



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN SEIGENTHALER

June 5, 2007
Washington, D.C.

Interviewer

University of Virginia

James Sterling Young

© 2019 The Miller Center Foundation and the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate

Publicly released transcripts of the Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project are freely available for noncommercial use according to the Fair Use provisions of the United States Copyright Code and International Copyright Law. Advance written permission is required for reproduction, redistribution, and extensive quotation or excerpting. Permission requests should be made to the Miller Center, P.O. Box 400406, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4406.

To cite an interview, please use the following general format: [name of interviewee] Interview, [date of interview], Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia.

EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN SEIGENTHALER

June 5, 2007

Young: This is an interview with John Seigenthaler in Washington on June 5. And before the tape went on, we were discussing your first contacts with the Kennedys.

Seigenthaler: Yes.

Young: And you were talking about the [John R.] McClellan Committee.

Seigenthaler: I was a journalist covering the committee in Washington. There was a Tennessee case and the result was some people went to penitentiary and a judge was impeached. Bob [Robert F.] Kennedy came down and testified at that impeachment trial, and I think that he was reasonably impressed with the fact that I was a journalist with some promise. So the next year when I was a Nieman Fellow, both he and Jack [John F. Kennedy] came before our Nieman class. When Bob came, he invited me to come down to Hickory Hill over Christmas with my family.

While I was down there, he asked me to help him. He said he was leaving the committee and wanted to write a book on it, and asked me to help him with the book, and I did. It was a project in which we wrote for approximately six months. The research had pretty well been done. He had a full-time secretary on hand. I had a full-time secretary on hand. We lived at the house at Hickory Hill. We started really before school was—I came down in May, just as the kids were getting out of school. They went to Hyannis Port and were gone until mid-September.

It was around the clock, Monday through Friday, starting at six, working all day, talking through dinner. Occasionally we had somebody who had information that they added to it. I guess I learned very early that the last thing anybody ever wants to do is engage in a project in which there is a committee of the Kennedy family making value judgments and decisions, because it is chaotic. After that I fled from the premises whenever it was suggested, and still do today. But my guess is you've heard that before. Ted and Jack both had suggestions about that. After we finished, the book shot to number two on the *New York Times* bestseller list. I don't know how many copies Joe [Joseph P., Sr.] Kennedy bought to get it there, but it got there anyway and stayed there for a long time. I was in Hyannis Port a number of times during that, and the whole family would be—

Young: Who in the family was there? Was John there?

Seigenthaler: Well, Pat [Patricia Kennedy Lawford] was there occasionally. Joe Kennedy was still there intermittently—This, of course, was before the stroke—and putting his nose in extremely—I guess this is a little off the record, but it sort of gives you a sense of—

Young: You can edit this when it's done.

Seigenthaler: Yes. And the story has been told before, but right after I agreed to do it, signed the contract, thought I was being well paid—The deal was if it went to the bestseller list I got a bonus—and he was going to write his own book and he was determined to do that. We were just getting ready to start and he calls me and asks me if I can fly to New York to have dinner with him and his father, whom I had met a couple of times during my Nieman year at Harvard. He gave a couple of receptions, one for [Lord William Maxwell Aitken] Beaverbrook, and invited a couple of Nieman fellows who were friends of Bob and Jack over.

So I knew him. He didn't know me, I'm sure. Anyway, an hour later we're in Le Pavillon on Park Avenue having dinner and he's sitting at this banquette. Bob and I are across the table from him. He was waiting when we got there and I had no idea what the purpose of the meeting was. Sitting next to him at the next table, but very close by, was Ed [Edward J.] Sullivan and his wife. It was clear that he had told Joe why we were there before he told us. What developed was a lecture to me on loyalty and making sure in his own mind that I was not somebody who was going to claim that I had written Bobby Kennedy's book for him. I heard that in about three different sermons before I—and one from Sullivan himself, who weighed in on the values of loyalty when you sign a contract. He remarked that there was nothing in the contract that muzzled me.

