EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW 2 WITH DONALD W. RIEGLE JR.

September 1, 2009
Washington, D.C.

Participant

University of Virginia

James Sterling Young

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James Sterling Young: This is an interview with Senator Don Riegle, in Washington, September 1, 2009. This is the second interview with Senator Riegle. One of the things you want to talk about, and I would like to hear about for history's sake, is your meeting and get-together with Senator [Edward M.] Kennedy, in recent times.

Don Riegle: Well, as we were discussing before—I don't know the precise date, but we can figure that out. It seems like it was like three months ago, or thereabouts—we received an invitation from Ted and Vicki [Reggie Kennedy], to come to their house for a dinner gathering. I was so thankful to get that invitation because I had not had a chance to see Ted up close since this whole cancer thing became public. I'd seen him at a distance at the Democratic Convention, and like a lot of his friends, just felt very hesitant to try to press in on him because of the circumstances, but hoping there would be a time when we could see each other and give each other a hug.

In any event, we received this very welcome invitation to dinner and so we went over to Ted and Vicki's house. It was a very special evening, and it was an evening where Ted, I think, was feeling pretty good. He was pretty upbeat. It would have been a good day, in terms of whatever his health profile was doing over a period of time.

It was very interesting because he had as his houseguests his very dear friend, John Tunney; and his wife, Mieke [Tunney]; and John Culver. Of course these were his two college roommates and his buddies—John Tunney from the Virginia Law School and John Culver from his days at Harvard. John Culver and his wife were there. In addition, Jim Sasser and his wife, Mary [Sasser]; and my wife, Lori [Riegle], and I; and Ted and Vicki—that was the grouping for dinner. Chris Dodd probably would have been there, but I think, maybe even it was said, that they were out of town or something and couldn't be there.

In any event, it was the ten of us having dinner, and it was one of those wonderful evenings, which I thought at the time was probably a goodbye dinner. It was an opportunity for all of us to be together again. Maybe we would get another opportunity to be together, but probably not. It had that element of meaning and emotion in it.

When we arrived and knocked on the door and were ushered in—When you come into the house, as you know, to the right there is a little receiving room, a sort of TV room almost, and Ted was sitting down at the end of it in a chair and was using a cane. He got up when he saw us, and his first words to me—I'll probably get emotional through this discussion because I am emotional—In his loud voice, he said, "Where's my kiss?" Because whenever I would see Ted, for the last

several years, I would go up and give him a kiss. It was just a very natural thing that I would do and that he obviously welcomed.

I walked across the room and took that wonderful face of his in my hands, and I gave him about 15 kisses, both cheeks, forehead, everywhere. I wanted to make sure he was well-kissed. And he loved every single one of them. He didn't say stop, and it was just one of those precious moments for both of us. It was an opportunity to have the kind of greeting that had sort of become our greeting.

Young: When he asked you, "Where's my kiss?" this was going back in time?

Riegle: Yes. He was expecting one, wanting one, inviting one, and obviously thinking about it. It was a precious moment. Then we sat down and talked.

I don't know how all of his evenings were, but I think this evening was an evening when his strength was up, and he was excited about having everybody there. I think Vicki had tried to time everything just right so that this evening could happen at a time that could be a good evening for him, as well as for the rest of us. He was in very good spirits and was drinking wine, which I'm sure was probably—I don't know how much he was permitted to do that, normally, but this was like a night off from the normal disciplines, and so this was a night of enjoyment and pleasure. He clearly enjoyed a glass of white wine as much as anybody.

In the course of the evening, there was a lot of storytelling and a lot of reminiscing, because everybody in that little grouping would go back for quite some period of time. I left the Senate in 1994, and it's now 2009. We had seen each other a number of times since, but the bulk of our time together would have been back in that earlier time frame.

Young: All of you went way back.

Riegle: Yes, exactly. One of the funny things that happened is that they had this new little dog that's the sibling of the one that the [Barack] Obamas received—

Young: "Captain."

Riegle: We're sitting down in the living room and there were some nice hors d'oeuvres out on the little coffee table, and a plate with cheese and strawberries and so forth. Then there's another plate with a big ball of some kind of a pâté. And this wonderful little black curly dog comes bounding in, sees this food and takes a beeline over, grabs a strawberry off that thing, and throws that strawberry down. As everybody is trying to grasp the speed with which this dog had been so enterprising, the dog obviously smells and sees that pâté and it makes a lunge for this great big—Somebody who was seated near there grabbed the dog and moved the meat away so the dog didn't quite get that, but it was a funny scene and just a happy scene.

We sat around and we talked. Ted always liked to hear stories told and retold that were funny stories we would have shared over the years past. I can't remember precisely what the stories were. I asked my wife, Lori, this morning, knowing that you were coming, whether I had been asked by Ted to tell the John Warner story about the dogs in the Senate swimming pool. She thought so, and I may have told that story again that night because Ted gets such a kick out of it.

He just would laugh so uproariously. I think I told the story but I'm not certain, just as I think John Culver may have told the story about the sailing event that he told at the wake up in Boston, and had everybody in stitches. It was that kind of talk at the dinner table, with good food and wine and fellowship and warmth.

Young: You might, if you feel inclined, since Culver did not—That story is not in the oral history.

Riegle: We've got to get that story. I can't tell it accurately, but you've got to get John to tell it, even if you just—

Young: I'll have to go back to him and say repeat it.

Riegle: Well, I'll tell you how you can get it: His remarks at the wake will be on *YouTube*, or on something, so you ought to be able to retrieve it and get it anyway. It's wonderfully funny, and John is one of the great storytellers of all time. He has a wonderful, humorous ability.

