EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH NEIL MACNEIL

May 9, 2006
Bethesda, Maryland

Interviewers
Charles O. Jones
Paul Martin

Index : page 36

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TRANSCRIPT

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Jones: We want to start where you started with Kennedy and talk about the changes in covering him as he developed over time. We want to talk about the Presidential bids. It's just going to be a free-flowing conversation about your recollections. We don't want to influence that in any way. We want to hear your impressions of him, of the coverage of him, how colleagues thought about him—plus anything you think we left out. The purpose of the project is not for today, or for next year—not even for ten years from now.

MacNeil: It's forever.

Jones: That's right. Let's start with when you first met him and covered him, and your recollection of that.

MacNeil: Well, his brother became President in 1961, and the next year he ran for his brother's Senate seat, 1962. But he wasn't old enough to serve, because you have to be 30 years old, and he hadn't quite made it yet. I thought it would be fun to go up to Massachusetts and cover the state Democratic convention. I spent two weeks at it, believe it or not. The whole idea was kind of a lark. We had a very fine reporter in New England named Ruth Mehrtens. She teamed up with me there. His opponent was the state's Attorney General, Edward McCormack, who was Speaker [John] McCormack's nephew. He was the son of a guy who was known as Knocko [Edward Sr.] McCormack, who was kind of a Boston lush and an embarrassment to the Speaker of the House.

Ruth was a good reporter. She took care of Knocko and Edward, and I took care of Ted Kennedy. We spent time with both of them, but I was very interested in Eddie McCormack, who was the Attorney General. He was driven around by a state trooper, and they didn't know what the speed limits were—Wow! Did we move! And you don't arrest the Attorney General!

I decided that we ought to check to s see whose numbers had any validity. So I talked to Ted and to Eddie McCormack, and I got their estimates on how the delegations were going to break down. The delegations voted by delegation, and we were particularly interested in Berkshire

County, because that would be the first one called. I forget how many members there were, but it was either 65 or 67 from that county at the Springfield convention.

We tried to call all 67 of them and ask, "Who are you for?" and we'd run that against what the two candidates had told us. We got all but maybe four or five, and we had some idea where they were going from their colleagues. Kennedy's numbers were right on the dime, which is interesting.

Jones: His estimates?

MacNeil: They weren't estimates—he knew. And this was before the convention. It's the typical Kennedy attention to detail. It was fascinating. I don't think he missed one, and it was extraordinary. We knew in advance how the vote was going to go, and that's the way it went. It was the usual convention, but one thing that sticks in my mind about it—which really annoyed Kennedy. I was with him in his hotel suite when the voting was going on for the nominee. And as he won it, he was changing clothes to address the convention. He stood in the room, and he put his arms out like this, straight out in front of him. He was wearing a shirt with French cuffs, and an assistant put the cufflinks in. I thought it was a little touch of where he came from. It ended up in *Time* magazine, and Ted didn't like it. But it was as true as gold—I saw it.

I had worked for a wire service, and they always want a little flashy phrase of some kind. If there's a train accident, they like to say there are 3,000 people killed and injured. Then after they get to use that headline, they roll back. The whole point is to goose this thing to another level. The important newspapers like *The New York Times* want to know the meaning of it all. But the news magazines want the graphics. You know, [Lyndon Baines] Johnson belched into [Everett] Dirksen's face and so on. They want the little graphic touches, and that's what we did with the French cuffs, and that's where I met him. I spent two weeks there with him, and of course he was old enough to serve by January of '63.

One of the things that was odd about it is he did a lot of the calling of the delegates and voters himself. He called one woman, and she didn't believe it was Ted Kennedy. He said, "How can I prove it to you?" She said, "What's your brother Jack's birthday?" and he couldn't remember. There were nine of them, you know, so I think he lost that one. She didn't believe he was really Jack Kennedy's brother. Anyway, that's when I met him.

As a Senator in his first few years, he followed a very strict course. He would talk to no journalists who weren't local Massachusetts writers. Of course you know he was in the chair of the Senate presiding when his brother was killed, which is sad.

Jones: How did it go with the guy, what's his name, the guy who was the interim Senator?

MacNeil: I don't remember, but he was a family retainer.

Jones: [Benjamin, II] Smith? Do you know anything about how that went, whether he was just a caretaker in his mind?

MacNeil: There were two years left in Jack's term. I knew nothing about the arrangements, but the common understanding was that he was just temporarily sitting in the seat, and Teddy was going to run for it. Of course, the fact that he was Jack's brother made possible his election to the Senate at age 30. Actually, Eddie McCormack brought that up against him; he said that if his name was anything other than Kennedy, he wouldn't have a chance, which I'm sure was true.

Martin: Did you have a chance to watch McCormack's campaign at the time?

MacNeil: A little bit. Mostly I remember driving around the state with him at great speeds. He was an interesting guy, but there wasn't much to him. I had no sense of a powerful thinker or anything like that. And Ted was favored by his youth, of course, as anyone at 30 is.

Jones: How did he campaign? Give us your impressions.

MacNeil: I don't remember a hell of a lot about the campaigning. I rode around with both candidates. He was an attraction for crowds, the way he's always been, because he was a Kennedy, and he used to get pretty good audiences. But I don't particularly remember what happened.

Jones: What about the general election?

MacNeil: I didn't cover that. All I covered was the convention, and of course Eddie didn't have to accept the convention decision, and he didn't. They ran further in the primary, and Kennedy won the primary. Of course, I didn't pay any attention. I don't think there was any problem with him getting elected, a Kennedy from Massachusetts. Jack was as big as all outdoors at this point. That was the year of the missile crisis, which was a strange bit of business. I've always been fascinated by that. May I say something about it?

Jones: Sure, absolutely.

MacNeil: Jack called everybody in the Congressional leadership to the White House and told them what he was going to do. He was not asking for advice or consent. A good number of Vice President Johnson's people were there, and Johnson himself was there. As far as I know, Johnson never said a word. He was in his sulking mood from not becoming chairman of the Senate caucus. Anyway, Dick Russell and John Stennis and Bill Fulbright, which is interesting, all wanted immediate action to take the sites out with a bombing attack.

I heard one word after the thing. I was reporting it, and the word—it came from that group—was "chicken." That was the word they used. I was scared to use it because other people would read it and it might have affected the Soviets.

Jones: They said who was chicken?

MacNeil: Kennedy. They wanted to hit the missiles. He had that quarantine, which that group thought was silly. But of course it worked, and suddenly Kennedy was 12 feet tall. I'm sure that had a big effect on Johnson when he had to face the Vietnam War. Johnson had no background

in diplomatic things. I was surprised when I talked to him one time when he was Vice President and he tried to impress me with his knowledge of such things. He said, "I write every month to Konrad Adenauer, and he writes back." I thought that was pathetic.

Teddy stayed submerged for a long time.

Jones: He gets to the Senate, and you have three Kennedy brothers. Can you talk some about the relationships in this extraordinary set of brothers?

MacNeil: It was a little bit like what we read about the Italian mafia.

Martin: How so?

MacNeil: You don't speak anywhere against the family. If you do, you get knocked off. But they were utterly different people. I had a basically unpleasant relationship with Bobby Kennedy. I met him first before the election of '60. It was probably '59. I know he was very unhappy about Jack being a Senator and wished he was a Governor so he wouldn't have all those questions come up. You know, there are hundreds of votes coming up in the Senate, and any one of them could be used to beat the other guy over the head, and he didn't like that.

Jack was a very open guy. I campaigned with him in the West Virginia primary, and he was an interesting fellow. The press corps went from town to town on a bus with the candidate, and he would drop down in one of the seats and chat with different reporters between towns. He plopped down next to me between two stops. He had advance guys ahead in the next town trying to stir up some kind of crowd for him in the marketplace or the center of town.

He said, "What do you think of the speech?" I said that it was really to bring up the religious question about him being a Catholic and whether it was possible to get elected. I said, "Oh, that second or third or fourth part of the speech—" it was the same speech at every place—"would be better if the other thing came ahead of it." I thought he had them in the wrong order. That's the kind of thing politicians do to be cozy with journalists who're going to write about them. Except Jack listened, and from then on he changed his speech to the way I had suggested, which I thought was interesting.

Jack had a very close relationship with a lot of the press because of that, his openness. Bobby didn't like me because he had a totally different view of where we stood, where the press stood with him and the Kennedys. With Bobby, it was you're for me, or you're against me, and I wasn't for anybody or against anybody. That wasn't my job, but he didn't like it. I never did much with him until after he became a Senator in 1965.

When he was Attorney General, I did try to do a piece for *Time* on the difficulties between him and Larry O'Brien, who was the key guy in the professional world of campaigning. Larry was upset, as Kennedy's chief liaison with Congress, that they had indicted a few—two or three—members of Congress for some rascality or other. Bobby had gone to the trials and testified against the Congressmen culprits, and Larry wished he wouldn't do that.

Jones: Against whom?

MacNeil: Two or three Congressmen who had been indicted by grand juries. Bobby would go to the trial and testify for the government against the Congressmen. Larry didn't like that. Larry had the job of working with these members of Congress, all of them, to get the President's program through, and he would just as soon the Attorney General (who was the President's brother) didn't show up to make the case.

There's a subtle bit of difference. It's not that he was backing away from convicting the guys. They had done those things, and in due course they were convicted and sent to jail. But what Larry didn't like was it gave a sense to the body—the members of the House and Senate—that they had to face the Attorney General who was looking down his nose at them.

Anyway, I tried to do that piece. I don't know what you know about *Time* editors. It was impossible for them to convey the idea of the subtlety of the difference between the two guys. Larry wasn't against indicting them. They deserved to be indicted. But the article came out in a terrible garble—that Larry didn't like Bobby or Bobby didn't like Larry. That wasn't there at all. It was just that the editors were incapable of dealing with the subtleties of it.

After the death of his brother and after the election, Bobby became a Senator from New York, and I saw an astonishing change in him after a couple of years. I don't know how this happened, but I knew it happened. He no longer was a militant, hostile character fighting everybody who didn't agree with him. Somehow he had made himself a spokesman for the hapless and the hopeless and the helpless. He went to South Africa and upbraided them for their racial policies. He went to Mississippi and did the same thing. He became the voice of the underlings, and I thought that would make a hell of a good *Time* cover.

This was 1966, in the fall. As I put it at the time, Bobby had looked at life with an etcher's eye, all blacks and whites, but he had changed. I proposed a cover to *Time,* and the editors said "go." He was very popular, and there was a serious question about him running for President pretty soon, like 1968.

