bottle of wine among the three of us, so we were all really crocked. *[laughs]* But I was so proud of him on that.

Another time that nobody said anything about: I was in Washington, and he was still a freshman Senator. He was chairman of a subcommittee on immigration, and I went to the hearing. Dean Rusk was coming from the State Department, the Secretary of State, to testify at the hearing. Jacob Javits was there, the senior Senator from New York, and Sam Ervin, who Ted thought was a good barrister. He thought he knew his law, so he had respect for him. I never asked him what he thought of Jacob Javits.

At that particular hearing, it was a very small room; it wasn't much bigger than my living room here. Dean Rusk arrived and they started questions, and Jacob Javits started in about New York and his problems with immigration and all about New York. Ted tells Senator Javits, "Dean Rusk has a busy schedule and we're so grateful to have him here for an hour or so. Please let's confine our questions and answers with him. We're so proud to have him here." About 10 or 15 minutes later, Javits interrupted again and started talking about New York and immigration. *Bang, bang, bang!* "Senator, I've cautioned you on this and I don't want to continue, but we can't have these interruptions. As I mentioned, we have the Secretary of State here and he's

running on a schedule.” The third time, *bang, bang, bang!* I thought he was going to break the hammer.

“Senator, if I have to call a Sergeant at Arms, I shall do so.” And he said, “I would appreciate it—I’m trying to be nice about this. We want to talk to Dean Rusk, and we don’t want you to be telling him about New York. Is that understood?” Old Jacob Javits really did not approve. It was the first time I knew he was going to be a good Senator. Jacob Javits was very powerful in New York State. It’s a big state. And Sam Ervin was the head of two committees. So it was the first time I saw him in action, and I was sure proud of him.

Heininger: Did Ted tell you about Suzana Maus?

Hooton: Who?

Heininger: Suzana Maus, in the middle of the ’80s, the woman he was seeing who was European.

Hooton: I never heard of her.

Heininger: Interesting.

Hooton: She was an aide?

Heininger: No, no. A woman, European.

Hooton: I never heard of her. He never mentioned her. I went to Europe with him a bunch of times. Who was she?

Heininger: She was apparently somebody he saw quite seriously.

Hooton: Really?

Heininger: Yes.

Hooton: Helga Wagner was the one we all liked so much, and she loved him to death, but that didn’t work. I was with him the night he met her, in London, but then they just kind of went—

Heininger: When was that?

Hooton: I don’t know. It was back in the ’60s. I don’t know which trip that was on, but we were in London for some reason and stopped off there.

Anyway, Bobby and Ethel, getting back to the relationship, I think they loved each other very much. You don’t have 11 children, or however many they had, if you don’t kind of like each other.

I was with Ted when young Teddy’s leg was amputated. We were on his boat down in Miami. His cook, who was French and was a great chef, called and said that the Senator was not going to be able to come because they had found something on young Teddy’s leg, and that he wouldn’t

be able to come. I said, "I'm on the next plane." Libby and I flew up to Washington and found out it was cancer.

Ted and I always took long walks. Right across the street from the hospital was a big estate that had a little gatehouse. The question was, how far up his leg they would have to go. He was hoping it would be below his knee, and that way, he would hardly notice the difference. The night before, I got a model airplane. I asked Ted if he had ever built a model airplane, and he said no. I said, "We're building one tonight." So I got this little model and we built it that night.

The next morning, I went with Ted over to a wedding. Kathleen [Hartington Kennedy] got married—he was best man at her wedding—and we had to leave the hospital to go over and then rush back to the hospital. As I said, when he came out with that shoe on his foot, he was so great. He and young Teddy Kennedy were really close friends and best buddies.