Young: Did you tell the story in the oral history about Warner and the dogs?

Riegle: I'm quite sure I did, and if I didn't, I will at another time. But I'm quite sure I did, about Ted being in the pool and the dogs splashing. I'm certain that I would have said that, and you would have that. It's a great story because it was just so Ted.

One of the interesting things—It wasn't all just reminiscences. One of the things we talked about was Chris Dodd, because he wasn't there. We were talking about his political situation and the tough prospect that he faced from an election point of view, in Connecticut, and what should he do? We all had opinions on that, as to how he should approach that issue. Ted just listened. He didn't express a view. He let the rest of us all express views, and we all had views because we all care.

Young: Did he put the question?

Riegle: No, I don't know that he put the question. I think the question kind of arose on its own and it was a natural thing to have happen because everybody cares about everybody else, so Chris's situation would have been a normal course of conversation that evening.

One of the interesting things, and this is very personal so it's not highly relevant to the overall scale of the project you're doing, but it was an interesting element of coincidence involving the ten of us around the table. It was a story that Ted didn't know, and the others didn't know, but I decided that I would tell it because I thought it might have some meaning to Ted that evening. Back in the early '60s, I was up at the Harvard Business School, in the doctoral program there in the field of business and government relations, and one of my assignments was to write some cases. Harvard, as you know, is very famous, as is UVA [University of Virginia], for writing case studies.

I had to come down to Washington to write some Washington-centered case studies, and one that I was asked to do related to how the Postal Service works. Back at that time, the Congress had a lot of control as to setting the rates, and there was a lot of politics, a whole complexity of what's

on the surface, and beneath the surface, and how that whole process worked. It was my job to figure it out and then write it up in a case form.

I came down as a novice in that respect. I was focused on the House side, and on the House Committee on Postal Service was a young Congressman from California named John Tunney. I had to try to reach out and get a meeting with some of the members of this committee, and one of the people I asked for a meeting was John Tunney, and he was kind enough to be willing to meet with me. He didn't know me from Adam. He was young and I was even younger, but he took an interest in me and gave me some valuable insight and invited me to come to a couple of events that were going to happen. One was a fund-raising event for one of the senior men on the Postal Committee.

John went out of his way to be very gracious to me as a complete stranger, and later on, after I finished my work, I sent John a very nice note, thanking him. A long period of time elapsed, maybe six months, it seemed, and I got this very nice personal note back from John saying, "I enjoyed working with you and I'm glad I could help you with your project," and words to the effect that, "You obviously have a keen interest in Congress and you ought to really think about running for Congress some day, because I think you'd be good at it."

I thought that story was worth taking the time to tell that night, because Ted and John were so close, and yet the things that would have brought us together in that room had elements that would seem to be extraneous but, in fact, it all started to feel something like a fabric. It's almost too extraordinary to have coincidences of that consequence embedded into this small set of relationships, that it reached weight in all of our lives, with enough meaning that the ten of us were around the table together. I thought that little piece of history, because it was highly relevant, at least to the path that I've been down—I wanted Ted to know that and I wanted the others at the table to know it, and I wanted also, in a sense, to be able to thank John Tunney again, in that setting, for his kindness and help to me at a point when it really meant something.

Young: Well, let's see. John Culver was drawn in as a staffer before he then went to the House.

Riegle: Yes. And by the way, when Ted cast his whatever high number of vote it was, like thirty-thousandth vote in the Senate, or twenty-five thousandth vote in the Senate, it was known a day or two ahead of time that was going to happen, and he invited both John Culver and me down to the Senate floor to be present that day. This was not all that long ago. This was just three or four or five years ago, recent history. It was quite a long time after I had left the Senate.

Anyway, we were on the floor together that day, and Patrick [Kennedy] came over from the House as Ted cast this historic vote, and I was very flattered to have been asked to be there. John Culver made the point that he had been with Ted on the floor as a staff guy when Ted cast his first vote, so it was this wonderful moment of closing this ring 44 years later, or 43 years later, of John having been there with the first vote and then having come back now for that vote. That was a very special moment.

Young: That wasn't the end, either.

Riegle: No, it wasn't the end.

Young: There were many more.

Riegle: I wanted to say to you, and I will say to you, and then you can decide the relevance of this to this history—

Young: Oh yes, go ahead.

Riegle: At the end of the evening, because we were all mindful of the fact that the Tunneys were staying, and Ted was tiring, and that we shouldn't overstay, although nobody wanted to leave, Vicki made it a point of walking Lori and me to the door, and we chatted in the doorway for two, three, four minutes, and she was explaining to us—she gave us a look into some of the health difficulties, how Ted was having seizures. She didn't go into detail, and we didn't expect her to, but she was, in a sense, explaining why it had been very difficult even to do an evening like this, because of all of the circumstances, and so forth. I think she was, in effect, saying that there weren't a lot of windows that presented themselves where it might be possible for Ted to see people that he might have wanted to see, and who might have wanted to see him.

That's when I really appreciated even more keenly the fact that she was doing this remarkable stewardship role of guiding his every day, quarterbacking every day, and that these both planned and sudden ups and downs in his health cycle were really difficult to work around. She was obviously going to great lengths to protect him from prying eyes and an ugly photograph by some paparazzi who's two blocks away. She was very mindful of the fact that she wanted to preserve his privacy and his dignity and his strength, how that was seen and understood, as well as one could possibly do it. What she did goes so far beyond heroic, in terms of being able to describe what she was able to do, under the worst of circumstances. I am so profoundly grateful to her and I admire her so much for her strength and her skill in helping Ted down this glide path, right to his last breath.