I talked to him and said, "We're going to do a cover on you." He didn't want to talk to me, which was interesting. He had that sense that I was hostile—only because I wasn't for him. I spent an hour or two with him (I've forgotten how much), and he was answering in monosyllables, very brittle and stiff and all that. And the cover I wrote—which was one of the few pieces that went into the magazine as I wrote it, which was unusual, because we had a big rewrite system—was highly favorable. And that changed everything. Suddenly I was a good guy.

Anyway, he had that militant attitude that Jack didn't have, and neither does Teddy. He was much more relaxed about the whole world. I was with Jack Kennedy for three weeks in October of the campaign in 1960, moving around the country with him, with the regular press corps guys. I ended up with him at the last of the debates with [Richard Milhouse] Nixon. I was leaving the party then, and another guy was replacing me.

I went out to LaGuardia Airport in New York just to say goodbye to him and wish him luck, that sort of thing, and said I was leaving the party. He was alone on the tarmac, and I went to talk to him. I said, "How do you think you made out tonight?" This is what I mean by the openness of Kennedy. He said, "Neil, Nixon is so full of shit that I can't tell." That wasn't for quotation, but there was only an understanding that it wasn't. There was no "off the record" stuff at all. He was that open with people, and we knew each other very well by that time. That was part of the Kennedy mystique, I guess.

Jones: Was it the same with Teddy—that is, the same as with Jack? You explained the problems with Bobby, but as far as press relations, as far as your relationship with Teddy—

MacNeil: Well, I didn't pay a hell of a lot of attention to him when he first came because he was a freshman Senator, and freshman Senators at that time didn't have much say in things. He did cruise around the Senate when he first got there. He went to Senators' offices to meet them, particularly the Democratic Senators.

One of the ones he went to visit was Jim Eastland of Mississippi, and Eastland was absolutely delighted. It was 10 o'clock in the morning, 11 o'clock, and he poured him a drink, but Ted didn't drink at 10 in the morning. When Teddy saw his chance, he poured it into a wastebasket.

I don't know quite how this happened. Some time after the cover came out that I did on Bobby in the fall of '66, I was reading the *Congressional Record* (which I used to do every day), and there was a speech by Bobby in which he referred to Lord Acton, John Dalberg, the great British historian, as a "Tory historian." Acton was the co-founder, with British Prime Minister [William Ewart] Gladstone, of the British Liberal Party! And he called him a Tory!

I was an admirer of Lord Acton and had been all my life. I wrote a note to Bobby that on one occasion, a friend of Lord Acton's wrote to him and said he was surprised to see that he had used the word "Tory" as though it were a word of opprobrium. Acton wrote back that he was surprised any friend of his would think he would use the word in any other sense. I mailed that off, but I didn't kick Bobby in the magazine or anything like that. The note was a courtesy. Nothing more.

I got a letter back from him—a typed letter, signed. Then about six months later I got another letter, handwritten, and he said that this was still bothering him. He said, "All right. You were right and I was wrong." He had that problem with being wrong. My father had it. My father was never wrong, and neither was Bobby.

Jones: It reminds me of my best friend's father, who's a former Dean of the Business School at the University of South Dakota. He said, "The only time I was ever wrong was one time when I thought I was and wasn't."

I'd like to go back to a comment you made when you were talking about the West Virginia primary. You were really talking about the relationship between journalists and candidates. Can you talk a bit more about that? When you're covering somebody, and you're with them pretty

consistently over time, what is that relation? How do you maintain a professional cast in what you're doing?

MacNeil: I think different guys use different methods. A *Newsweek* reporter named Sam Shaffer believed in calling everybody by their first names. So it wasn't "Senator Kennedy," it was "Jack," and Mike Mansfield was "Mike." He liked to pretend that he was very close to them on a *tutoyer* basis. I was exactly the opposite. I always addressed them by title; I never called them by their first names. They'd call you by your first name, but I always said "Senator," "Mr. Chairman," that sort of thing, to try to keep it at a formal level.

One thing I learned early on in covering the Senate was that objective reporting was essentially a mistake. Joe McCarthy showed that. Lord Acton spoke to this as a historian. As a historian, he argued, you can't stand aloof between truth and falsehood, crime and all the rest of it. You had to judge, but you had to judge correctly, and to make a better case for the offender than he could make himself. That's always a problem in politics, because you get in close. In the Presidential race, nobody's close to the candidate except his own people. It's a huge circus moving around the country. I don't know how many people are involved in it, but there's a planeload of them traveling separately—if not two planeloads. So you don't have that problem. But in lesser cases, you get to know the guy pretty close up.

This is part of the reason why so many Senators run for President. They see the President, whoever is there, as a guy with clay feet; he puts his pants on one leg at a time like everybody else. Barry Goldwater was with Kennedy during the Bay of Pigs crisis. They were personal friends in spite of their differences politically, and he saw Kennedy wallowing around not knowing what the hell to do. Goldwater said to himself, "Hell, I could do that." That's what made him run for President a little later. They all see that the guy as just a normal human being.

I remember asking one candidate, Alan Cranston, "You don't seriously think you're qualified to be President, do you?" I don't think anyone's qualified for President. The job is just too huge, it's a fabulous job—the leader of the free world. How can you do that, just one guy?

He admitted he wasn't qualified to be President. But then he said the key words, "But I'm better than the guy who's there." It was [Ronald] Reagan at the time. They look at the guy and they say, "I can do that," and it changes their attitude.

But it's a delicate relationship. There are a lot of choices about what you use and don't use. It's very subjective, and there's a way for conservative reporters to write conservatively and liberal reporters to write liberally. It just can't be helped.

Jones: With Ted Kennedy, can you give us a set of benchmarks where you had a lot of contact with him or covered him especially well?

MacNeil: I didn't pay all that much attention to him. On some things, yes. I don't remember what year this was, but he was in the Senate and Nixon was in the White House. Nixon made some appointments as if the Congress was out of session—and it was out of session. It was Christmas Day, and the Congress had just been meeting the day before and was going to meet

again the day after Christmas. I covered the appeals case for that. Ted Kennedy took on the onus to appeal the case. Nixon had gotten an okay—I think from the District Court—and Kennedy won the case. I don't remember much about it except I was quite astonished that he had the legal wherewithal to do that. Nixon didn't challenge the loss, so it stood.

Jones: Here is this relatively young guy who takes on Russell Long to win the Whip's job and then two years later gets himself knocked off. How did that happen?

MacNeil: There's a funny story that goes with it—at least I think it's funny. The reason the Whip's job was open in 1965 was that Lyndon Johnson—after making Hubert Humphrey sweat about it—picked him as the Vice Presidential candidate. So he was suddenly Vice President, and the Whip's job was open. Russell Long wanted it. This was 1964, before this happened, and there were two or three other guys going for the job.

It was interesting because it had become important. The Whip's job had previously not been much, and neither was the floor leadership much before Lyndon Johnson. Russell Long wanted the job, and he was running for it. And in the midst of that, Strom Thurmond changed parties: he stopped being a Democrat and became a Republican. It caused terror in South Carolina. My God, John C. Calhoun's desk was being moved to the Republican side. How can we do that? Well, Russell Long knew about John C. Calhoun's desk because he had it, and he had it because his daddy had had it. After his father was shot and killed in 1935, his mother had the desk. Russell Long had used his seniority to claim it.

This became an in-house crisis with the South Carolina delegation. Long wanted to use it to get a vote. So he went to Olin D. Johnston, the other Senator from South Carolina, who was under fire because he didn't have it. Russell Long swapped John C. Calhoun's desk on the Senate floor for Johnston's vote. But before he did, he told me, he got down on his knees and asked forgiveness from his father. He said, "I'm going for broke." That's how he won the damned job, according to Long.

Long's problem was he was a very strange guy. He was a very quick study on almost everything, and he didn't do much studying of anything. He didn't do much as Party Whip because he was involved in many other things. He liked to think of himself not as one of two Senators from Louisiana but as one of 25 or 30 because he made friends all over the place on whom he could count when he needed them in a vote. So he did that, and of course he was vulnerable—and Teddy ran against him because Long was vulnerable.

Time did a cover on him when he ran for the Whip job. It said, "This is the coming on of a new Kennedy," yakkety yak and all that. Teddy didn't do the job either, but the guy who *was* doing the job was Bob Byrd from West Virginia. I forget the job he had; it was a lesser job as party secretary or something like that. He did the work, and he made the contacts with everybody and everything. He took care of all the favors that needed to be done. And he ran against Kennedy.

Part of it with Byrd was that he was a close ally of Russell Long, and part of it was retaliation against Kennedy, the preppie New Englander, for what he had done to Long. But there was no real contest on it. Ted didn't do the job just as Russell Long didn't do the job, and the job was

becoming more important. It was becoming particularly more important because of the role of Mike Mansfield, the Senate majority leader. He didn't believe in roughing people up. He was the opposite of Lyndon Johnson, whom he succeeded as majority leader, and he wouldn't push people around. A lot of things he just wouldn't do, and so the Whip was put in the position of doing them. And when they didn't do it, it was noticed by everybody.

And it was also noticed that Bob Byrd was constant in his attention to the Democratic Party. His career, in fact, is astonishing. He's as unlikely a candidate as ever ran for the Senate. He was a former member of the Ku Klux Klan. He later realized that that was the worst mistake he made in his life—that and fighting the Civil Rights Act of '64. As a Senator, he went to law school. He became one of the few Senators who treated the Senate as though this was a religious rite, way beyond himself. John Stennis was that way and some others. It was a different attitude towards the place, and one that grew over the years, including paying attention to the details of the job.

Kennedy was there as a Senator from Massachusetts whose brothers both ran for the Presidency. He was a natural to run for the Presidency—that was why he was a Senator. Bob Byrd was there because he was a Senator and that was his religion. He doesn't do anything else. He never did anything else. He has no sports, no interests, no hobbies. His idea of a good Sunday was watching the news shows to see what other Senators were talking about.

Jones: Playing the fiddle I guess, once in a while.

MacNeil: No, not even when playing the fiddle. I was with Byrd on his first Senate campaign in 1958, and the fiddle was an important bit of business, but not everywhere. He didn't play the fiddle in Charleston, with a sophisticated audience. I went up in the mountains with him. He damned near killed both of us because he lost control of the car. (If they flattened out West Virginia, it would be larger than Texas.) When we reached the place, he said, "Pretend you're a member of my staff. At the appropriate time after I make the speech, somebody will say something about the fiddle, and you go out to the car and get it for me." I said, "Sure, I'll do that."