I saw him this past summer up at the Cape. We were out on the pier up there, and there were two little boys who must have been three and four years old, four and five, standing there looking at his leg, because he had shorts on. He said, "Come on, you can touch it. It doesn't hurt. Come on, get over here." And over they came. Teddy's saying, "Oh no, hit it with your fist, that's great." He said, "This thing is the greatest thing I've ever had." And he went on and said, "You know what? If you ever have to have a problem with your leg and have one of these, you're going to love it. Don't even think twice about it." He was so cute with them, you know, instead of trying to hide it or something.

Heininger: Yes, that's nice.

Hooton: I've always loved Teddy, and all of them.

Heininger: How was Ted with his nieces and nephews? Were there any he was particularly close to?

Hooton: I think with the nieces and nephews, some loved him to death, and some of them thought, *He's not my dad*. I wasn't around with him that much. I know they all loved him. It's like JP and Ted. He loved him to death, but sometimes he could be a little stern. I think they probably had—some of them certainly, but I think all of them loved him to death.

[Christopher] Chris Lawford is—I never was fond of Chris. He wrote that book about his mother's drinking and all that, with the cuss words all through it. I don't know how he got along with Ted. I got a call from Joe Kennedy when I was living in Los Angeles, one night at 2:00 in the morning. He said, "Chris Lawford is over at UCLA Hospital. He OD'd. Claude, do you think you could go by and see what's going on?" So I did. Peter [Lawford] showed up. I loved Peter. He got to drinking and into drugs at the end there. But Peter came in. It was when they were wearing the groovy coats, you know?

Heininger: Yes.

Hooton: And he had all these chains hanging all over him, stoned to the gills. "What's this all about?" I said, "Peter, Chris is in there, in another room somewhere, and they say he OD'd on something." He said, "Oh come on." And there was a young couple there, friends of Chris's. I

said, “Joe Kennedy called and asked me to come over and see what’s happening, and that’s why I’m here, but if you’re here, Peter, I don’t have to worry.” That’s the last time I saw Peter. Chris—I don’t know what’s—I loved his mother Pat with a passion, and I loved Peter. He had a good sense of humor. He was a good athlete.

But I think Bobby and Ethel loved each other to death.

Heininger: When did you begin to see less of Ted?

Hooton: The last time?

Heininger: No, less. Clearly, you spent a lot of time with him in the ’60s and a fair amount in the ’70s. Did you see less of him in the ’80s?

Hooton: Well, I was in Europe from 1985 to ’88. I was trying to do a hotel project there. He came over to Geneva. Pierre Salinger had set up an appointment with the mayor of Nice, because I wasn’t getting anywhere. I had been there almost a year, trying to find a site, and the French government—I had to go wait for three hours to see somebody, and the commissioner they had—They were going to build eight golf courses or something, in the south of France, and hadn’t built one since 1938. I couldn’t wait to get started.

Anyway, the mayor all of a sudden got called out of town. So I called Ted in Geneva and he said, “No, I’m coming anyway. I have a friend there who’s in the newspaper business, who said he’ll get your name in the paper, and that may help you, Claude.” He came down that night and he hand-wrote a two-page letter to the commissioner of golf, about how I was reliable, a man of honor, and all this. Then we went out and had a few pops and he got on a plane. When he got back to Washington, he had been up all night on the plane, and then all night with me. He said his blood pressure was 300-something.

I’d gone back to England because I didn’t think Ted was going to be able to make it. Then I flew back to the south of France. I had the house in Yorkshire. I had my children there. When I got back after Christmas holidays, I went back to the commissioner of golf—or whatever his title was—to find out if he got Ted’s letter. I went in and his office door was open. Normally I had to sit there for two hours to see him. I said, “I just want to see the commissioner.” “Monsieur Hooton,” he said. “*Ici, ici*. Get in here.” I said, “I didn’t want to bother you. I just wanted to know if you got my credentials and got some copies of stuff I dropped by before Christmas.” He said, “We have your credentials, monsieur.” Before that, he had said, “We don’t have your credentials. Forget about it.” He reached around and he had his briefcase open, and he pulled out Ted’s letter and said, “We have all the credentials we need from you, monsieur.”