Young: She was his partner, too.

Riegle: That was great.

Young: They loved talking politics together. If you're there before dinner, they'd be having back at each other.

Riegle: Right, exactly. She was a fully equal partner in that, and really cared about it, and she comes out of a tradition of that. Judge [Edmond] Reggie is a wonderful guy and she is her father's daughter. I'm just very fond of him. We chatted up in Boston. I wanted to try to take him to lunch somewhere this week if they were staying, because I thought it would be a good break for everybody, but they have gone back to Louisiana. Anyway, that evening was—I think we all knew that we were probably saying goodbye to each other for the last time, but in the sweetest possible way.

Young: Vicki said that he was ready to go, but we weren't ready to let him go.

Riegle: I've heard that, yes.

You know, I've gained a deeper sense of the importance of Eunice [Kennedy Shriver] to Ted, and I tend to take now as fact what I've been reading and gathering from different places, that Eunice may well have been the sibling who was kind of the surrogate mother to Ted, and was maybe the one who was closest to him as the years went by. I was reading about them being able to spend some time together as they were both near the end, up there on the porch, on the rocking chairs, reminiscing and so forth. I know how much he loved her, not that he didn't love all of his siblings, but I know how much he loved her.

I don't know if I mentioned this in the previous oral history, but I had met Eunice a number of different times for different occasions, where we've been to things at Ted's home or other things that he was doing, so we got acquainted. At one of the birthday parties, we sat together at a table, she and I, and we really got into a deep conversation, and it was a terrific conversation and we both really enjoyed it. She reported this back to Ted and she was complimentary about this conversation. Ted commented on that afterward and teased me a little bit about it. He actually sent a nice note to my wife, Lori, and said something to the effect of, "Don and Eunice had a great conversation, Lori. You better look out." It was just a cute note.

At a subsequent event, a birthday party—this is about Ted—we arrived, and there were a lot of people there, and there was going to be a nice sit-down dinner. As we came in, he just clamped onto me right in the doorway and he said, "I want you to come over and talk to Euni." He just commandeered me right through the crowd and took me over to where she was seated. She was getting more frail at that point. Sarge [Sargent Shriver] was there, but not there at that moment, because of his issues. She was sitting there and Ted wanted her to be able to be engaged and enjoy herself, and he was assigning me to be her erstwhile date for the next 15 minutes, which I did with great interest and earnest attention. To me, it was a loving brother at work. In other words, he had a lot going on, but he was thinking about what might be fun for her in that event. He obviously had it in his mind, and when it clicked, he was going to just make that happen.

Young: He had a lot of insight into people, didn't he?

Riegle: You know, Jim, that's such a good point. I was thinking, as I was trying to describe Ted to others, that his level of human intelligence—that's the buzz phrase now that's used—his natural ability with people, his sense for people, his caring for people, his interest in people, his ability to tune in to people, to be open to people, was really extraordinary. It's as complete and as strong as anybody I've ever known.

There are some people who are said to be good at that, but it's mechanical. Ted's a different story. Ted does care about other people's feelings and is mindful and kind and giving, and this is the part that has a hard time rising through all the propagandized overlays of his opponents, and all of the labeling that's been done over the years. It's his goodness of heart, which was really his strongest quality. His defining quality would be something that a lot of people wouldn't even know about, although they got a big dose of it in the last three days.

Young: They did.

Riegle: Because that goodness of heart quality was shining out in a thousand different ways, and people could start to get that. His human intelligence, his ability to relate to people, to care about

people, and tune in to people, was really—I think it's the single most important part of Ted. He's a hard worker, he's smart, and he had a great sense of humor. He was full of life, he had all these other wonderful qualities, but I think his true caring instinct for other people, and not just people he knew, but strangers and people who came in along the way—it's part of his DNA, and it got stronger as the years went by.

As he went through these terrible vicissitudes and losses and events that could have crumpled somebody else, as he went through those moments in time, and grew older and wiser and deeper—and I think Vicki's coming along had a huge part to play in that—he became even more of a—that humanist instinct and essence just became more and more apparent and radiated out in all directions. I've had somebody say to me, for example, who was a complete stranger to Ted—They were visiting in the Capitol or something, and they just bumped into him as he was turning somewhere, and they had the chutzpah to ask, "Senator, would you mind taking a picture with my kids?" He stopped and they took this wonderful picture, and this person remembers that because it was a gesture of kindness in the moment to a stranger that is sort of vintage Ted. You can imagine a lot of other people who wouldn't react that way, in a way that was so easy for the other person, and make it feel like it's not an imposition on yourself that you're doing this.

When I heard that he had sent these letters to all these families in Massachusetts who had lost somebody in the 9/11 crash on the World Trade Center, or other things like that, his humanity, his openness, his caring instinct—that was just an absolute quality of his makeup. It would be interesting to know how many people really saw that in Ted, or know about that in Ted, but it's probably the single most important thing to know about him. If you could know only one thing, it would be that he had this open heart to other people, just everyday people with real problems and real needs that mattered to him. That mattered, and if he could do something about it, from a kind gesture to a legislative answer, or advocacy, or whatever. I think he felt other people's needs and pains and feelings, much more deeply than most people you find in public life.

Young: Yes. That was powerfully impressed upon me as I got to know him and I'd see the little things, the attention he paid.