He made this terrific speech; it was an education to me. But he didn't speak as a politician; he spoke as a preacher. He spoke the ole time religion, and it was the damnedest thing I'd ever heard. It was really good. He knew the religion, and he had the right audience. The media was not at the courthouse, the city hall of this little town. The speech was in the courtroom where they have space for people, and the hangers-on went downstairs after the speech. Byrd was then upstairs meeting with the regulars, the machine guys, the Democrats, and they started talking about Election Day and the walkabout money.

Byrd got more and more embarrassed and said, "You haven't met Neil MacNeil of *Time* magazine"—very loud. In other words to them, "Shut up." Anyway, I went and got the fiddle in due course and went downstairs, and to make up for shutting me off that way, he played something like "Turkey in the Straw" in honor of me. He wouldn't do that in a city. It was a two-seat race in West Virginia that year, and he told me that if he got in, he'd be reelected forever.

Jones: What do you mean a two-seat race?

MacNeil: Two seats were open. [John D.] Hoblitzell had been appointed, and the other guy was an old-time Senator. So there were four candidates, and Byrd was the least likely of them. But he made it. He said if he got elected, he would be reelected six, seven times. Right now in the spring of 2006, he's running for his ninth consecutive term. He doesn't do anything but the Senate. His attention to his constituency is enormous. Every high school has a valedictorian, and every year every one gets a $25 U.S. bond from Bob Byrd. It's this sort of thing; he's very attentive. There's no way to beat him. He doesn't do anything else, just the Senate, and he's become almost a religious leader for those who care about the Senate.

Martin: I think the first *Time* story you were involved with when Kennedy was in the Senate was the Whip story, when he was challenging Long.

MacNeil: Oh no, there were a lot of stories before that.

Martin: That's what I was going to ask. What was your sense about when Kennedy became newsworthy early in his Senate career?

MacNeil: Oh, he was newsworthy before he was elected, because he was a Kennedy.

Martin: But in terms of what he was doing in the Senate.

MacNeil: Well, as I said earlier, the first couple or three years, he stayed away from the national press. He wasn't unpleasant about it; he just didn't respond. He was making sure everybody knew he was a Massachusetts Senator, and he functioned as a Massachusetts Senator, and that was the whole thing. He was not in there to be a playboy looking around for odd funny statements or dramatic performances, or any kind of clowning to draw attention to himself. He was trying *not* to draw attention to himself except in terms of the Boston and Massachusetts newspapers.

Martin: There's a quote in this story about the Long race where Long makes a case that he could beat Kennedy in the Senate, but Kennedy would beat him with his popularity with the public. What was your sense at the time of the accuracy of that statement in terms of Long's place in the Senate versus Kennedy's? How much did public opinion affect what was happening inside the Senate?

MacNeil: I'm not quite sure I understand what you're saying. Could you ask again?

Martin: Kennedy was popular outside the Senate. Did that translate into the Senate in terms of how other Senators reacted to him?

MacNeil: I think the reaction within the Senate would not be for them to be taken aback by someone's popularity outside the Senate. They would not appreciate that worth a damn. That's a classic attitude. I remember when [John Foster] Dulles ran for the Senate and won, he wasn't put on the Foreign Relations Committee. Had [Thomas] Dewey won, he would have been Secretary

of State, but they made a point of giving him something like the District of Columbia Committee to put him in his place. There's that attitude by the older members.

But most of that has changed as the leadership has realized more and more that they can't keep the natives quiet, and they're useful, they can be used. It's a totally different kind of Senate now. But I think basically Long lost it because he didn't do the job. After Ted's defeat by Byrd, he made a speech someplace—at a party rally or some damn thing—and he said he wanted to thank the 28 Senators who had pledged to vote for him and especially the 24 who actually did. He had it all locked up—except they didn't vote for him.

At the same time, Mo [Morris] Udall, who was one of the House's greats and one of our country's greats, sent him a note. He'd just been beaten when he ran for Speaker. There's a file in there that quotes him. He said something to the effect that he'd be glad to come over to the Senate and help pull the knives out of Kennedy's back, from the guys who betrayed him. I forget the exact quote, but it's in the files. They both took it with a humorous attitude.

The Party Whip was not an important job, and the reaction by the press far overdid the significance of the damn thing. *Time* did a cover story on Ted Kennedy running for Whip. Wow, here it is. I had nothing to do with that. I didn't agree that it was important enough to go on the cover. I did write the damn thing, and it was interesting, but it wasn't what we normally considered important.

The *Time* magazine cover was used in its pure form when, at my recommendation, the editors decided to do a cover story on Mike Mansfield—Mike Mansfield, who didn't want any publicity at any time. I got Mansfield in the President's Room, took him off the Senate floor. I said, "Senator, I have really bad news for you." He said, "What's that?" I said, "The editors of *Time* magazine have decided to carve your face on Mount Rushmore." He said, "What!?" I said, "We're going to put you on the cover." Mansfield was really upset: "That's terrible, how can we stop that?" He didn't want publicity.

He was a tremendous majority leader, to look at his record: three great Civil Rights Acts, concluding that subject. There was a whole world of things he did, like Medicare. We carved his face on Mount Rushmore. At that time, the cover of *Time* was a lot more important than it is today. At least in the last 20 years or so or more, they've been doing cover stories on people eating ice cream, those kinds of trivialities. I think it's fairly obvious that the news magazines and others as well think that politicians aren't all that interesting to their readers. I think they *are* that interesting to readers; they're just not interesting to the editors.

Martin: Did you think at the time that Mansfield was unusual in trying not to get that much press? Or was that pretty common for the old guys?

MacNeil: Unusual is not the word. It was astonishing. I remember a housing bill, and Larry O'Brien had a big struggle with the vote on it. Somebody else had a role in it, but I forget who. Mike Mansfield had a big role in it, working the thing, lining up votes and so on. They passed the bill, and at the meeting with the leadership afterward, John Sparkman was there, the chairman of the committee that produced the bill.

Mike Mansfield grabbed the microphone and announced that this was a tremendous feat by Senator Sparkman. Sparkman was stunned; he hadn't done a damn thing. Mike wanted all the credit to go to Sparkman, not him. He acted as though he hadn't done a thing. He was concerned about the welfare of the people of whom he was majority leader. I forget which funeral it was. It was a funeral of a Senator, and a plane took 40 or 50 of them someplace. Mansfield thought about it, and he said, "That will not happen again." He sent word to the Air Force saying never again to take more than 12 Senators in one plane. If a plane went down with 40 Senators, the Senate practically ceased to exist. The life of the Senate was involved, and he wouldn't allow that.

He had the same attitude towards the filibuster. He would not tolerate keeping the Senate in indefinite session the way Johnson used to do. Johnson once kept the Senate in session for six solid days, night and day, and it didn't work. You try to break the opposition by keeping them in constant session. In plain terms, Mike wouldn't do it—I shouldn't be calling him Mike, but I do—because there were guys in the Senate in their upper sixties and seventies. I think somebody might have even been eighty, and he didn't want them answering roll calls at 4 o'clock in the morning. It might kill them. So he wouldn't allow it for the protection of the membership. It wasn't just Democrats; it was general. He had an overall view of the place. Johnson had a wonderful quote about him: "Why do I have a saint as majority leader?" He was that kind of guy. He never said anything off the record, never. Everything was on the record.

Jones: Mansfield?

MacNeil: Mansfield. He was a champion witness before *Meet the Press*. I don't remember the number of answers he gave, but there were somewhere around 60 in a half hour. I've been on a number of those programs over the years, and the idea was to catch the guy—it's different from other reporting—making some foolish statement that will make a headline for *Meet the Press*. The ones who could do it were the ones who were invited back. A reporter would ask a two- or three-minute question, "Senator, yakkety yak…" and his answer would be, "Yup." And that was it—or "Nope." The time was taken up by the question, not by Mike's answers. He didn't give a damn about that. He would go, he'd suffer through the damn thing, but he wasn't looking for praise.

He prepared a marvelous speech to make a few days after Kennedy was killed. It was the defense of his majority leadership. He didn't make it because he thought it was inappropriate with Kennedy about to be buried. He was a remarkable man, and he had an extraordinary majority leadership, from 1961 to 1977, 16 years. No one else has served in that job that long.

He was ultimately fair. His best friend was George Aiken, senior Republican from Vermont. Every day the Senate was going to meet, George Aiken and Mike Mansfield had breakfast together in the Senate cafeteria. Aiken was an authority on foreign relations, as was Mike. They were intimate friends. He was really a marvelous fellow just as a human being. To find a Senator who literally deplored any notoriety for himself is astonishing. A lot of Senators want to make sure, basically, that you know how to spell their name, period, and the more you use it, the better they like it.

Jones: Did Ted Kennedy talk off the record?

MacNeil: Sure. I don't particularly remember anything.

Jones: I'm just asking whether he was as open with you and other journalists as Mansfield was.

MacNeil: Well, I didn't pay as much attention to him as I did to his brother. When I was working for *Time,* it was 1958, and Jack was already a hot property: he was running for President. I did have one slightly bizarre incident with him. This was 1959, and one of my editors had some question they wanted to ask Kennedy. I don't remember what it was. The Senate was going to be in session that night, and that's a lovely time for reporters because everybody's there. All their offices are closed, and the staff has gone home, so they're all hanging around the Senate chamber waiting for the votes and so on, because that's what they do in late session.

I had dinner with the girl I was engaged to, and then we went up to the Senate. I parked her in the gallery and went to the President's room to send in for Kennedy. He came out, and he didn't say hello. He said, "Who's the girl?"

The short hairs came up. I said, "Senator, I'm marrying that girl." He was through. He just cooled off instantaneously. It was quite obvious what his intentions seemed to be. This was 1959, February or March or something like that, and he was running actively for President at that point.

Jones: You've drawn a fascinating portrait—in talking about Byrd and Mansfield, in particular—of Senators who are successful in the chamber because their concern is about the Senate—the chamber itself—and Senators, and the institution and so forth. It's now become something different, but even at that time there were Senators who were more national figures. Was it your impression that Ted Kennedy understood this, that there was this difference between the insider and himself as a naturally born national figure because he's a Kennedy? Was he sensitive to that, do you think?