It was clear as it emerged, and Ed Sullivan let it out first, that Joe Kennedy thought Ted Sorensen had claimed credit for *Profiles in Courage*. I could never find anything that indicated that, except that occasionally somebody in writing a nasty column might say that, you know. Finally I got it, and then I took it and took it, and finally I said, "Look, we have a clear understanding about this. I'm going to get an acknowledgment in the book. I'm being well paid. You're paying me better than I was being paid if I had gone back to the paper. I'm sure the book is going to go to the top of the bestseller list. If it hits the bestseller list, I'll get a bonus. So, I'm perfectly happy, Mr. Kennedy. I am your son's friend—I'm his brother's friend—and you can just be sure that whatever Ted Sorensen did or didn't do, in your mind, I'm not going to do anything that ever makes you say that."

The thing I remember about it was that Bob and I both ordered ice cream for dessert and when the check came, he carefully, with a pencil or a pen, checked off every item on that check and then called the maître d' over and said, "I'm not paying \$10 for two dishes of ice cream. I can remember when I couldn't carry \$10 worth of ice cream on my shoulder." And the maître d' said, "Of course, Mr. Kennedy. Compliments of the house." He then tipped the hat check girl \$20 on the way out.

Anyway, we go to work on the book. The book comes out. The book does well.

Young: Was that the last you heard from him on the subject?

Seigenthaler: No. Bob calls me one day and says, “Dad wants to have a celebratory dinner at Le Pavillon. Can you come back up?”

Young: This was after?

Seigenthaler: After the book was published. Maybe it’s on the bestseller list a week or two.

Young: OK.

Seigenthaler: I’ve already got my check and I’m happy at the newspaper, and so we go up to celebrate the victory. He agrees to meet me at the airport and we’d ride in together. When I met him at the baggage claim, he had a book for me. I showed it to somebody doing a story the other day. “To John, who wrote my book for me, Bob Kennedy,” it said. I said, “You know, you shouldn’t have.” I laughed. The thing about it was, during the writing of the book, every morning he was up at 6:00. He made sure he got up every morning before I did. I would go to shower and I would walk by his bedroom and he was sitting on the end of the bed writing. Somewhere in the Kennedy Library there must be a stack of yellow pads that—

Young: This was Bob?

Seigenthaler: Yes, that fall. Because he wrote every—He would write; Angie Novello would type. I’d get the type, rework it, and a young woman named Dottie [Dorothy Frey] handled mine and then it went back to him. We just did that process all day and it was hard work.

We broke for lunch and went for a long walk. This is far removed from Ted, but one of the most interesting moments in the writing of the book was three or four times, Evan Thomas [II]—This is Evan Thomas’s father, who was with Harper and Brothers; later it became Harper and Row. I guess it became Harper and Row while we were doing it. Anyway, Evan came down and we would go on these long walks after lunch and we’d throw the football. Evan, even then, was having some difficulty perambulating. He later had to ride in one of those cars. At any rate, it was interesting to walk down that lane behind Hickory Hill—It was then virtually deserted—and realize that I was with the son of maybe the richest or the second-richest man in America at that time, and the son of Norman Thomas, the Socialist candidate for President.

Very few people know that young Evan Thomas is the grandson of Norman Thomas. But, you know, the whole thing was a fascinating experience for me and I was lucky to be part of it. So anyway, now we’re back and we ride in and go in and sit down.

Young: You’re going to be writing now at Hickory Hill?

Seigenthaler: We come in from the airport that night.

Young: Oh, OK.

Seigenthaler: Now we’re in with Joe Kennedy and back at Le Pavillon for the celebratory dinner.

Young: Right.

Seigenthaler: He is just ecstatic. “Well, you fellows knew what the hell you were doing right off. I mean, you just had it right down—That opening scene in Chicago, vivid, graphic. That will grab the reader’s attention. You fellows just knew what you were doing from the outset, and it’s a great story, and you two guys together are great storytellers.”