I had a great site in a day-and-a-half. They had all these green areas, but they were starting to have forest fires, so they wanted to build golf courses because they get watered. And this had been in the same family for like 500 years or something, some prince. Somehow a developer had gotten it from the prince and wanted somebody to build a golf course. He said he’d give me the land if I’d build a golf course, and enough to build a hotel on it—He built condos. He had done a beautiful project—if I would give him an opportunity to join the club. I said, “Of course. Deal.”

Anyway, Ted came down and did that for me, opened a door that was locked tight as that one. I did that all my life. Jack, when I ran for Congress, wrote me a letter I had in my brochure. When I was running for Congress, he called me one time and said, "How do you think it's going?" I said, "It's hard but it looks like we're doing pretty well." He said, "We just got a poll over at the Democratic National Committee. Eighty-eight percent say Bob Casey's doing a good or excellent job as their Congressman." *[laughs]* I got beaten by—He got 35,000. I got 29,000. But I figured if it was 35, if I could have turned around 15 to 20—about 2,000 votes, I could have won. I ran out of steam at the end. I got him in the front pages and challenged him to a debate, but it was too late.

Heininger: Were you concerned at the end—You said that you hadn't seen Ted much during the last year, even though you were there on Cape Cod. Were you concerned that you might not participate in the funeral?

Hooton: I didn't know. A funeral to me is so—it's all over. Eulogies and all that are fine and well and good, but I've always tried to tell people I love that I love them, and how much I respect them, if I do, while they're alive. The funeral stuff has never been big in my book. I had no idea. I just knew I needed to get up there. Then young Teddy called me. He wanted me there Friday night, and then he said, "Claude, you're going to be an honorary pallbearer." I said, "I'm quite honored." He said, "You don't have to worry about lifting; you're just honorary."

Heininger: It was really all the people who were closest to him who were the honorary pallbearers.

Hooton: Yes. I didn't know that I was a Federal Judge. I had to go all the way down to Washington, and it cost me about \$2,000 to get up there and back, which I didn't have, and Teddy said, "We'll get you a ticket, Claude. I understand you're having some hard times, so forget about it." Ted helped me, financially, to get down here. I would have never been able to get there. I had to get off the East Coast. I couldn't afford to live up there. My living costs here are half of what they were up there, and I'm living pretty darn well. But he helped me out, or I just couldn't have done it.

The last time I saw him—I went by young Teddy's house and I said, "I need to see your dad." He said, "Let me go over there and check, Claude." Then he said, "He's coming by here on the cart, going to the boat, in just a few minutes, so stand out here and get him on the way." I did, but somehow I missed him. Then I realized they were all down the street. I went running down and I went out to the pier, and he was just getting on the launch to take him out to his boat. He said, "Hey, can you come to dinner tonight?" And Vicki [Reggie Kennedy] said, "Wednesday night, Wednesday night."

Then I went, and they had Culver and everybody come up. We did have Vicki talk most of the time. That night, I had made out a note to him for the money that he advanced for me, and I told him, "You'll probably never, ever get a penny back, but at least you can write it off." And I said, "Forget about interest," and he got a big smile on his face. That's the last conversation I had with him.

Heininger: How soon was that before he died?

Hooton: What date did he die on? Do you remember?

Heininger: The 22nd? 24th? August.

Hooton: Yes, it was probably three weeks before he died, a couple of weeks, maybe. I never put a time on it. But he was holding up well and I was telling him how much I loved him.

Heininger: If he had to look back across his life, who would he say had been his best friend?

Hooton: Ted?

Heininger: Mm-hmm.

Hooton: I think I was, and I'm proud of that fact. We used to joke about Tunney. And we loved Tunney. Tunney was probably his second—I don't know how he looked at it, but I know Tunney—The three of us had a lot of great times together, and communicated on big occasions, little occasions.

Heininger: Where did Chris Dodd fit in there?