MacNeil: Well, I'm not sure quite what you mean by that, but the impression I have of all three Kennedys is they went to the Senate to run for President—Bobby and his Senate senior, Ted—you couldn't escape it. Their brother was the President when Ted was elected to the Senate. Ted obviously couldn't avoid the problem. And it *was* a problem for him running for President. He was a candidate immediately after the death of his brother. Well actually, that's not correct. His brother, Bobby, was after that, but then after Bobby was killed—

I had a strange thing with Bobby on that. In February, in 1968, he wrote a note to a constituent that was published somehow, saying that he had no interest in running for President in 1968. Then came New Hampshire, which is on the usual Tuesday in, I think, March. Gene McCarthy got 42% of the vote, and it was a shock effect on the body politic.

On Wednesday after the primary, that was all the talk, the most fantastic thing that had ever happened. Thursday, at Bobby's invitation, Hugh Sidey and I had lunch with him, four of us.

The other one was Ted [Theodore] Sorensen. We had lunch at a bridge table in the middle of his Senate office, and he couldn't sit still.

Jones: Bobby couldn't sit still?

MacNeil: Bobby couldn't sit still. He'd get up to walk around, walk around, walk around. Hugh and I kept our mouths shut as they went back and forth about it. Sorensen was trying to quiet Bobby down, but it was a crisis for him. What should I do? It was running for President they were talking about. It was an extraordinary thing to witness, to see a guy fighting with it.

I didn't see any hope for him in 1968. I didn't think he could win. And the reason he couldn't win was that the ballgame hadn't changed yet. The Governors and the big-time bosses in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia were still there, and they had authority. They would do what they always had done: pick the candidate. At the same time, I thought, watching him, *My God, this guy's a shoo-in four years from now*. There was nothing left of anybody else. Johnson couldn't run again.

Jones: This is before Johnson decided not to run.

MacNeil: This is the day after they knew what McCarthy had done. Tuesday, McCarthy did the business in New Hampshire, 42%. Wednesday, everybody knew about it. Thursday, we had the lunch. And Saturday he announced for President with the same words his brother used: "I'm running for President." I knew the boss of Pittsburgh, who was the Governor later (I've forgotten his name), and Bill Green, the boss of Philadelphia, both Catholics, were very much against Jack Kennedy.

Jones: Davey Lawrence, I think.

MacNeil: Dave Lawrence, that's right. They were just very much against that, all the Catholics were, all the bosses. They remembered Al Smith. But they had broken that with Kennedy's election. I didn't think that Bobby could catch Johnson. I don't know why Johnson gave up. I think he could have bullied his way through.

Jones: Your interpretation of his marching around was his anxiety about whether to go ahead.

MacNeil: You should understand that Gene McCarthy and the Kennedys hated each other. I made a terrible mistake as a journalist in the 1960 convention in Los Angeles. I came back to my hotel, the Biltmore, about 2:30 in the morning, and there was Gene McCarthy. This was the night before the nominations started. He grabbed me and said, "Come on. Let's have a drink. I want to tell you why Jack Kennedy is not a good Catholic."

I couldn't handle it. I'd been going since dawn, and I was about to pass out, so I refused to listen to him. I've always regretted not having the damn drink with him. They were very hostile, two different camps, and that was part of the ingredients. I knew about that then, and I had the sense that Bobby was fearful that McCarthy was going to become the heir apparent by making the

challenge. The damn thing was working. He didn't get a majority of the New Hampshire votes, but 42% was enormous.

Jones: So the nomination was going to take off in that direction and away from Bobby.

MacNeil: Yes. It was somebody else taking his job, in a way, and he announced immediately, two days later. What broke the old machine was the '68 Democratic convention. They wiped out the bosses, and everybody else got lost. If the Democrats didn't have a decision by convention time—and they always have since then, really—nobody would have known what to do. There was nobody to broker the thing because they had all been relegated to nothingness politically. There were more schoolteachers there than anybody else. So if they didn't have a decision, they would be facing political chaos. Nobody was going to fill a smoke-filled room and have some whiskey and smoke some cigars and pick a candidate.

Jones: Let's talk about Chappaquiddick and the impact of that on him as a Senator and subsequently for his Presidential ambition.

MacNeil: When Ralph Nader did a thing some years ago—decades ago, now—about the Congress and what was wrong with it, he had a bunch of little girls and boys going around interviewing people. They sent a little girl around to interview me about Congress. She was all business. She said, "Tell me the history of the United States Congress." I said, "Do you want the three-minute version or the short version?" She didn't even know it was a joke. It doesn't work that way.

Teddy was definitely a candidate for President from the beginning; it was in the family. But Chappaquiddick changed all that. It's very difficult to believe that he could have acted the way he acted in that incident. Essentially, he was seen as letting her drown. He was responsible, and he said nothing. I don't see how he could escape it. They were trying to find somebody else to take the blame, it looked like. It was just a benchmark. I'm sure he thought he could get past it in 1980, but he couldn't.

In earlier times—I forget what year it was, the first one when he was really a candidate. I guess it was '72. He wasn't a candidate for wanting to be a candidate. He was a candidate because so many people in the party wanted him to run. He made an announcement that he would not run and wouldn't accept the nomination and so on. The main concern then was his family position and literally his own safety. After assassins killed both his brothers, it was natural as rain for somebody to get the idea, "Let's make it three."

That was before Chappaquiddick. He had just been elected that year as Whip. Then all that went a-glimmering. He was always a big handsome guy, and he had more problems than Chappaquiddick, which was simply indefensible. He couldn't defend what he had done, and there was the sense that the fix was being put in by the locals.

When he ran, he ran with something that absolutely startled everybody who knew him. There wasn't anything of the kind of skill he had been using as a Senator. One of the things that was characteristic of all three Kennedys as Senators was they all had top-flight staffs. They had their

own backup people, and they were independent backup people. That was part of it. When Roger Mudd asked him, "Why do you want to be President?" and he didn't have an answer, that was devastating. That was not a hostile question. It was as natural as rain.

Jones: It's sort of the first question.

MacNeil: It should have been the first question, and I think it was. Roger was a terrific guy, and that finished Kennedy off. One of the things he had going then for him was Tip [Thomas Phillip] O'Neill. In 1980 Tip was Speaker of the House. I was fairly close to O'Neill for quite a while. He used to tell me what was going on between them. They were very amused at each other through the whole process, Ted and Tip. They were a generation apart almost. Teddy would say to Tip, "Tip, keep me alive." O'Neill took the position with no doubts or questions or anything else that if Teddy ran, he'd sweep the primaries, absolutely without fail. Of course, that didn't happen when he did run. I'm pretty sure it was Chappaquiddick mostly, and Roger Mudd with his terribly devastating question right at the heart of the whole business, "Why do you want to be President?" And Ted answered in effect, "I don't know."

What we were talking about were the John Stennises and the Mike Mansfields and people like that. After the failure in 1980, Kennedy for another quarter century has been the Senator, and he's one of the great Senators. He's the liberal voice of the party, and everybody knows it. And that's a change, a fundamental change, needless to say.

Jones: I think it was leading up to the 1976 campaign that you told me that *Time* and *Newsweek,* in particular, had investigative teams ready to do something on Chappaquiddick if Teddy Kennedy ran. Am I correct in that memory?

MacNeil: I don't remember, but it would be a very natural thing to do—not just *Time,* but everybody. It was an enormous vulnerability, and it didn't go away. He was very popular, and there was a groundswell for him by people who weren't looking at Chappaquiddick. He was a big handsome guy, and he was smart, and he was articulate. He had good speechwriters, and he had a marvelous way of speaking. His speech to the convention in 1980 was an astonishing speech. He appeared as a defeated candidate.

I was on the convention floor when he made that speech. I was stunned by it, particularly the end. He quoted a poem, "That which we are, we are, one equal temper of heroic hearts and minds, strong in will—" How does that go? It's from *Ulysses* by Alfred Lord Tennyson. He left out the words "made weak by fate and time," but said "Strong in will—to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield." It's a great dramatic monologue by Tennyson, one of his best poems, and it really caught the house. It shook everybody who was there, a tremendous speech.

But again, it was a speech as a loser. He had trouble from the beginning. I'm sure he was listening to O'Neill, "I know he can sweep the primaries." But of course he didn't.

Jones: You said early in his career you didn't pay that much attention to him in the Senate. When did you start paying attention to him as a Senator, not as a Presidential candidate?

MacNeil: I don't really remember. He was not an important Senator for quite a while. He sublimated himself a lot. He wasn't being pushy. I was quite interested in him on the thing with Nixon making an appointment because Congress was out of session on Christmas Day, which is stretching the idea of an interim period of the Congress pretty far.

He argued the thing before the Appeals Court. I looked for my notes on that, but I couldn't find them. That was impressive—as a lawyer. He's not routinely thought of as a lawyer; he's thought of as a Senator who is not necessarily lawyer, but that was a skillful thing. I know when I was watching that, I was deeply impressed. He made a damned good case, and he won. It was such a good case that Nixon let it stand that he had lost. Before 1980, there was always the potential that he was going to run. He kept knocking down the things. But he had a genuine interest in his family and his own livelihood in terms of staying alive, that he'd be a target for some nut.

Jones: Did you ever talk to him about that, his being a target?

MacNeil: I don't remember. Probably. He was quite open about it, and there wasn't anything that I would know secretively. Another problem, of course—which I didn't discuss with him—was the collapse of his marriage. That had to be a devastating thing politically for him. There was a time when a divorced politician couldn't run for President. It was just not done. But that all changed. It was an awkward and embarrassing thing for him. And then, of course, he got footloose. He got involved in affairs with other women and that sort of thing. He became quite notorious for it, and he was drinking too much.

One of the things that came out of that was his relationship with Orrin Hatch, a Republican from Utah. They were on the Judiciary Committee together. Hatch became Chairman in '81 when they got the Senate majority. Hatch was a personal friend, and in fact took him and gave him a good shaking, and said, "You have to straighten yourself out. Give up the booze and give up the broads." Kennedy apparently took it to heart, and it hasn't happened again.

Jones: It's a fascinating friendship.

MacNeil: Yes, especially since Hatch is really an unpleasant politician in many ways in terms of party ways. He has called the Democratic Party the "party of queers" or the "party of homosexuals." When he was flagged on it by a reporter, he categorically denied that he ever said such a thing. There was a little difficulty with the reporter, because he had a tape of it. Hatch has lied that way more than once. Lying is a strange business. There's such a thing as not telling the truth but still not lying. And I think Teddy, like any skillful politician, was able to do that.

Jones: Why don't we take five minutes?

[BREAK]

MacNeil: It was during Jack Kennedy's Presidency, and [John Kenneth] Galbraith was in to see the President. He asked him to do him a favor.