Riegle: That's why—I may have mentioned this to you—I understand Ted on that level. There was this very widely circulated photograph taken in the hospital after he'd been diagnosed with his brain cancer, to explain to the public what was happening. It was a big family photo and everybody was there. Patrick was there, Vicki was there, and so forth. He was in a chair, and everybody was putting on a brave face, and he was putting on a brave face, because it was like a family photograph that said, "These are the facts, but we're going to get through this. We're all together." But I looked at that picture and, to my eye, knowing Ted as I knew him, I could see he was making himself smile, but there was a sadness in his eyes that I could see. It was so obvious to me that his eyes were sad.

I think his eyes were sad for two overriding reasons: One is the terrible reality of knowing that this was going to limit your life and that you probably weren't going to outrun this, and that you'd live for a while but you weren't going to live for a long while, I mean, this was a fatal illness. He would understand that immediately and take that in. And the other thing is—and maybe this is the more powerful thing: Ted's sense of caring for everybody that's under the oak tree, and everybody else, for that matter. It might hurt every other person. To not be around to

help people, care for people, especially those closest to him who needed his help, like Caroline [Kennedy Schlossberg], and Kara [Kennedy Allen], and Patrick, and so forth. The thought of not being there for them, the people he cared most about, was the most painful thing of all. I think he could accept almost anything but the fact that he wouldn't be there to give them what they need. And I could see that in his eyes. At least, that's what I think I saw.

Young: Yes.

Riegle: It was a sad look. It wasn't a selfish sad look. It was a sad look about stewardship, and needing to stick around to help others, his sister—the whole thing. That's a very powerful metaphor. I don't mean for it to sound like a metaphor, but it's a very important way of seeing who Ted was, because he was lots of things, but that was the biggest thing. That was the most important thing. That was the center of his makeup, refined over the years by all these events, tragic and happy and otherwise.

Probably it also is what helped him—I guess I'm jumping now. He would relate so well to almost every other person, because having been through it all one way or the other himself in his lifetime, he could always find the speck of good in some other person and steer to that, as opposed to whatever else might come with it. That was another part of his growing through these life events that are sort of epic in number and scale, to become the man that he became in his later years.

I think I spoke to you about this before, but when he was facing what looked like a tough race for reelection against Mitt Romney, we had this political session at his house, to which I had been invited, and Judge Reggie was there as well. We were putting our thinking caps on as to how we would deal with that, and came up with actually a pretty good strategy. The young—Robert Kennedy's son, Michael [Kennedy]—He was the one who was killed in the skiing accident. Ted was especially fond of him and he had him there as a young political operative because he saw in him something that he wanted to invest in, and let him have experience to grow, and so forth.

Obviously the loss of John [Kennedy Jr.] in the plane crash, his nephew, but also the loss of Michael, and the other losses as they came along, had to be so hard to accept and to deal with and to still be able to, for the sake of everybody, take it in and deal with it, and sort of rise above it, and continue on down the track. His story is such an epic story.

Young: Yes, it is.

Riegle: As somebody was saying, he was the only one of the brothers to live to see his grandchildren, even though 77 is too short a ticket. The number of heartaches and shocks and traumas and needs to rise above the difficulties and help others, minister to others, as he's had to do, is such a test of a human being, and he passed it with flying colors.

Young: Keep going, keep going.

Riegle: Well, and to keep getting bigger and better and kinder and deeper and wiser. The idea of the giant oak tree was that the tree kept getting bigger, in height and around the base, and with the sweep of the arms, the limbs, in such a way that it got as big as it needed to be. It got bigger

and bigger because it needed to get bigger and bigger to accommodate more people underneath its sheltering branches.

Young: It's a telling metaphor—growing and growing.

Riegle: That's how his life looks to me. I can just see it, from the time that I got a chance to first meet him back in the late '60s, up until right at the end.

Young: How did you first come face-to-face with him?

Riegle: Well, I don't know if I told this story or not. I might have, and so this may be repetitious and maybe will ring a bell if it is. Back in either 1968 or 1969, one of those two years—I had been elected in 1966, to the Congress, as a Republican from Michigan, so I took office in January of 1967. Well, within a year or two years of that—Oh, I need to tell you one story about Culver, too, but that's a different thing.

Ted and I shared an award. We were named two of the "Ten Outstanding Young Men," by the U.S. Jaycees, at a time when the U.S. Jaycees were a big national organization and it was a big deal. These TOYM awards, Ten Outstanding Young Men awards, were highly prized, and there was a lot of fanfare around it. In that particular year, I was chosen as one of the ten, and so was Ted. We were the two political figures, one in each party, one in the House, one in the Senate, and so we met at this event for the first time. It was in Minneapolis and it was a huge event. There were like 5,000 people at this event, because of the way they did it. Hubert Humphrey was the keynote speaker.

We met, because we didn't know each other, other than the fact that we were there sharing this occasion and this nice honor. I met his wife, Joan [Bennett Kennedy]. My wife was not with me, my wife at that time, because she had health issues and couldn't travel. So we got there and we met in a perfunctory way. I think we met on an elevator the first time. I don't even recall, precisely.