He goes on and on and on—Sullivan is not there that night—and he has a bottle of Dom Perignon brought out, pops the cork on it. I guess we’re halfway through the entrée and Bob says, “Show Dad the inscription I put in your book.” He was sitting right between us. And I said, “I can’t find it.” I put my hand right on it. I said, “I can’t find it. I can’t find it.” I tried to put my coat around it. Before I got around it, “I’ve got it right here. Here it is, Dad.” He says, “Bobby, you’re a goddamn fool. It will be in the *New York Post* within two weeks.” I said, “Well, you know it’s not true. Mr. Kennedy, you know it’s not true, it’s a joke.” He said, “It’s not funny. It’s not funny.” I said, “I told you I was not going to go to the *New York Post*. I’m not going anywhere. I’ve got the book. I’m going to keep it forever. And I’m very proud of this moment because it’s fun.” “Well, I don’t think it’s fun. Sometimes I just don’t understand my own children.”

Anyway, I met him then. I didn’t see him again until the convention. I went to cover the convention. He threw [Jerold T.] Jerry terHorst, who later became Gerald Ford’s press secretary, off the property of the Marian Davies mansion. Jerry found out where he was and went out and knocked on the door, and it made a little news. I mean, the Detroit newspaper, their reporters. Our paper was supporting—It was owned by a Texan and we were supporting Lyndon [Johnson], Sullivan Evans reporting. They had two reporters covering Lyndon and I was sent out to cover Kennedy. They wanted insight on both.

So we are out there, and I guess the second or third day, I went by the office late in the day and he said, “Is there anything I can do for you?” It might have been the first day I was there. Bob said, “Anything I can do for you? Except an interview with Jack.” And I said, “Yes, there is. As a matter of fact, I’d like an interview with your father.” A cross face comes down and he sort of snarls and shakes his head. “You know he’s not giving interviews. You saw he threw terHorst out yesterday.”

I said, “Bob, you know, I don’t need a hotel room. You asked me what you could do for me. You could get me an interview with your father. I know he’s not giving them, but you asked me what you could do for me. You could pick up the phone and tell your father. I don’t think he dislikes me. I kept my word that I wouldn’t claim falsely that I wrote your book for you.” He picks up the phone. “Dad,”—and the old man gives it to me. I drive out in a cab and while I’m in the cab the radio is on, and all of the Kennedys were visiting all of the delegations. They sent a telegram to every delegation.

Young: But his father stayed out of it, didn’t he? His father. The brothers and sisters—

Seigenthaler: Yes, he was out at the house. Yes, that’s right. So every member of the family, except Joe or Rose [Kennedy], and Rose—I didn’t see Rose at all until the night, and then she showed up on the stage that night. I don’t think she was even there. She might have been. At any rate, he was at that Marian Davies mansion.

But while I'm in the car, there is an announcement that the Texas delegation has accepted the invitation and wants to have a debate between Jack and Lyndon before the Texas delegation. I hear that maybe five minutes before I get to the gate. Open the door, go in, walk up to the house, ring the bell. He comes to the door himself. He's wearing a faded swimsuit—shorts, faded blue—and he had a straw hat with the brim turned down. Short, brim turned around. That house was sort of a rectangular court. The rooms around it surrounded a pool and the roof was open. It was an Olympic-size pool. He was sitting there by the pool reading something, and he had the umbrella tilted over him. He put me in the sun and it was hotter than hell. He thought, you know, *I'm going to get this little bastard out of here quick.*

We sat down and began the conversation and I said, "Well, the obvious first question is what do you think about the debate with the Texas delegation?" He said, "We will not go near that. This thing's locked up. Bobby called me last night and gave me some numbers." I said, "Are we going to win it on the first ballot?" He said, "Ought not risk anything." And I said, "So you don't think he'll accept?" "No, I know he'll accept. Shouldn't, but he will." And I said, "Well, what are you going to say when he calls?" He said, "He won't call me. Hell, they won't—They're making the decision over there right now. They're going. They'll be on their way in a little while, and I'll be out here listening on the radio."