Jones: The President asked.

MacNeil: The President asked Galbraith. Jackie [Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis] wanted to go to the Jockey Club, a very fancy restaurant in downtown Washington, and he couldn't take her. Would Galbraith take Mrs. Kennedy to the Jockey Club, which was a public restaurant? He said sure, he'd do that, and he made arrangements. He called up the Jockey Club. He was in town for a meeting with economists, and after due course he walked in, Mr. Galbraith, with the First Lady on his arm. And the Jockey Club damn near fainted, everybody, and they did what he didn't want done: they put him at a table right smack where nobody could miss him. Anyway, they were dancing around attentively and all that sort of thing, and that was that.

That night, the group was still meeting, and they said, "It's time we had some dinner." Galbraith said very pleasantly, "I know a place we can go." He called over there, and they went over, and they were greeted at the door, "Your usual table, Dr. Galbraith?" He had been there for lunch for the first time in his life. I love that story.

Jones: You mentioned Ted Kennedy's involvement in the potential impeachment of Nixon.

MacNeil: The trigger of the whole thing, of course, was the raid on Larry O'Brien's office, when Larry O'Brien was chairman of the Democratic Party, on June 17, 1972.

I was close to Larry. I went by very quickly to see him, and it was interesting. None of this stuff has ever come out—well, some of it. Larry knew it was going to happen. He never would tell me who told it, but some Republicans had gone to a professional spy and asked him if he could take on this chore. He was a professional spy, but not domestically; it was foreign stuff. But somehow, something came through the transom to Larry that he should be worried because they were coming after him, courtesy of that intended spy.

Kennedy knew the viciousness that some of the people behind Nixon were capable of. He then was chairman of a Senate Judiciary subcommittee. I don't remember which one, but he had a crackerjack staff man there whose name I don't remember. He was put on the job to range through the Nixon administration and grab papers on the subcommittee's authority against the investigation to come. Whether Kennedy wanted to conduct the investigation, I don't know, but they were grabbing papers all that fall. I knew about it because I knew the guy. His name was Judd or Mudd or something like that. He was a very savvy guy, and they were lining up data to use in the hearings that were coming later.

The hearings by a Senate committee were way out of line. This wasn't a Senate problem. It was a House problem. The problem was impeachment, and only the House could impeach. Carl Albert would not allow anybody in the House to mention the word. He was terrified of it. He was a Democrat, and after [Spiro] Agnew disappeared, caught taking bribes, he was the next in line to the Presidency. He wouldn't allow anyone to mention it. He was scared of the thing. The reason he was opposed to any talk of looking at Nixon in terms of impeachment was that he knew impeachment, if it came, would take months, and the President of the United States would be

badly crippled. To him the country couldn't afford to take those risks internationally with the Soviet Union and so on. Albert was very firm on that.

It was different with Tip. Tip was with Albert at first. He says this differently in his memoirs, that he knew all along. But that wasn't true. He didn't know the job of majority leader. He had just become majority leader; he followed Albert. Tip was stunned by the testimony of John Dean. I believe it was July of '73. That changed Tip's mind. He started getting ready first of all to create a select committee, but then he realized he couldn't do that. On such a committee, Jerry Ford would approach Republicans who would never vote for impeachment. There were only 55 Democrats in the Senate, and they needed 67. they had to find Republicans. They were out to get him, so he had to go with the Judiciary Committee of the House.

When it did come, after the Saturday Night Massacre, that fall, Albert went over. I had talked to him at that time very privately. I was close to Albert. He said he would not accept the Presidency if Nixon resigned. They thought Nixon might have to resign because he was about to be held in contempt of Judge [John] Sirica's court. Albert said if it was forced on him, he would take it and keep it until Jerry [Gerald] Ford—who was already being processed as Vice President—could get confirmed, and then he would resign in Ford's favor. If the Congress refused to confirm Ford as Vice President, Albert, as acting President, would name another Republican to be Vice President and then resign to him. If that failed, too, he would ask the new Speaker of the House to resign as Speaker and ask the House to nominate a Republican as Speaker and then resign in his favor.

But he would not accept the Presidency. The talk had already started from the likes of Pat [Patrick J.] Buchanan and that crowd that this was a Democratic plot to steal the Republican Presidency for a Democrat. Where did we start on this?

Jones: Ted Kennedy's involvement.

MacNeil: Oh, yes. Mansfield knew early on that they were going to have to act, and one of the rules he made for himself was that he would not nominate for the chairmanship anyone who was a potential Presidential candidate. It was too obviously a conflict of interest, and Mike wouldn't do it. He went for Sam Ervin, who was an astonishing guy. He had one great love affair besides his wife—they were a devoted couple—and that was with the Constitution of the United States. He had been conducting hearings on his own on the Constitution with help from Mac [Charles] Mathias and some others for a period of years, and Mike wanted him to do that.

At that time, I figured Nixon's days could be numbered, and I said on *Washington Week in Review* one night that the hearings would be conducted by Sam Ervin, and it was likely that the Nixon government would fall. And it worked out that way. Teddy was very valuable in terms of grabbing stuff. Mike himself—when he realized how serious this was—sent a note to all the federal agencies involved in these matters that no papers were to be destroyed, anything to do with this, at your hazard. He sent it to everybody in the Republican administration, and Ted was part of that. Of course, Kennedy was included as a possible Presidential candidate. That was an interesting part.

Jones: Did Teddy Kennedy have a good relationship with Mansfield?

MacNeil: Yes.

Jones: Did you have an impression of how Mansfield looked at him?

MacNeil: Mansfield didn't have a bad relationship, as far as I know, with anybody. There were a couple of times, one when the Connecticut Senator, Tom Dodd, who was drunk at the time, got up in the Senate and denounced him for what a terrible fellow he was. Dirksen, the Republican leader, who was close to Mansfield, wouldn't tolerate it. He got up and ate Dodd alive. There was a second one by Wayne Morse of Oregon, who was one of the most arrogant men I've ever known. His love for himself was one of the great romances in history, I quote.

I remember teasing him in 1953 when he was changing parties, whichever way he went, that was the majority of the Senate. I said, "You must be having an awful lot of fun." And he turned on me, "This is very serious business." He was a very serious guy. He had horrible relations with everybody.

Jones: I call that his "cocoon period." We have skipped beyond Dirksen, but I did want to ask you about Dirksen's relationship with Ted Kennedy.

MacNeil: It was interesting. First you have to understand about Dirksen. I did a biography of him, as you know. When he first came to the Senate, he was an arrogant and vain politician, full of himself. He quickly got the nickname of "the wizard of ooze." He was very upset about [Dwight D.] Eisenhower beating [Robert] Taft for the nomination in '52. He had the idea that if Taft had been nominated, Taft would have asked the convention to nominate Dirksen as his Vice President. I think it was a doubtful thing, because Illinois is quite close to Ohio, and they think alike. But anyway, he lost everything.

He was Joe McCarthy's chief defender. He was a very right-wing kind of guy, and he tried to save McCarthy and failed. McCarthy was denounced and [Robert] McCormick, the publisher of the *Chicago Tribune,* died with all his crazy ideas. By 1956, when Dirksen was up for reelection, he was worried, and he suddenly became friendly with Eisenhower after all. One thing led to another, and it was a bit of a concoction by Styles Bridges, who was a power behind the throne. We were always scared to do a cover on Styles Bridges because we'd have to say a lot of things about him, and he'd never speak to us again, and he was an enormously valuable source. That's just hearsay.

Anyway, Dirksen became Republican leader in 1959, and he was a changed man. First of all, he had gone guns ablaze defending Eisenhower in all directions, when the leader of the party, [William F.] Knowland, would actually get up and denounce Eisenhower on the Senate floor. And he had changed his attitude toward Kennedy. When Kennedy had international problems, it was "He's my President," which was astonishing. With Johnson, he would not say, "This is Johnson's war" the way Taft and the others in the '50s denounced [Harry S.] Truman for "Truman's war" in Korea. He held off on all of that partisan stuff all the way through.

Jones: We were going toward Dirksen's relationship with Ted.

MacNeil: Well, Dirksen had changed in a fundamental way. The Senate now was the achievement of a lifetime, and he loved the job, he loved the whole business of it. He changed radically, as I just suggested, in defending Democratic Presidents against Republicans, ones who would naturally attempt to knock his brains out.

With Kennedy, it was an incident in either '67 or '68. Bobby was in the Senate, and the Kennedy family had put up for Federal Court an Irish politician who was one of their family retainers. Dirksen knew about the guy. Dirksen was on the Judiciary Committee, and he was going to defeat that thing. He had information on this guy. I think his name was Morrissey.

Jones: Francis X. Morrissey.

MacNeil: Yes, that's the guy. He was going to knock that guy out. The guy was sponsored by Teddy. Bobby went in to intercede with Dirksen on behalf of Teddy, and Dirksen unloaded on Morrissey. This was not the kind of person who should be a judge in the Federal Court or anyplace else, and he gave Bobby the bad news that we could do it several ways. Bobby was very militant at this point and ready to eat Dirksen alive, but he realized that this was not going to work out quite well. So they gave up on Morrissey.

Then Bobby got upset about Teddy. That was a big loss for him. The guy he had gotten was a faithful retainer and all that stuff, and he had been defeated. Bobby told Dirksen that Teddy was very upset and asked if Dirksen could do anything. Dirksen took the Senate floor on this case and made a speech glowingly praising Ted Kennedy for the courage he had shown. It was a grace-note, but Dirksen was capable of that then. Earlier, he would have eaten everybody alive. But that's what happened, and Morrissey didn't ever get to be a federal judge.

Jones: What about the relationship between Dirksen and President Kennedy?

MacNeil: There was one wonderful incident, I loved it. It was on the nuclear treaty. It was about '62. The treaty was in pretty good shape politically in the Senate, which requires a two-thirds vote on treaties. Dirksen was upset about everything, and he went to Mike Mansfield and said he wanted to have a session with Kennedy and asked if Mike would arrange it.

Mike called Larry O'Brien, and they set up the meeting for the following Tuesday. In that weekend, Richard Russell, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and John Stennis, on the same committee, came out against the treaty. This was devastating because they had tremendous influence as military experts within the Senate. Kennedy had been furious with Larry O'Brien when he heard about this arrangement to have Dirksen come in, with Dirksen getting a little house on the doorstep of the White House. Kennedy disliked giving it to him in a situation where it didn't count. But after the weekend, Kennedy was glad to see him.