But the key part of the story, and it comes back later, is that in the course of the awards ceremony, each of us got this lovely statue, and some nice things were said about each one of us. We were presented individually with this award, and then we had about four minutes to speak and to give acceptance remarks. I took the acceptance remarks part very seriously. I got there and it was about 11:00 at night, the day before they were going to have the presentations. I always wrote my own things and so I had written out the set of remarks, and I thought, *This is a piece of shit. This is an epic moment. I can't get out and say—I've got to get my thoughts up to a much, much higher level here.*

I knew Ted would give a great talk, so I was sort of using that as my mental marker. I stayed up all night long. I got coffee and Coca-Cola, and I sat at a desk with a yellow pad and a pen, and I continued to write and rewrite and write and rewrite that entire night. I didn't go to bed until 6:00 in the morning, because I wanted my four minutes to be as good as I could possibly make them. I certainly didn't want to fall short of the mark that I felt Ted would probably set, or the others as well, so I was determined to do as well as I could possibly do at that stage of my life. When I finished at 6:00 in the morning, I really had a good set of remarks, probably the best set of remarks that I've ever delivered in life. You know, I've written a lot of speeches. But I was

highly motivated, and sometimes less is more; you've got to compress it. You can't give a Joe Biden-length talk here. This has got to be—it's got to be like what Teddy Jr. did the other day. There wasn't a wasted word in what he said in his remarks at the church. Brilliantly done, I thought.

In any event, we get out there, and man, I'm ready, I mean I'm really ready. I feel ready, and I've got these remarks down. And then in the random order of things—I'm like the sixth speaker, and Teddy's like number eight, so I'm going to go before he goes. I get out there and I'm ready to just knock this ball so far out of the ballpark that they'll never find it. It sort of worked out like that. I don't mean to be boastful about it, but it was probably the best set of remarks I ever gave, probably got the best crowd response I've ever gotten.

I knew, and as I thought about it afterward when I finished and it worked so well, I knew Ted was waiting in the wings. He was stuck, because he had his remarks, and I doubt that he'd stayed up all night working, because he didn't know that he was going to run into that kind of comparative situation. I was thinking afterward, he probably thought to himself, *Son of a bitch. Here I am, stuck with a set of remarks, and this guy—Who the fuck is this guy? He shows up, gives a hell of a talk, and now I've got to come out, and I've got to try to match that, and yet, I've got a set of remarks that I can't do anything with at this point.* So he came out and did his thing.

But what's so interesting is that, 20 or 30 years later, we're having one of Ted's birthday parties, again the same group of people, up in the Hay-Adams Hotel, right across from the White House. You could get a room then and look across and see the White House. It was a very nice evening. I know Sasser was there, and we were there, and I think Tunney was there, and Culver was there. Everybody's drinking, and everybody's telling stories, and it was really a great, convivial, fraternal dinner, while the spouses were all there too. We're all telling stories and cracking jokes and teasing each other.

At some point, Ted, who'd had two or three shooters by this point—We were all pretty well relaxed—just started up, as he could sometimes do. He said, "You know, that son-of-a-gun Riegle," something like that kind of a start. Then he went back to this Jaycee thing, and he started repeating, almost word-for-word, what I had said that day in Minneapolis, 25 years before. I was dumbfounded that he would remember it so vividly and be able to recall it, but it also told me that it had had the impact, at the time, that I thought it might have had, because of just the way, situationally, it worked out.

Young: Yes.

Riegle: In its own way, that became, along with whatever other things, one of the bonds that permitted us to define each other over a long period of years, so that the relationship in recent years became very special to both of us. I don't think you can have a special relationship like that be one-way. If you're going to have one, it's got to be essentially reciprocal. The person that you want to kiss has got to want to be kissed, you know what I mean? Otherwise, it doesn't work.

You asked the question, how did we first meet? That's how we first met. It was a good start, because it gave him a chance to know that I had a little bit of talent, and he had a chance to see some of it. But at that time, there would have been no way for any of us to predict that I would

end up changing parties in early 1973 after going through a major challenge to [Richard M.] Nixon's renomination, a major revolt within the Republican Party at that time, such as it was, over the Vietnam War, and [Spiro] Agnew's conduct, and the southern strategy and the anti-civil rights attitudes, and that things would work out in such a way that not only would I then change parties and become a Democrat in the House, but that Philip Hart, who was of course in the Senate, and was close to John Kennedy and to Robert and then to Ted as well, would be dying of cancer in 1976, vacating that seat. It created an opportunity for me to run as a relatively newly minted Democrat.

The way that everybody's paths worked out caused us to not just all end up in the Senate together, or to end up in the Senate together as Democrats at a later time, and come down through that 18 years that we spent together there, but to come right down to that last dinner at Ted and Vicki's home. If you rewind the movie, and if you said, "Well, if this is where things ended up, where did they start?" which was your very wise question, it then opens up the question, "Well, it started here, and it ended here, but what were all the intermediate things that caused this to become this?" Some of that is just the mystery of life, and some of it is stuff you can identify.

Young: Do you want to talk about things in between that stand out in your mind, from that beginning, and then after you joined him in the Senate and became a Democrat? There's still a lot of space left.

Riegle: Well, for Ted and me to really get to know each other and develop a really deep relationship, we needed proximity. You couldn't do it at a great distance. When I ended up in the Senate, when we had that 18 years in the Senate, and then even the time since, because in the time since, our relationship continued to grow and deepen in some really wonderful ways—The Senate was kind of a platform opportunity, but the Senate wasn't essential to the continued growth of our relationship. It kept getting bigger and stronger and deeper without the Senate being in the picture. I think it's because there were some things about us that were similar. I'm not saying everything, because we're different in many, many ways, but there were a couple of commonalities that were so strong that as time went on, those commonalities kind of connected to each other.

One of the strongest would be that we both have a deep sense of caring about people and what happens in people's lives, and we don't have to know the people to care about them, and hating the notion of people being ground up in the gears, or cast aside, or not helped when they need help. That's the strongest thing about me, in terms of what I care about, and that was a trait that was also present in him. It was a trait that we had in common that would sort of draw us together, because of that kind of fierce sense.

Young: And this translated itself into your work, on some of the issues abroad.