Hooton: Chris was his Washington buddy. I love Chris; he's a ticket. He was his Washington buddy, but he didn't go to law school with him or Harvard College, and he was a later-on friend. He and Chris used to get into trouble together. Chris married—She was administrative assistant to a Senator from Utah. When I was with Grumman, I put together these briefing books to explain to the Congress why the Navy needed more F-14s and how good, compared to the F-18. I handed out a whole bunch of them, and she—Clegg—I can't remember her first name, but she was from Utah.

Heininger: Jackie.

Hooton: Jackie, Jackie Clegg. We had been down to Florida, at Ted's house, with Chris Dodd and Jackie, before they got married. Ted had a gal with him that time. He wasn't married either. They picked me up at Grumman, on the runway they used to take all the Hellcats off of for World War II. I was quite honored.

But he and Chris had a great relationship. That was his Washington buddy, because he was there all the time. Culver was married; Chris wasn't. Hanan was there. Hanan was married and Ted wasn't.

They all said he was a womanizer, but what was he supposed to be, a man-izer? I mean, if you're single and you like ladies, you don't sit home and read books every night. That's a joke to me, that whole attack. Ted loves people, and he loved ladies, and he loved men. He was a guy who just loved people. But he was nailed on that, coming back from Alaska, about how he was smashed. That's what we did. That's what he did. I'm sure he was happy and had a great trip. He was going to liven it up a little bit for them. So what do they do? Right in the back. But that's what he always did.

Heininger: Was he happy with Vicki?

Hooton: Apparently. She was the love of his life in his book. But Vicki was not—He dated some girls that we all liked a whole lot better, who were more fun. We thought he had more fun. Vicki was always—she’s a hypochondriac. She always had a bad ankle or a bad something, or couldn’t go on the boat. But they used to sail together, just the two of them. I think what Vicki brought to him was that he loved her mother and father, he really did. I love them too. They’re great people. Also, she has a big family that he was used to being around. His children had all gone off and married, except Patrick [Kennedy], but he was gone.

One time I came back, I said, “Ted, any kind of problem, I try to be around.” That was just because he was my friend, the best friend I’ve got. You don’t just stand there and say, “I hope it works out for you.” So I told him, “Your children are grown now, Eddie. They need you. You don’t need me kicking around, but they need you.” And then I said, “You know if you ever need me for anything, I’m here, but I think your relationship with them is very important to both of you, and they’re old enough to get in there and do whatever they need to do.”

You know, it’s like when John-John [John F. Kennedy, Jr.]—I called him John-John because he didn’t like it. I was never very fond of him and had no reason not to be fond of him; he was always pleasant with me. In the old days, I’d have been right there, you know? But Vicki turned us all out to pasture. Maybe it was for the best in a lot of ways.

Heininger: Was it hard being a best friend of a very famous man?

Hooton: There were times it was very difficult. Yes, at cocktail parties, when some guy’s mouthing off about Ted Kennedy and he doesn’t even know him. “I don’t need to know him. I know *about* him.” I said, “I *do* know him and you’re full of _____. And I would appreciate it, if you want to talk about my friend, do it somewhere else, but not in front of me.”

I had a guy up against a wall one time in New York. This is when we were still in college. We were having a little party up at his parents’ apartment and two guys came in, kind of wise-assing around. I didn’t know them, but I think Teddy knew them. I heard them, “Damn, they don’t even have any decent whisky here.” You know, just complaining. I went over to them and I said, “Listen, I don’t know who you are, but I know you weren’t invited. Since you’re here, we were trying to be polite, but if you want to complain, why don’t you just get your asses out of here right now?” “Don’t get smart with me.” I said, “I’m not getting smart with you.” “Yeah? You want to go down and work it out in the yard downstairs?” They had a courtyard. I said, “If that’s necessary.” I didn’t want to bother Ted with these asses, so I went down. We were mouthing off, something about where he went to school. He went to Harvard. I said, “You went to Harvard?” “Yeah, and I’m captain of the wrestling team.” I said, “Oh, I went to Harvard.” We ended up shaking hands and walking off.