In the meeting, Kennedy said to Dirksen, "What's your problem?" He said, "Well, this and that and the other thing." Kennedy said, "Do you have any notes?" Dirksen said, "Yes, sir." Dirksen took pride in calling Kennedy "Jack." He had permission from Kennedy to do it. He saved

Kennedy during the campaign in ’60 when Kennedy was losing his voice. He didn’t know how to speak constantly, and Dirksen told him who to see. He needed a voice person to speak not off this but off that, the larynx or whatever, and Kennedy got his voice back, for which he was grateful to Dirksen.

Dirksen was against almost everything he proposed in domestic things, but in the foreign arena it was different. So he asked him if he had the notes, and Dirksen said, “Yes, I do.” Kennedy said, “May I see them?” And Dirksen pulled out of his pocket a letter drafted for Kennedy to send to Dirksen and Mansfield saying that whatever they did in this treaty arrangement, they would not let up their own studies and investigation of nuclear weapons and so on. Kennedy read this thing, laughed, and said to him, “It will be done.” It was a lovely way the thing worked out. Dirksen himself told me about it. The Senate passed the treaty.

Jones: Let me ask one more about the leadership. After Byrd defeated Kennedy for Whip, how did that relationship go between Ted Kennedy and Bob Byrd?

MacNeil: They basically came from different worlds. Byrd was a scrub out of the back roads of West Virginia. He was the adopted son of a coal miner. His own parents couldn’t care for him. Kennedy was not only a multi-millionaire, but his brother was the President and enormously wealthy as well. I think it was a class thing. I think it took Teddy some time to come to terms with the damn thing. What year are we talking about?

Martin: Seventy-two or ’71, when Byrd challenged Kennedy.

MacNeil: Seventy-one. Of course, there was Chappaquiddick in there.

Jones: Right. Chappaquiddick had occurred—

MacNeil: —in between. Ted Kennedy was in a lot of trouble in a lot of ways. I think his marriage was questionable with all the women and all his other things. He was at loose ends for quite a while, I think, but he was something that most Senators are not. He was a student of what he dealt with. The reputation of his staff was very high, and he had them doing all kinds of things, such as checking out the Nixon people and what was happening on Watergate before they could destroy evidence. I think he was a serious student, and along there someplace he started to become a really careful student. I don’t think he had been a student, particularly in college. Of course he had a terrible no-no at Harvard that got him expelled temporarily. He emerged after a while as an extraordinary fellow legislatively.

Jones: Which Byrd would respect.

MacNeil: Absolutely. They had a natural coming together in the way they felt about legislation. There was no reason for Kennedy to be serious about legislation. He had all the money that God gave anybody, but that wasn’t where he was. He was, at this point, becoming deeply committed to the Senate and what it was doing. I’m not quite sure of this in my own mind, but I think as of today, I would put him in the classification of Dick Russell and his friend from Mississippi as committed to the Senate.

Jones: Stennis?

MacNeil: Yes, and the way Byrd is committed to the Senate. I think Kennedy had other parts to his life in a very interesting way, a lot of other things. But Byrd does nothing but the Senate. He never takes a vacation; he's working on the Senate. I'm sure they've come together. There's another part to it. Starting out, neither of them had a reason why they should be Senators. They had nothing to contribute. Byrd, as a Senator, went to law school. He had a spotty educational background. He went to law school and emerged with a degree as a lawyer. Of course he never practiced, but he wanted it for the training.

I think Kennedy did the same sort of thing. Of course he had a terrible scare when he was in that airplane crash. The pilot was killed and Senator [Birch E.] Bayh was with him. (You know what they said about Senator Bayh? This is best stricken. Indiana had two Senators: Senator Bayh and Senator bought.)

Jones: Who was that at the time?

MacNeil: I forgot the guy's name, but he ran for President at one point.

Jones: [Rupert] Vance Hartke?

MacNeil: That's the guy.

Martin: Can you talk a little bit more about Kennedy's standing within the Senate between Chappaquiddick and 1980, and how his name showing up in potential Presidential runs affected that standing?

MacNeil: He dismissed them all. Part of it was the immediacy of the Chappaquiddick thing. He just didn't want to go through that. It would tear up his family, it would tear up everything. There was no defense for the damn thing. What he did was appalling. It's a little bit in the nature of what [William Jefferson] Clinton did that almost got him impeached. It mostly had to do with that girl. He perjured himself trying to defend basically an indefensible performance. And it was indefensible by Kennedy, and he didn't want to go through it. I didn't talk to him about that. I wasn't interested in that. But he had a groundswell of support.

The whole process of running for President has fundamentally changed between the '50s and now. The guy who started the change, I think, was Estes Kefauver, and I'm glad you've never heard of him. He was as big as all outdoors—a legend in his own mind. He had a series of crime hearings that made him television popular. They called in all kind of rascals, and off that he ran for President. He ran in the primaries, and when the Democratic Convention of '52 came into session, he had the most delegates of any candidate. But he was hated by the hierarchy of the Democratic Party, particularly Harry Truman, who called him "Senator Cowfever."

He had done a despicable thing as far as they were concerned. In his crime hearings, he went from town to town hauling in all the bad guys, embarrassing them and so on. They pleaded with

him not to go to Chicago before the election there. But he went anyway; they were closed hearings. One of the guys they interviewed was known as the wealthiest cop in the world, profoundly corrupt. The damn stuff got out, and it made the election of Dirksen possible because it defeated the guy who was majority leader. What was his name? Illinois.

Jones: What year are we talking about?

MacNeil: We're talking about 1950.

Jones: Majority leader on the Democratic side. Scott Lucas?

MacNeil: Scott Lucas, that's the guy. Scott Lucas was a down-state smoothie, but it cost him the election. I was there when Scott Lucas first saw Kefauver after he had been defeated, outside the President's room in the Senate. And what a look he gave him! No words. He was a self-serving politician, Kefauver, and that's why he was hated by the regulars, and they blocked him at the convention. He showed how to gain attention by winning primaries.

Martin: We were trying to understand how Chappaquiddick affected Kennedy's standing in the Senate in the period leading up to 1980.

MacNeil: I started by saying that the whole system had changed, and Kefauver did part of the changing. What the hell is he doing winning all these primaries and getting delegates to go to the convention? It opened up like a brood sow, in Lyndon Johnson's phrase. Kennedy ran for Vice President at the '56 convention against some other guys, and the primaries were now becoming important. Kennedy won in West Virginia in 1960 when he raised the religious question. The whole ballgame was changing, and it really radically changed in '68, with the riot by the Chicago police—not against somebody, but the police themselves had a riot beating up everybody. It wiped out the previous ways, so anybody was free to run for President, and they ran according to their tastes.

Before the 1992 Presidential election, then-President [George Herbert Walker] Bush had gone to war in '91 against Iraq in a miracle kind of war of four days with the loss of almost nobody and the destruction of an enormous number of Iraqis. Bush's popularity went up to 91%, and it was intolerable for the guys who wanted to run for President. That's when they'd have to be moving, to try to beat a guy with 91%. Of course, I thought at the time—this is a way of bragging—that was stupid. He wasn't going to stay at 91%. I didn't think Bush was very bright, and I thought he's screw it up. He had already done that by the "no taxes" business: "Read my lips." But he'd gone to the taxes, and this is the kind of thing that ended up defeating him.

The group of Democratic candidates in '92 was silly. It was a former Senator who had a variation of cancer, and a Senator who had won the Medal of Honor and didn't know what he was doing, and a Governor of a two-bit state in the South, and a couple of other guys who didn't count either. It was a very weak slate, and out of that came Clinton. The likely guys like Sam Nunn and Lloyd Bentsen had all backed away. The thing had all changed, and the nominees nominated themselves: I'm going to be President. One of these days, like in the next election, when the present President [George Walker] Bush can't run for reelection, you're going to have

a crowd of people running. They're all thinking of it now, mostly Senators, and there's no reason for any of them to get the job. I think the job is beyond anybody's capacity, but that's another question. So that was part of the whole thing.

Jones: If I can summarize what you're saying, the context you provide absolutely applies to Kennedy because no longer could you manage this from the inside. Whatever you had done—take Chappaquiddick or whatever else happened with the Kennedy family—was going to be a part of running publicly, not inside, but outside.

MacNeil: If he had not taken that turn over the wrong bridge, our whole political future would have been changed. I don't think there's any question that Ted Kennedy would have been elected. He had everything going for him. Everybody knew who he was and has always known who he was. He's highly talented, a wonderful speaker, a really eloquent speaker like his brother Jack was. But that one incident was simply devastating.

Jones: There's another leader I wanted to ask you about and that's Howard Baker, and Baker's relationship with Ted Kennedy.

MacNeil: I don't think I know it. I spent a lot of time with Baker. He was a fascinating guy.

Jones: Talk about him a little bit. One of the main purposes of this project is using Kennedy to understand the Senate during the long period he's been there. Howard Baker is a fascinating figure in the Senate. So talk about him a little bit and his style.

MacNeil: I thought Howard Baker was one of the best of all the majority leaders. I didn't understand part of him, which was how he could have the patience he had with the kind of people he had to deal with. I guess both parties have difficulties with the members, but Baker was tried at times beyond human endurance and he stayed patient. His relationship with the Senator from Connecticut, 6'4"….

Jones: Who was later Governor.

MacNeil: Yes, Independent. Lowell Weicker. He ran for President and came in third in his own state, and he's now thinking of running again. But Baker said at one point to him—the words I don't remember exactly, but basically it was, "Senator, you're only allowed one moral crisis this month, not two." He had Strom Thurmond and he had Jesse Helms from North Carolina. By the way, I'm deeply grateful to Jesse Helms. He's one of the kindliest men I've ever known. Every time I took him off the Senate floor and talked to him in the President's room, he would thank me for lighting a cigarette. And I thought, *That son of a bitch wants to kill me.* He helped me quit cigarettes. He really did, he helped me quit cigarettes. I had a thing with him, but this has to do with Kennedy.

Editors in New York know everything. Thank God they do, because nobody else does. All the top people at Time, Inc., came down to Washington one Presidential election year, and they were going to be here for three or four weeks. They wanted two Senators to describe the prospects of

the two parties in the Senate elections coming that fall. One they wanted was Ted Kennedy, and the other was the gentleman from North Carolina, Helms.

I told them, "You don't want Helms." I said, "You just can't do this, you can't trust him." I tried to turn him down twice, but they absolutely insisted they had to have Helms. Helms knew nothing about the elections and cared less. You didn't know what he was going to do. So I called up Ted. The thing was some weeks in the future. Kennedy just said, "Yes, I'll be there." It was for a dinner at the Madison, where the Time headquarters were, and he said he'd be there. That's money in the bank. You knew everything was done, and that was the end of it. He showed up and was his usual brilliant self.