Riegle: Right, right. He gave me this nickname, and I've mentioned this to you before, but he may have mentioned it if he thought of it. This is an interesting comparison. The nickname he coined for me was "Mad Dog" and the mad dog label was because I would get up on the Senate floor from time to time, or in the caucus, and I had such a strong feeling about what I was talking about, whether it was unemployment, or people without healthcare, or other outrageous behavior

going on, I would talk about with real force, and I wasn't reading notes. I could get up and talk about it, because that's what I felt and who I was.

If you went back and looked at the tapes of spontaneous speeches on the floor, you would find some of mine that would be similar to some of the ones you have seen of Ted, you know, some of the clips they show of Ted, of him getting out there and really sort of pouring it on. Most people don't do that, especially in the Senate. Most people in the Senate don't feel that strongly about anything that they're going to do that. It's not just a quorum. It's style. It's who has that level of passion, and who feels something strongly enough that they start talking about it with that kind of force, not a contrived force or a manufactured force, but because that's who they are, and that's what they feel, and that's the degree of the outrage of what's happening that's being talked about.

I would do that. I wasn't doing it for him; I was doing it because that's who I was and that's how I was exercising my role. I think Ted related to that. There was that element in Ted that was a common element between the two of us. These were little guy issues. It was fighting for the common man on things that were just social and economic justice issues. That's what animated me. It's what animated him. If you say, "OK, you've got a hundred people. How many people out of the hundred in the Senate, at any given time, are highly animated about those issues?" Well, Hubert Humphrey clearly was, but he wasn't there most of the time that I was there. But the rest, that's more uncommon than common.

I think Ted appreciated that, whatever he thought of the other aspects of my makeup. I think that aspect he related to and appreciated. That was a plain upon which we connected, where neither of us connected with very many other people, because not very many other people could get that super-heated on those kinds of things because of how they feel, who felt that was so central to why they were there in the first place, to articulate these things with real force and with real commitment. That was one thing.

Humor—Ted loves to laugh, he loves good storytelling, and he would ask people to tell stories that he'd heard other times before, just because of the sheer joy that he got from humor and laughter and fun. That was something else that we sort of had in common.

Young: You were a good storyteller?

Riegle: Well, not as good as Culver and Wyche Fowler. Those guys are in a league of their own. My humor tends to be—I mean, if I know a good story, I can usually tell it, but not to the level of those guys. Those guys are really—they're the Ted Williams. They have the Ted Williams swing in that category of talent. But on quick humor and teasing humor, I can pretty much hold my own in that area, and Ted loved that, loves that. He not only understood, and it shows in the lines of his face—his face is not a sour face. His face was a happy face, despite everything. He could have had a sour face, but he loved to smile, and loved to laugh.

It's sort of like the old phrase in the *Reader's Digest* magazine, that "laughter is the best medicine." You almost have to be able to laugh and find humor in the absurdity of things, sometimes just to keep your sanity, and especially if there's been a lot of tragedy or a lot of hardship. If you can't find the way to balance life out with the humor and the laughter, the

conviviality and the goodwill and some hopefulness, you could go into a downward spiral. For Ted, not only his Irish ancestry and his makeup, like he'd break into song and that kind of thing, but for Ted, being able to balance the serious side of life with the humorous side of life was absolutely essential. I could see why it was, and he managed to do that, and anyone who maybe understood that could work across those different levels with Ted.

I wouldn't say this on tape. I'm going to say it to you now, but I wouldn't want it printed, because it sounds too self-centered and I don't mean for it to be, because that's not where I'm coming from, but one of the things that I wonder is the answer to the question, *How was I able to have a special relationship with Ted?* I know how it felt to me. How did it feel to him? How was it that it worked for him, as it was working for me? Obviously, it was working for both of us, and I'm so proud and happy that that's the case. It's one of the things that I feel best about in my whole life, the fact that he and I could, in our own ways—and I don't want to make it more than it was—but could find a plain on which to reach each other.

If you'd roll the movie all the way back to the beginning, there's not necessarily any reason to assume or to predict that, starting in the late '60s and coming up into the 2009 period, we would necessarily traverse a path that would bring us out at a point where we had really deep, tender feelings for one another. But I'm so glad that that was the reality, and it's why I tend to be having such a tough time emotionally. Everybody reacts to his death in a different way, because we could see it coming, but emotionally, I happen to be wired in such a way that it just hits me with a lot of force. It's hard to accept. And it frames a lot of questions. Ted had an importance in my life to such a degree, in terms of my own thinking and feeling, that it's forcing me to do a lot of soul searching and reappraising, and I'm going to continue to do that.

Two things that I've done—and I wouldn't want this on tape, either, because it would be misunderstood, and I'm sensitive to it. One of the things I did on Monday was I went over to Patrick Kennedy's office, because I want to help Patrick, and I'm one of the few people—if anybody of Ted's circle of friends can help Patrick, I'm probably one who can, and I'm determined to do it because I love him. I love Ted and I love Patrick, and Patrick needs support. He needs the kind of support—I mean, support's not the right word. He needs the kind of understanding and—I'm not quite sure what the right word is.

Young: Fatherliness?

Riegle: Yes, something like that. He needs to have some rock under his feet that's of the kind that I can help provide a little bit of, and that he can trust because he knew how his father felt about me. He's told me any number of times. So there's no angle. I'm only interested in trying to be helpful if I can be helpful, but I want to be helpful, and I don't want him to be more storm-tossed than he needs to be, at a time when he just needs some things around him, a little bit of which maybe I can provide. I want to do that. I at least want to offer to do it. I won't try to force it on him, but I want to make it available. I went to his office.