Then after Jack had won the Presidency, I was at River Road Country Club. I play golf. I used to play a lot. I love the game and got my letter at Harvard in golf. I’d be in the shower, and these guys would come up with towels wrapped around them. “You and your communist friend Kennedy—he’s running this country down.” And they’re pointing their fingers at me while I’m in the shower.

I'd go to cocktail parties and guys want to come on. I'd just say, "You should have had a better candidate. Maybe next time you'll win." They wanted to argue about things they didn't know anything about. They didn't know the facts. They just wanted to argue. So my wife and I quit going to parties for six months, and I took my showers at home for six months, until it all kind of died down.

What has gotten me all my life about the Kennedy family are these people who write these books, who have never even seen them, shaken their hands, or ever spoken a word to them, and they know all about the Kennedys. They write these books and make money, and people publish them. Never even saw them. I was going to sue this guy who wrote this book and said Ted and I slipped down to Mexico, and intimated that we were smuggling drugs back, that we got picked up by the FBI in New Orleans for reasons unknown. We *did* get picked up by the FBI in New Orleans when we came back from water skiing, but we weren't smuggling drugs. I was going to sue him. Then I realized it would just sell more books for the guy, and then Ted would have to testify to the facts, and it would have just made the guy bigger and richer, so I dropped it. I had my daughter who's a lawyer on it. They promised they wouldn't put that part in anymore, in future publications, but that book went flat.

In New Orleans, we were coming back from water skiing, and we stopped off there. He would sell the car and fly back. I was going in the Army, going back to Houston. We went around New Orleans. It was hotter than hell, 100 degrees. We had on shorts and we're still wet with sweating, and the Camaro wasn't air-conditioned. We went about three or four lights and—I'm trying to remember how much the guy was offering. The highest offer we had was \$500. This last one was in a garage. You had to drive down into it. You buy and sell used cars. We got out and the guy looked at the car and he offered us \$550. We said, looks like that's about all it's worth, and said OK. He said, "You boys come on in my office and sit down, and I'll be right with you."

We're sitting down, wondering what was taking him so long, and these three guys walked in, "Up against the wall." Boom! Patted us down. "Where did you steal that car?" Oh, I know why, because he asked Ted, "Do you have the title?" Ted said, "Well, it must be in the glove box." The guy said no. Ted said, "You know, Frank Morrissey must have that up in Boston. I'll have him send it down to you." The guy said, "Oh? Frank Morrissey has it up in Boston, does he?"

He'd caught two kids with a stolen car the week before, so he thought he really had something here. He said, "Where did you steal the car?" I said, "Listen, my father is an architect, the number one architect in New Orleans. Just call his office and straighten this all out." "Oh, yeah? What's the phone number?" They dialed the number and it rang and rang and rang and didn't stop ringing. It just kept on ringing. My father, at that time, had about eight guys in his office and his secretary. They must have all been to lunch. "Yeah, biggest architect in New Orleans doesn't even have a secretary. Up against the wall."

Ted said, "Well, my brother's a Congressman." "His brother's a Congressman; how about that? This one's father's the biggest architect in New Orleans, and his brother's a Congressman. How about that, Al? Do you want us to call *him*?" Ted said yes. So they got on the phone. "What's the phone number?" Ted gave him the phone number. Bobby answered the phone, for some reason, instead of one of the secretaries. "We have a gentleman here who says he's the brother of Congressman John F. Kennedy. Is this his office?" Bobby said, "Yes, it is." "Have you ever

heard of, or do you know a Ted Kennedy?" Bobby said, "Never heard of him." And he hung up. [laughter] He called back in about five minutes and we were back up against the wall again. So that was our run-in with the FBI. Bobby called back and got it all straightened out.

Heininger: Was Ted pissed?