I didn't know what the hell to do with Helms. I called him up, told him what I wanted him to do—it was a coffee the next morning with about 30 editors. They wanted him to speak about the elections in November. Then I wrote him a note and told him what the date was, the time and the subject. A couple of weeks after that, I called him again, told him what the subject was, and said I would meet him at the entrance to the hotel when he came. He showed up at the hotel, of course, at the right time. He had a couple of guys with him, which was normal, and I told him again what the subject was. I didn't trust him on the subject.

We went upstairs, and I introduced him to this array of brilliant editors who had insisted on him. I again announced the subject on which he would talk. He started by telling the editors, brilliant people that they were, that his two staff guys would pass around to them a few speeches that he had just recently made on foreign policy, and then he talked for 20 minutes on foreign policy. He never mentioned the elections.

I was, of course, privately gloating. I told these bastards they shouldn't trust the son of a bitch. Well, I missed the opportunity of a lifetime. I thanked him for coming and giving us his wisdom and so on—what a load of crap that was—but I should have congratulated him on his candor, that the prospects for Republicans were so bad he didn't dare mention them. I didn't think of that until later. It was a different world. He wanted to be known for his foreign policy, and he had the editors of *Time*, all the magazines there. It was terrible. But as I said, I'm grateful to him for thanking me for smoking. A chill went up my back every time he did it.

Jones: At one point you said that Kennedy was a student of what he dealt with.

MacNeil: He didn't deal with everything, nobody does. I think they've corrected a lot of this lately, but after World War II, they slashed the number of committees, and then created a new world of subcommittees. They've been raising hob with the Senate ever since. There are only a few committees, but they're scattered everywhere in subcommittees. At one point—and I don't know when this was—they were looking at the subcommittees, and Ted Kennedy had more than anybody else. I'm not sure of the number, but I think he had 33 committees and subcommittees. It was mind boggling; you couldn't remember them all. He was a workhorse for a lot of these things, but a lot he basically would neglect. He had to.

Jones: That's exactly where I want to head. I'd like you to talk about how he worked on legislation, how he was a student of what he dealt with. But also what you've described with the

committees is a person who wants to familiarize himself with the agenda, perhaps because in doing that he can pick out those things that he wants to pay particular attention to.

MacNeil: I don't know about that. I never talked to him about it. One thing he did as a way of life was to use his home for constant meetings with his staff people and experts in different fields. At one point—I think this was before 1980—he literally borrowed the professional staff of Harvard University to brief him on a whole lot of subjects. This was after the plane crash when he was locked up in a vise for something like six months. That had to be devastating.

That was a period of massive re-education by Ted, and it took a lot of guts to do it. He was strapped over some kind of a wheel, I think. I forget; it's only a dim image in my memory. But he didn't waste time feeling sorry for himself. He was lucky to get out with his life, and he took advantage of it. He had the likes of Galbraith coming to talk to him, and he had questions, and he had questions, and he had more questions. In the process of that and his own work with his skillful, carefully picked staff, he became an enormously knowledgeable human being. And that tells, that really tells.

I haven't covered Congress on a detailed basis in almost 20 years, but if Kennedy took a position, there was a sense, I think, like Senators used to think of Henry Clay when he decided to act. The rascal had his votes lined up. He was that good. It was not just that he knew what he was doing, but he had worked out the new world.

Now an extraordinary thing happened in 1975 when they first met in the Senate at the last minute of the early session in January. The southerners, through Russell Long, offered to cut the number of votes needed to vote cloture on a filibuster to three fifths of all Senators elected. That meant 60 votes, and that very quickly became a different kind of margin. It became mandatory to have the 60 votes, because everything of consequence now brought on a filibuster—or a make-believe filibuster, a hold—that required cloture. And with neither party having 60 Senators, neither party could do it as a party.

The Republicans had one shot in the 1998 election, which they botched, to get what they called a filibuster-proof Senate, but they didn't get the votes. They didn't get any additional ones. But in that new world of requiring 60 votes, there was no way to pass anything if it wasn't bipartisan. What's happened is the Senate has now basically altered its practice in how to pass legislation.

It starts in talking privately to people who may agree with you on some things. One of the most astonishing cases is Mrs. [Hillary Rodham] Clinton. She had been talking to very strange Republicans—for her: Senators who were actively involved in impeaching her husband. She's become very successful at it. Recently *Time* magazine had a thing about it, quoting [Lindsey O.] Graham from South Carolina saying what a formidable woman she is. He was one of the managers of Clinton's impeachment before the Senate.

Ted Kennedy is one of the principal guys you want to get, because you don't get just Kennedy; you get Kennedy and his crowd. It's the same thing [John] McCain does on the Republican side. These two guys are formidable human beings in the Senate because they claim broad support within the Senate. And the Senate has become more and more partisan for the last quarter

century, to the point of destroying the damn place with their filibusters and the nasty campaigns and all that sort of thing.

Jones: Well, as you point out, it has also changed what's necessary if you're going to get a positive vote on something.

MacNeil: Chuck, I've been trying to finish a book I've been writing for too long on the United States Senate, and I have only a few pages left to do. I didn't want to write totally negative things about the place. I wanted something to put an uplift, and that's it. What they have done now is what they have done forever: accommodate themselves to the new terms. There were problems about the filibuster for a long time, and it's a problem now. The smart ones, the able ones, are moving to accommodate themselves and what they want in the only way they can. If you're going to pass something of consequence, it has to be bipartisan, mandatory.

I think it's enormously encouraging. I think it's outrageous how everything gets held up by a hold. A hold is an obscenity in parliamentary terms; one guy can kill a bill, and they do that all the time. They also use it as blackmail and extortion. If a guy wants to talk to the Secretary of Agriculture and he has nothing to do with agriculture himself, he just decides he's going to put holds on everybody nominated for the Agriculture Department. The way you get them freed is to talk to him.

Jones: It's interesting, isn't it, that the two examples you gave—McCain and Kennedy—in fact often communicate well with each other.

MacNeil: Absolutely. They're deadly. They both have clientele in each other's party. They had an immigration thing just recently, the two of them. It got turned down, but the thing is still in process. I don't think it will stay in process very much longer. I think they're going to get what they put forward. There would have to be some accommodations made for this group or that group, but they're the ones who appear to have what the country and what the Senate want, not what the President wants. He's kind of at sea on this whole subject, with the country's porous borders, which in terms of security is mind-boggling.

Jones: One of the former Senators who have been interviewed said this about going up against Kennedy when he was on the opposite side. He's often on the same side, but when he's on the opposite side, he likened it to an independent grocer going against a chain.

MacNeil: That's good.

Jones: Is that your impression?

MacNeil: Oh, sure.

Jones: When the Kennedy operation—you talk about the Kennedy "enterprise" rather than just the Senator—when it kicks into gear, it's a formidable operation.

MacNeil: Indeed, that's true. Perfectly true.

Jones: You said something else very early in our discussion: the Mafia quality—you're looking at it a little differently—of the Kennedy family. I assumed at the time that you extend it as well to the team, his staff and others who are loyal, friends who are loyal. Can you say more about that?

MacNeil: I don't know a hell of a lot about that, but I do know that if Kennedy wants somebody to work for him, he thinks automatically, *Good Lord, that will be something on my résumé*. And it's all plus. As I told you earlier, I don't much follow his staff. I've had a reluctance to get personally involved with anybody in the Congress.

Jones: Why?

MacNeil: It's a question of how you approach your work. I remember one case in particular, a member of the House who was chairman of a committee. He told me, "If I'm not around and you can't find me, just make up something you think I should say and just quote me on it." I told him, "That's not the line of work I'm in."

That's happened quite a few times in different places. There is a desire by a lot of people to be quoted. The new thing—it's not all that new now—but when television came on the scene, politicians didn't know what the devil to do with it. It was a gimmick. Some of them used bits on television in their campaigns to say what great guys they were and how they were humanitarians, Renaissance men and women and that sort of thing.

But that changed and it changed quickly. In 1968, when Nixon ran the second time for President and got the nomination, they hired a guy who had nothing to do with politics. He was a television guy, Roger Ailes. Roger Ailes withdrew Nixon from active campaigning with the dirty world that we have. It was all a private world with him, and he set up shows with an audience of loyal Republican questioners, carefully selected by Ailes. He wouldn't tell them what to ask. He would just make sure they were faithful Republicans. The audience was instructed to cheer loudly whatever Nixon said, and at the end of the hour show, to rise and give him a standing ovation.

As the *New York Times* wrote, "It wasn't a question of trying to show who Nixon was, it was to pretend he was something else." It worked. In Alaska that year, Senator [Ernest] Gruening was running for reelection. He was in his early eighties and he was the father of Alaskan statehood. He was one of the first Senators they got in 1959. He was up for reelection, and a guy named Joe Napolitan, who was a buddy of Larry O'Brien's (they were partners at one point), had a candidate who was manager for real estate operator, Mike Gravel, who wanted to run for the Senate against Gruening. It was a hopeless campaign because Gruening had made Alaska a state. Napolitan didn't spend much money before the primary—it was a primary fight—but he husbanded all the money they could get, and then two weeks before the primary he launched a television attack.

This was again like the Nixon thing in 1968. It manufactured a lot of make-believe stuff about Gravel, and he murdered Gruening. He had a half-hour show that he played 68 times on Alaskan

television. It cost fifty cents a show—they didn't have much in the way of film—and knocked Gruening bow-legged. The only thing Gruening could do was put up more posts, signs, "Vote for Gruening." There was, in both cases, television used as a weapon.

That was '68, and by the '70s, people were getting wise. And after a little while, they found out that praising themselves, patting themselves on the back, didn't do anything. But an attack on your opponent—as "my honorable opponent, the axe murderer," just savaging whoever it was—worked. And even Senators who wanted reelection, decent human beings, people who were not mud slingers, who wanted to run decent, good-guy campaigns, found a new breed of campaign manager had evolved, the so-called "political consultants." Those guys are independent. They're functioning on the basis of their past record, and they get paid that way. The guy who has a winning score gets candidates to support, and it's an immensely popular thing.

For example, they get a percentage of the money spent on television ads—and everything is television ads. In a state like California, there are 14 major cities with television operations and there are something like 74 TV stations. It costs a mint just to run. One guy who was something of an idiot as a candidate spent $30 million. That broke the record until a guy came up in New Jersey and spent $73 million for a job that pays $150,000 a year. It's a different world now.