Young: Did you manage to see him?

Riegle: No, he was not there, but I talked to the senior aide that was there and I said, "I want to arrange to see Patrick at the first opportunity, and come by and talk with him." Once I can talk

with him, the two of us in a room, it won't take long to get across what I want to say. Then what I would hope we could do is maybe have a dinner together, have him to our house for dinner, whatever. I want to kind of get my arms around him.

I want to do the same thing with Kara, by the way. I don't think Teddy Jr. needs it; I think he's squared away, and he's got a family circle around him. Kara, who I've known for a period of time, is far more vulnerable—vulnerable is probably the best word—in a different way than Patrick is. It's the one thing I can do for Ted now, the one thing because I'm maybe most like him in that way. I don't mean to be boastful when I say that, but I think that, just in the randomness of the way the world works, some of the qualities that are needed there just happen to be ones that I happen to have, and can offer. And I want to do that. I think I should.

Young: Yes, that would be—

Riegle: I'd want him to do it in reverse and so I just feel like I need to do it.

Young: You're assigned. That's a good assignment, sort of a self-assignment.

Riegle: Well, that's what we have to do. We have to think about where, on the margin, those of us who really loved and cared about him—

Young: He might have asked you, if he could.

Riegle: Yes, but in a sense he shouldn't have to. I should be able to figure it out.

Young: I have not interviewed either of them yet. I was about to when Teddy got the brain cancer diagnosis, and I'm not going to push into their lives.

Riegle: No, you've got to wait.

Young: But I did have a fairly long talk with Patrick up in Boston.

Riegle: Oh, good.

Young: It was very intense, and he wanted to do this. He said, "Yes, I'll do the interview next week," and I said, "Well, that's fine. Let's take it a little easy at first, just talking. So, I'd like to take it a little easy at first, and I am going to get in touch with the others.

Riegle: I think your instinct is just right on that.

Young: But if you do establish this relationship with him and with Kara, I'd appreciate it, if you have a sense of when would be a time—

Riegle: Oh, I'll tell you. I'll do that. I'll get back to you and tell you that, because I think this can be very helpful for them. It would be therapeutic, and you'll do it in the right way. Your sense for the timing is right. I think they're both raw wounds at the moment and they're just like walking wounded, and very vulnerable. They're both storm-tossed kids, for different reasons.

Kara's been through this terrible lung thing, and issues with the mom.

Ted gave everybody as much as he possibly could, but there were so many people who needed so much that there weren't enough hours in the day. I'm sure everybody got what they could get, that he could give them, but was that as much as they felt they needed? Probably not. It's pretty hard not to want and need more of it.

That's where I thought Patrick's comment about when he had the asthma and his father would come into the room and put the cold cloths on his head, and how Patrick was so honest as to say that he was actually glad he had the problem because it gave him the time with his dad. His dad was there. Of course, I was thinking to myself, *Where was the mom? Why was the dad there?* Usually the mom's the one there with the cold compresses, but that's a side issue. It said so much about Ted's love for his kids, but also the needs of the kids, coming back the other way, particularly for Patrick.

I even wondered, when he said that he had to take all this asthma medicine, if that wasn't the beginning of this dependency on these medicines. That opened a window, too, into where did this all come from? Not that there weren't enough events to destabilize anybody. Patrick has chosen to try to pick up the political flag and carry it and run for office and serve in office. Teddy Jr. has gone off a different way and obviously is doing fine and is squared away. Patrick, you know, it's probably testing him to the max, right now, to cope with all of this, and to deal with his own—I don't know if "addiction" is the right word, but whatever the substance issues are, and now to face the prospect of his dad being gone. His dad was a huge rock he could hang onto. Not to have that there is going to be hard for Patrick, and that's why we've got to shore him up. I'm really determined to do that, to the extent that I can.

Let me rack my brain for a minute, to think about, in the context of your comment about the arc of time, in terms of other events that would have been things that caused our relationship to notch forward in a fulsome way. You know, so much of this is just human chemistry. What are two people like? He had it with so many different people, so you're going to get all different kinds of combinations and permutations and so forth. But one of the things that was key for Ted and for me, is that we knew we could trust each other. We could trust each other's confidences. He just instinctively knew that whatever was the nature of our relationship, it was between us, and I was going to protect it, and he was safe with me.

Young: Yes.

Riegle: To really have a deep relationship, people have to be able to feel that way. We were fortunate enough to have that aspect to our relationship. That's important. I don't know so much about events. There probably were any number of events.

What we have underway is an effort to understand Ted Kennedy, the mystery of Ted Kennedy, not that it's a mystery, but to the extent that we don't know all of it and it remains something of a mystery for us as historians or seekers of truth, to sort of figure out. Another key thing for Ted, a litmus test that he used, and it was a key litmus test, especially for political figures, was what do they stand for? Ted developed this remarkable ability to work with Republicans on specific things, but I would assert, or it would be my belief that the depth of his feelings for them would stop at a certain point. It came across over the spectrum of daily work, and pragmatism, and good

humor, and getting things done, but he'd want to be marooned on a desert island with very few of those people. That's just the fact of the matter.

I wouldn't say this on tape, so I'm sensitive to this issue: He had a good relationship with Orrin Hatch, but Orrin sees it in a much grander way, I'm quite sure, and have reasons to believe, than Ted ever saw it. But that's neither here nor there. Ted also, when it came right down to the issues that people believe in, what they stand for—that was really important to him. I think it would be very hard for Ted to have the deepest kind of relationship with anybody who didn't hold to the same values, in terms of other people, that he held to. I can't think of anybody, just off the top of my head, who was super-close to Ted, who didn't meet the values test and the human ethics test of how you view people and how you relate to people.