Hooton: Oh, man. But that was them, you know? I grew up with those guys, from the time I was in high school, and just out of high school. That's the way all my friends—it's a competition, trying to get the other guy embarrassed.

I scored two for Yale, playing Harvard. [Richard] Clasby went out for one play. The ball was about this far from our end zone. And my father had flown up. I played defense most of the first half. I couldn't believe I was going in, but the ball's down—You had to stand out in the end zone to get the ball. I was playing tailback and he snapped the ball. The guard there had shifted into blocking back, the same way you have the tailback, the fullback, the blocking back, and the wingback out near the end. The play he called, I had to fake to Culver, who we should have given the ball to. He could have run it out of there. Fake to Culver, and then wait for the wingback to come around, and then fake to him, and then go off the weak side of our line. By the time I turned around, it was all blue and white. I didn't move an inch. Ted used to love to tell that story, any time I talked about my football days.

Heininger: How close was Ted to his father?

Hooton: We called him JP behind his back but never to his face. I know he had the fear of God from his father. He was boss and there wasn't any question. My father—I respected and loved my father, and I think Ted did the same. That doesn't mean he was always pleased, maybe, with—Senior year, we had a big party down at the Cape. His father was there. His father had given the party.

I was walking down Fifth Avenue—Their offices used to be in the Pan American Building in New York. I was there, and for some reason, we were walking down the street, he and I. I said, "Mr. Kennedy, you know I'm graduating this year." He said, "Oh yes, congratulations, Claude." I said, "If I may, I would like to ask you a question. If I wanted to be a success from here on in—You've been a great success, both with your family and with your business—what would you recommend?" We walked about another five feet and he said, "You know what, Claude?" And he stopped. "If you want to make money, the best thing I can tell you is go where the people are. That's probably the best advice I can give you. No matter what you choose to do, go where the people are." It was so true.

Heininger: Did Ted seek his approval?

Hooton: Did Ted seek his approval? Oh, yes, because his father was right.

Heininger: What about his mother? How close was he to his mother?

Hooton: He loved his mother with a passion. They were so cute together. The first time I met all of them, we were out in California in 1954. We were staying with Pat and Peter, until we went down to Balboa. His mother was there, his sister Pat was there, of course, married to Peter, and

then Eunice [Kennedy Shriver] came out, and Jean [Kennedy Smith] was there, working for Father [James] Keller that summer. So it was three of the sisters and his mother.

Pat had a little cocktail party. I'd never seen them all together that much, at the dinner table, but it was priceless. The four of them got together and it was just—No one talked to them the whole cocktail party. You couldn't get a word in. Pat and Peter had a wonderful place right on the water there. They had an outdoors deck.

Ted and I were going over to the Bahamas, and we stopped in Palm Beach to see his mother. We were taking his boat over from there. We walked in and his brother was there with—I can't remember her name—this wonderful maid, she made the greatest cookies. She did the cooking and was with the family forever. His mother said, "Oh, Teddy, I didn't know you were coming for dinner. I just went shopping today and I only got two lamb chops, but you're certainly welcome for dinner. But next time it would be more polite if you would call and let me know beforehand." So we got down to the table and guess who had the two lamb chops? Ted and I. They had tuna salad. I just felt awful.

I talked about the golf thing. I was sitting next to her at a fundraiser in L.A. during the '60 campaign. Ted had gone—I was the one that got him on that bronco. And something about his book I wanted to talk to you about. But she said something like, "You boys are going to have such a wonderful life. I just hope you live long enough to enjoy it."

Heininger: Who had more of an effect on him, his mother or his father?

Hooton: Religiously, no question his mother. She went to communion every day. He loved his father and respected him enormously. He knew his mother was forgiving. At the wedding, when he and Joan got married, for example, Jack got up and gave a toast and said—I wish I could imitate him—"Mother, Teddy is not the baby in the family anymore. He is getting married today, and he'll have a wife and be just like the rest of us."