Jones: What was the effect of television on the Senate?

MacNeil: I think it's basically corrupting. *Time* magazine, the other day, ran a cover story or a big story about the ten best Senators and the five worst ones. That's a silly thing to do, because how do you define best and how to you define worst? In the first place, there are more than five worst, and I think there are more than ten best. They left out people like Bob Byrd, for example, who's an extraordinary Senator. As we said earlier, he's now campaigning for his ninth consecutive term. But you would think, with the kind of money they spend, as money—

The Reform Act of 1974 was put in place because of the outrages in financing done by the Nixon campaign, to reduce campaign spending. The Supreme Court, in the first place, knocked out one whole area, making money the same as speech—which it obviously is not—and freed every millionaire to spend whatever he wanted on himself. The interesting thing about millionaires running for the Senate, there's a lot of that done, but they don't do very well. A few get elected, but not very many.

Televising Senate campaigns has made it impossible for anybody to run what you might call a decent campaign. I know John Danforth had that problem. He told his people he wanted a good-guy program, and they told him right back, instantly, "That means you'll be defeated. You have to campaign ugly." This is an evolving thing, and it reached a gross point a couple elections back when Max [Joseph Maxwell] Cleland was running for reelection. His opponent ran ads claiming that Senator Cleland, by his votes in the Senate—which he misrepresented—was in effect giving aid and comfort to the enemy. That's the Constitutional definition of treason, and he won the election with it. That's the end of the line, and it's amazing. It was a shock to everybody, but that's the whole idea. The guys who make those ads get paid for it.

Another friend of mine in that line of work says, "Campaigns are not about education. They're about winning." The means are no longer circumspect; they're assault. You would think with the amount of money that they're spending—millions of dollars for every Senate seat—that you'd know something about the candidates. And yet, you get some incredibly stupid people being elected to the Senate. The classic guy came from Nevada, I've forgotten his name. His name was [Jacob] Chic Hecht. He was a nincompoop. There was a guy from Virginia, Bill Scott. An obscure magazine [ed. note: *New Times*] published a list of the ten dumbest guys in the Senate, and one of the guys was the Senator from Virginia, who is an unpleasant person. He held a press conference to denounce the magazine, broadcasting not just to Virginia and the nation, but to the world, that he really was the dumbest guy in the Senate, and he proved that with press conferences.

Jones: Let's talk about him historically, Ted Kennedy, as a Senator. You've compared him with Dick Russell and John Stennis.

MacNeil: It was a different kind of thing. He's more broadly based than they were. With them, the Senate was almost a religious commitment. I don't think Ted has that feeling, but he's deeply devoted to the Senate, and so is McCain. Even though they get confused by the natural instinct of every Senator to run for President, they do it because they look at the President up close and they see that he's not much. He's certainly not the greatest man they've ever met.

Martin: What about also a comparison with some of his contemporaries? I think sometimes of Daniel Inouye, who entered the Senate in 1962 with Kennedy. They had very different careers. Some people might say, "Well, Kennedy's successful because he's been there forever."

MacNeil: Excuse me?

Martin: Some people might make the case that Kennedy has been so successful just because he's lasted and he has the seniority and the power now to make legislation. But then there are other Senators who've been around as long who haven't done nearly as much.

MacNeil: You're saying the other Senators are basically nincompoops.

Martin: Well, you would have a better, more refined sense of why they're nincompoops.

MacNeil: Elections are a haphazard affair, and you never know what's going to happen. One of the things that happened in Dirksen's career, for example, was that the Senator who was the majority leader, Knowland, was desperate to run for President. He was a strange guy to be running for President. He was at the time having an affair with another Senator's wife, and that Senator was having an affair with his wife. But he ran for President. He knew in 1956 that he had no real chance to get to be President by being a Senator. So he decided to run for Governor in preparation for the 1960 campaign. It was an idiotic decision. Not only did he not get elected Governor, a couple of years more, and he committed suicide.

That year, 1960, was the second time a sitting United States Senator was elected President, Jack Kennedy, and we haven't had one since. It's the least likely place to get elected from.

Interestingly, the first guy to try it goes way back. It was Aaron Burr of New York. In 1795, with the assumption that President [George] Washington would not continue, he started negotiating, trying to get on the ticket for President. I haven't chased this down close enough, but in 1796 he ran with Thomas Jefferson, and he placed third. [John] Adams was first, Jefferson second.

Then four years later, he ran again and got elected—President or Vice President, they didn't know which—and the House of Representatives had to decide with 36 ballots between Jefferson and former Senator Burr how to get in there. They changed the Constitution. But ever since then there have been guys running from the Senate. I ran into a beautiful thing on one of my favorite Senators, Daniel Webster, who was a bit of a rascal. About four months before he died, he was traveling with somebody who recorded what he said. He asked him, "Why do you want to be President?" Webster said, "It's the greatest office in the world. I want it, I want it, I want it." These guys all have clay feet, especially to the guys looking at them.

One Senator, who was a bit of a clown, was challenged about why he would be running for President. He had a brief answer, "Look at the other guys." But they don't seem to make it. Bob Dole had a wonderful line about that at one point, why he was running and why the others didn't make it. He said, "The problem with Senators is if you ask us what time it is, we'll tell you how to make a watch." That's a beautiful line. My favorite of his is the time he saw a photograph of Presidents Ford, [Jimmy] Carter, and Nixon, and he said, "There they are: see no evil, hear no evil, and evil."

Jones: How did Dole and Teddy Kennedy get along?

MacNeil: I have no idea. I can't think of it offhand, but Dole is a formidable fellow. As party leader, which he was in 1985 and thereafter, with a Democratic President, he transformed minority policy by saying, "We are the party of filibustering everything." It was party policy, but that had never happened before. In 1995, he was majority leader again, and the Democrats were minority. They looked around a little bit and realized they're going to do exactly to Majority Leader Dole what he had done to them. They all filibustered almost everything. You have to have a supermajority to pass anything, which is what the problem is with the holds and the filibusters. The filibusters are no longer filibusters. They talk about it.

And there's another thing that's been largely neglected by the professionals in political science and the study of government, and that's the [John Nance] Garner ruling. He was an extraordinary Vice President because he was very active in promoting the [Franklin Delano] Roosevelt bills of the first term. Vice Presidents normally didn't do that, but he was one of the Big Four. He made a decision after the death of the then-majority leader, Joe Robinson, the guy from Arkansas, in 1937, that thereafter, whenever the majority leader sought recognition, he had a policy of recognizing him. It was a courtesy and it was silly, and it violated one of the fundamental rules of the Senate: the presiding officer had to recognize the first Senator who addressed him.

That's how Johnson orchestrated the Senate. He did some terrible things to the opposition. One time—I forget what the bill was, an increase in minimum wage—Spessard Holland, a Senator from Florida, was the watchdog for the opposition. He made the mistake of leaving the Senate floor momentarily, and Johnson asked recognition, had a quick quorum call—abbreviated—

called up the bill, and passed it by unanimous consent. Holland came running in, "Good Lord, what have you done?" Johnson said, "Oh well, you guys don't pay attention to what we're doing around here. I have an agenda to complete."

It was the recognition thing. Even Mansfield used it. Byrd used it in an astonishing case, violation of the rules right and left. That was when they had a post-cloture filibuster that couldn't be beaten. Every Senator had an hour after cloture and the Senator from Alabama, Jim Allen, saw the flaw in that as far as a filibuster after the cloture, and that was just to keep offering amendments, amendments, amendments, and they would line up a thousand amendments—all technical, all valid—and you could go on indefinitely. He did that and other guys copied it. You couldn't stop the filibuster any more.

Byrd decided he would break it, and he had a conspiracy with the Vice President, Fritz [Walter] Mondale. Fritz Mondale was in the chair, and Byrd started calling up the opposition's amendments. He'd call one, and the Vice President would say, "It's not in order." He'd call up another one, "Not in order." In nine minutes they did something like 33 amendments. The place was screaming wildly, both parties. "This is an outrage!" Every Senator is entitled to challenge any ruling. Nobody got it, because he kept control of the floor. He never did that again. Then they changed that to limit the amount of time no matter what, and Byrd did it not only these other times.

Dole did it in an astonishing way. He would ask recognition, offer an amendment, and then turn the amendment over to one of his guys up for reelection. The key one was Pat [Daniel Patrick] Moynihan's, the Democrat's, amendment on Social Security, which would knock out something that Dole had done earlier with his majority. He gave it to a guy in New York, Senator Alfonse D'Amato, and a woman from Florida, and they acted as though it was their amendment. It was actually Dole's amendment, and he voted against it after calling it up.

But he controlled the amendment process. He would not allow any Democrat to offer an amendment unless that Democrat came to him with his amendment and said, "Can I do this?" How much can you break the traditions of the Senate? And [Trent] Lott has done it and other guys have done it as well. But it's basically parliamentary madness.

The worst, I think, is the hold. The hold is expected to kill something and a single Senator can do it. He does it secretly and nobody knows he's done it or what he's done. It's parliamentary madness. One guy can veto major legislation.

Jones: Any final thoughts on Kennedy that you want to leave to the future?

MacNeil: Well one thing, he's a very attractive guy physically and mentally, and the way he behaves himself. When you meet him, you know you've met him.

Jones: A presence, a real presence.

MacNeil: And that's not because he's a Kennedy. Part of it's that, but it's because of him. He's really a formidable guy. And ever since he's remarried, he's had a different approach to all kinds

of things. I don't think it's a tragedy that he didn't make President. I think it's a triumph that he made such a successful Senator. I think he'll go down as one of the great Senators. But as far as the history books, I don't expect much notice of him. Nobody pays much attention to Senators unless they do something outrageous or dramatic.

Jones: Without Chappaquiddick, it's very likely that he would have won the Presidency at some point. You do wonder what kind of President he would have been.

MacNeil: There's another part of the Presidency now, I guess Reagan thought of this. He couldn't stand living in the White House, and every day he was off someplace making a speech. This President Bush is off every day. He's talking to some high school in Kansas and the next day he's in Alabama. Nobody has added up his trips, but they must be fabulous.

Jones: Yeah, they have. He's the most traveled President. Clinton was the most traveled and now Bush has topped that. Anything else, Paul?

Martin: I think that nicely wraps it up. We thank you for your wise words.

MacNeil: I'm sorry I didn't do better.

Jones: You did very well, as a matter of fact.

INDEX