It would be very interesting—I thought a little bit about this because I obviously felt very honored to have him name me as one of his honorary pallbearers—it would be very interesting as a historian, to take that list—not me, because of a personal point, but take me out of it, but to take the list and think about, *Why this group?* Why does each one of these people fit on this list? He went over that, and there are no names here that he didn't want, and there are only names here that he did want. There are no Republican names, by the way, at least in terms of members of the Senate. There are seven Senators that are named, and out of 44 years, there's not a Republican there. Well, that says a little something to me. Does it mean that he didn't have John McCain come and speak? Or Orrin Hatch come, which he would do, and which would be appropriate, but that's a different kind of statement.

Young: Yes.

Riegle: It would be very interesting as a little project, to go and talk to each one of those people. Maybe you're doing that anyway, just as you cast a net out. I don't even know how many were on that list. It's probably about 20 names. Whatever it is, why those 20? Why those people? There are 20 different answers, but there's probably some commonality in the 20 different answers. One of the commonalities that I saw, just remembering from the top of my head who the people were, were the values. They were all progressive people. They all fought for civil rights, human rights, and decency. They would never turn away from a person in need. These were more soul-mate type people than they were transactional people in the bazaar of give-and-take.

There are probably some great insights in that group, some of whom you will have met and talked with. One guy you should talk with, because he's so brilliant, and because he's so insightful, and he will know Ted in different ways, is Greg Craig. Have you talked with him?

Young: I have been after Greg for a long time.

Riegle: He's sort of a private guy.

Young: Well, he's also in the White House.

Riegle: That's no excuse.

Young: I know. Greg was very helpful to me way back, and I got to know him a little bit. When Archbishop [Desmond] Tutu was on a trip to the United States, I got a call from Ted, saying, "Would you be able to do an interview with him for the oral history?" I said yes. And this was going to happen in four or five days, and we try to prepare for these things, and do a little bit of research on it.

Riegle: Sure.

Young: I said, "Yes, but I need somebody there to brief me." And it was Greg. Greg was not in the office. He wasn't on the staff then, but it was just very helpful. I had a long conversation with him. He was on the South Africa trip. He saw that I had the itinerary and everything, and I said, "Why don't you join me for the interview? It's going to be in Williamsburg." And he said, "OK, I'll do that," but he had to call it off because his son was having a football game that Saturday afternoon and he said he had to do it.

Well, when he was appointed White House counsel, we were late in getting to him. I sent him a letter, as I do sometimes, a formal letter explaining the project and all that, and I never got an answer. So I sent another letter, and I sent it to his home address, and I didn't get an answer. What I'm going to do right now, as I just—

Riegle: I have a suggestion for you.

Young: Please.

Riegle: Well, the suggestion is, in due course, have Vicki ask him to do it. If he understands the importance of this project to Ted, Vicki will send him a message and ask him to do it.

Young: She's my last resort. Ted was my last resort, usually.

Riegle: You shouldn't have to resort to that, and I know he's under the gun, and if I see him, I'll say something to him, but it's essential to get what he has to say.

Young: I'm going to try to get—I'm going to ask Sharon Waxman if she can give me an email for him.

Riegle: Who else are you after that you haven't gotten to? And if I may ask, and it's not too awkward for you to answer, who else have you talked to that's really given you a lot of rich insight?

Young: Oh, there are so many. We've already interviewed most of the people on that list.

Riegle: I see.

Young: And with some, I will go back. Wyche Fowler, we have not yet interviewed, and there's one other person.

Riegle: Have you talked to Sasser?

Young: Yes, that was long before he got ill. Most of those people whose names are on that thing, we have already talked with.

Riegle: Good.

Young: But then it's kind of different after he's dead, you know?

Riegle: Yes, it is different, and I think it will unlock people. People will be thinking about things. Things will come to the surface.

Young: John McCain has had a ring around him. People lose the letters, or they don't see them. Janet [Heininger] was interviewing [Patrick] Leahy the other day, and she saw McCain and she grabbed him and said, "We'd like to do an interview with you for the Kennedy oral history." He said, "Of course I will, and I'd be very honored." So, I'm trying to strike while the iron is hot.

Riegle: You've got to get the knee bone connected to the thigh bone. It's one thing for him to say it, but how do we actually set a time and a place?

Young: Yes, that's what we're trying to do.

Riegle: Talk is cheap. Let's connect the thigh bone to the leg bone.

Young: Yes.

Riegle: Who else? Anybody else?

Young: Chris Dodd is a special case. We've been after him from the very beginning. I've talked with some people about that and they said, "Maybe you should wait. He's up to his neck in alligators now." This was referring to the Connecticut situation. They said, "Maybe you ought to wait until after the election." Well, the problem is, next year is the last year of the project.

Riegle: No, you can't wait, and you want to get—I think it's important to tap Chris sooner rather than later, because he's going to be full of thoughts, full of observations. He's going to want to do this. He needs to understand how important it is for Ted. This is for Ted; this isn't for anybody else.

Young: Yes, that's right.

Riegle: When he gets that—and I'll say something to him, too, when I see him.

Young: I would appreciate that.

Riegle: And think about anybody else who's sort of giving you the slip, or that you need help with.

Young: There are people, but the one that sticks out in my mind, who is really high priority, is Greg, whom we haven't gotten yet. I don't feel that he's putting us off or that he wouldn't want to do it.

Riegle: No. He's under a lot of pressure, but he will be a very important source for you because he's so smart and he'll have important things to say.