The telephone rings and he gets up and goes to the phone himself. I presume there is no servant there. Then he comes back and sits down and I say, "Well, what do you think the format will be?" So he talks about it. "It's a damn-fool gimmick. Sam Rayburn's behind this. Jack ought not go near that. But I know Bobby and he are talking right now. They're deciding they're going to do it and they'll be over there."

About that time Jean [Kennedy Smith], who is pregnant, comes down in a swimsuit, stops and says hello, and then says, "Well, Daddy, what do you think about the debate?" And he says to me something like, "Hell, shouldn't go near it. This thing is wiped. Stay away from it. Shouldn't go near that Texas delegation." She says, "But, Daddy, they challenged him." He turns to me and he says, "You see what the hell I'm dealing with?"

Anyway, I feel like I'm a little way in the door with him, you know, and I just decide to go with the children—Rosemary [Kennedy] had just been—and I said, "Let me begin to ask you about—My first question is about Rosemary." I asked him about Rosemary and then I said, "I want to talk about all of your children." The most telling moment for me—And he got very serious. The telephone rings. He goes to the telephone. He comes back this time. "We're talking about the kids." We had talked about Kik [Kathleen Kennedy] and Joe [Joseph Kennedy Jr.]. He puts that umbrella up so it shades us both and I thought, *Got you.*

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: I took him through all of them and he said, "Teddy may be the brightest of all. He's the youngest, but he may be the brightest." I said, "Your son is probably going to be President of the United States. What does that say about your son?" "Listen," he said, "I rely on [Stephen] Steve Smith at the office, but Eunice [Kennedy Shriver] can do that, or Pat. Any of my children are talented. I'm just saying Teddy is very young, but he might be the brightest of all." The conversation went along and it turned out he was enjoying it. Talking about his children was

the one thing he really wanted to do, and I wrote a long memo on it. Didn't do a very long story, but we claimed full credit for getting the interview that terHorst couldn't get.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: The line was—I asked him about Rosemary and then about Jack, and he said, “Who knows why God makes one child as dull as a dollar, and another who shines like the sun?” And I didn't want to write it down because I didn't want to stop him. You know, I had him on a roll and he just—He talked about Rose and her role in making the children what they were.

Anyway, that's very little about Teddy, but it's about the patriarch of the family.

Young: Well, in a sense, it is about Teddy—

Seigenthaler: Yes, it is.

Young: —because you just can't separate out.

Seigenthaler: No, you can't, that's right.

Young: You know, it strikes me as though that family was for so many years their entire society. They'd go out and travel, but they would even dance together.

Seigenthaler: Let me just tell you, you go to that house in Hyannis Port and go to breakfast, you were totally ignored.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: Finally, if Rose was there, she'd make some sort of bow to your presence, but it was like you weren't even there.

Young: But Ted is not at all that way, it seems to me, now.

Seigenthaler: No. I agree.

Young: He's the most gracious, talkative—

Seigenthaler: Oh, he is, yes.

Young: —entertaining, and he's always wondering, “Are you comfortable there?” and so forth and so on. But he's older and he's by himself.

Seigenthaler: I'm sure you're going to hear a hundred times the story about when he and Bob were in school.

Young: At Portsmouth Priory?

Seigenthaler: Teddy was getting pounded and Bob comes out. “Help, help, help!” “Now, Teddy, Dad said you have to take up for yourself,” or, “Mom said you take up for yourself.” Teddy tells that story.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: Then, I’m in the campaign. The day after the nomination he had said, “I’m going to have a little time tomorrow.” He thought [W. Stuart] Symington was going to be the nominee and wanted Symington to be the nominee. And after speaking to the Arkansas delegation, which he spoke to because McClellan was chairman, he met Symington outside in the hall and they went up into a little alcove and I’m sure he told Symington that Jack wanted him.