I think his mother was so cute. I've seen some of the letters. When they had their first anniversary, I think it was, she sent a letter with a \$50 check in it and said, "Just a little something for your anniversary. I want you to get anything you want." Fifty bucks. I know he loved his mother to death and was proud of his mother. So to say he loved one more than the other—he respected and loved his father, he respected and loved his mother, and I don't think there was that big a difference. He would try to please both of them. We were talking after Chappaquiddick and he said, "I've tried to do everything that everybody has wanted me to do all my life," which is really true. He did it better than I did, but I had probably more fun.

Heininger: Was he somebody who talked through his problems, or did he want someone around who could distract him from them?

Hooton: He was one who wanted to get to the problem and get it behind him; therefore, there was not a lot of hemming and hawing. We talked about running again, maybe, in '84. We were all over in Greece: Culver, Teddy and I. We talked, and I said, "Ted, Jack had your father, two brothers and a whole family alive and well. He had all his father's connections supporting him, and financial support. That's all gone for you." It was obvious to him in the last campaign. I said, "Jack's friends all don't think you're good enough because you're not Jack. Bobby's friends

don't think you're good enough because you're not Bobby. You're Ted. We're your friends, but when Jack ran, he had the whole bunch: your friends, Bobby's friends, everyone else's friends. Now it's come down to you, they've all run off. I think you can probably win, but I'd rather that you wouldn't run, because I love you."

You know what he told me about getting shot at? I asked him one time. I said every time I hear a gunshot, I still jump, and I wasn't near any shooting. When I hear a gunshot I jump a mile. He said, "If somebody's going to shoot me, I just want one swing at him first." That's kind of his attitude about it.

We were in a plane about two summers ago, coming back from—He asked me to fly out with him to Pittsfield. He was giving a commencement address. The weather was bad. I said sure, so we flew up together. We had a pilot and a copilot and a little jet. We got out there and he made a great speech. He loved to do that because that's a happy time. There's so much sacrifice and love and support. Working for those folks, that's one of the highest points in his life, and certainly for the parents. He loved to do those.

Coming back, we were coming into Hyannis Port. We're probably 20 miles out, and we're at about nine or ten thousand feet. We're in the clouds. It was pea soup clouds, and a lightning bolt hit the plane just like a gunshot. *Bang!* I was sitting across from Ted. It sounded like the pilot's head must have been blown off or something. It sounded just like a gunshot. I was starting to unbuckle and I saw Ted was down on his hands and knees, crawling through the plane. You know, it was only about from this chair over, to get to the cockpit, and he's on his hands and knees, crawling up there. I said, "What the hell? You've got the back. What do you think you're doing?" He said, "I can fly and you can't." [*laughs*] When he got up there, the pilot was OK, but it knocked out every instrument on the airplane.

Heininger: Wow.

Hooton: So we're flying around in the pea soup. Let's see if we can get up and out of there. We finally got up and out of there, and we had no radio and no instrumentation, but the plane was running. We headed south—You could tell when you got up, where the sun was—toward New Haven, and to the first clear break we could get in the clouds. We got down to New Haven and we were trying to see through holes in the clouds, and Ted said, "I know right where we are." He looked over, and he had just been at young Teddy's house the weekend before, and this is like three hills—the place is easily identifiable from the air. "That's where Teddy lives. I know the airport is right over there." We found another opening and got through and got down. As I said, he was always the one to be in the water when I'm taking my jacket off. Always.

Heininger: What was his relationship with Steve Smith?

Hooton: He loved Steve. So did I. Steve was a wit like Jack. Not any better, but very good. I liked him because he was also a good golfer. We had a bunch of laughs together in New York, when I was up in New York and Steve would be there. I always wanted Steve to run for Governor of New York. He would have been a great Governor. He handled the Kennedy estate for years and I was really sorry to see him go.

The first time I met Steve, I was in the Army in Europe and I was on leave. I was down on the French Riviera in Nice, walking along the street, and I heard, “Hey, Claudie!” I looked over and it was Jean. I kind of had a crush on Jean. She was just a little bit older. It was Jean and Steve on their honeymoon. So I went over to talk to them and I said, “Just because I got in the Army, you married this guy. What the heck? I was coming home, Jean.” Anyhow, I liked Steve and I think Ted did too. In New York, we always got together.

I heard through the grapevine that Steve had a nervous breakdown when Ted was running. I don’t know if there’s any truth to it or not. You know, when he told me he was running, he hadn’t announced yet. I was up in Washington in November, and he said, “I think I’m going to run.” I said, “Ted, for Crissakes, the election is next year and you haven’t done any legwork or anything.” He said, “No, but the polls—I’m the only one that can beat—” He hated Jimmy Carter. Not hated him, but he sure didn’t like him. [Ronald] Reagan, he didn’t think much of either. He said, “I’m the only one that can beat him, according to the polls,” And he said, “What have we got, if we get either one of those guys? I’ve got to run.”

I had broken my pelvis. A horse threw me and so I wasn’t able to help much. I was in the hospital. Normally, you start running two years before, at least, and so him jumping in at that late date to me was suicide.

Heininger: You miss your friend, don’t you?

Hooton: Yes. I don’t feel like he’s gone. Every now and then, though, I think about something and I start tearing up. My great-grandmother was Irish. My great-grandmother—before I went off to Harvard, I’d have to go by and get on my knees, and she would give me the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost in Gaelic, and then reach in her purse and pull out her rabbit’s foot that was nothing but bone, she’d rubbed it so much. So I knew I was covered on both ends. I’ve always done the Irish part of my family.

Heininger: You said there was something in the book you wanted to mention?

Hooton: Oh, it’s a letter from Vicki. I don’t like that picture; it looks like he has false teeth. Vicki’s brother took that picture.

Heininger: Maybe it’s touched up.

Hooton: This is just an anonymous thing here. That letter, I couldn’t believe. I’ve got three signed books.

Heininger: Oh, that’s a lovely letter.

Hooton: It is. You know, that’s what flabbergasted me. That happened when he was alive. If I was such a joy to him, why didn’t we get together more often? We lived practically down the street.

Heininger: “He loved you so much Claude. Thank you for bringing him joy, laughter and song over so many years. Hugs and kisses, Much love, Vicki.” That’s a really sweet—

Hooton: It is. Then I got this for Christmas, and I don't know how he could have signed that.

Heininger: He could have, because they could have done these—he could have signed these in the summer.

Hooton: Yes, and then just sign the pages.

Heininger: Yes. That's not an autopen.

Hooton: In the book, that's that painting up there. Anyway, this was a typical letter.

Heininger: Oh, wow, that's lovely.

Hooton: I designed these when he ran. This was his campaign slogan in 1988, whenever it was. Teddy and Kara [Kennedy] were his campaign managers that year. That's just a picture of the house up there.

Heininger: Wow, you have lots of stuff that goes way back.

Hooton: Yes, that was Teddy and my son, and Teddy and Ted. This was at the old tennis court. I went up there this last summer and the tennis court was overgrown.

Heininger: It hasn't been used much lately.

Hooton: That's the one he sent me over there on the—that's Joan and his sister, Candy [McMurrey]. That was about two or three summers ago. Joan looked great then, but at the funeral, she looked like somebody had puffed her face up.

Heininger: Well, the funeral was tough on everybody.

Hooton: Yes. Well, it's hard on Vicki, the poor thing. You know, I don't blame her. And Ted means what he said in the book. She was that great for him. I always said, they don't have to like me; that's not part of the deal. I just don't know why she kept us away, and particularly when he's got cancer. If I know Ted, he would have loved to have us around.

Heininger: Yes.

Hooton: Did he comment on that at all?

Heininger: We didn't talk to him in the last year.

[END INTERVIEW]