Then of course the morning after the nomination—I always blame [William Philip] Phil Gramm, or give Phil Gramm credit for it. Bob had said, “Come up and we’ll have a cup of coffee.” I took two lawyers from Tennessee, both of whom were for Kennedy, in that Tennessee delegation, and he knew both of them. We went up and waited for coffee and Angie Novello took us into a bedroom adjoining the large room where he and Jack were meeting. Suddenly, through this room this parade of recognizable people start filing in pretty early on. Phil Gramm was the first I remember, and I knew who he was. I shook hands with him. He goes on into the room and we’re sitting there and the next thing you know, Arthur Goldberg comes through with George Meany. They had their session. [Walter] Reuther comes separately. [George] Smathers came. I don’t know how many came, but it was entertaining to see who was coming and going and then after an hour, suddenly he walked in and said, “Look, I have to go downstairs. I’m sorry, something’s come up.” Of course, what had come up was the offer to Lyndon.

Young: Bobby was with you?

Seigenthaler: And he was told to go down and tell him there was going to be a floor fight. Had it not been bad enough between Bob and Lyndon before that, it was irreparable after that.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: I mean, Lyndon hated him forever and it was mutual. Anyway, he goes down and we leave. We said we understood perfectly. “We’ve had our coffee while you’ve been in there.” I tried to pump him a little bit. I said, “It’s damn interesting what’s going on there.” The people I know were in the room at one time or another—Both Ted Kennedy and Ted Sorensen were there; I think Ralph Dungan was there, and maybe Ted Reardon, although I’m not sure about Ted Reardon. Ted Reardon was basically on the way out by that time. He was not going to stay on Jack’s staff and really didn’t come to the White House with him. Larry O’Brien I don’t think was there. Larry was down still sort of feeling the pulse.

But I don’t have any doubt that when Bob left to go down there, he intended—both of them intended, all three of them intended—to tell them there was going to be a floor fight. “You don’t want to be embarrassed by this. The best thing is not to do it.” Of course by the time he got down there, Lyndon had called and Jack had accepted him, and so Bob was walking into a briar patch and it was pretty awkward. He explains it very well in the oral history.

At any rate, on that night he asked me to come up and asked me if I would come to work on the campaign as his administrative assistant. I told him I would. Our editor had changed. We had a great staff. Tom Wicker worked on that Nashville staff. David Halberstam was on our Nashville staff. Dick Harwood later came to the *Post*. Fred Graham was on that staff. The editor, a guy named Coleman Harwell, had hired us all. The new editor was a totally different guy and we all bailed out within three to four months after he came. Wicker went first. I went second. We all were looking for somewhere to go. David didn't leave until after the election.

A fellow named Wallace Westfeldt, who produced *Huntley-Brinkley*, moved from—He was a good print reporter, but he was also a great television producer. I was looking for a way out, and when he offered, I said, “Yes, I'd be glad to come.” He had mentioned it before, but this time it was serious and I did it. Periodically after that, I would intersect with Ted, because he was out in the west. I rarely saw him, because I didn't travel. My desk and Steve Smith's desk faced each other. The office in Washington was at Connecticut and K. We had a whole floor. Lyndon's operation was just across the hall. [Henry] Scoop Jackson's office was—Scoop was head of the Democratic National Committee, and his office was on that floor right next to Bob's, and then Larry's operation was at the end of the hall.

Young: Were you there most of the campaign, or did you travel?

Seigenthaler: I was there most of the campaign. He traveled, but there had to be somebody there. For example, the call to Dr. [Martin Luther, Jr.] King pissed Bob off a little bit because he didn't know it was going to happen, and he blamed Sarge [Robert Sargent Shriver] and Harris Wofford for excluding him from it, because he thought they were afraid he would block it.

Young: Because of the southern—

Seigenthaler: Yes. And so when it happened, the next day he said, “Call every southern chairman and find out.” You never heard as much moaning and groaning. The only southern chairman who really stood up was Griffin Bell. “We could use a little advance notice if you're going to do something on this, but we're still going to carry Georgia.” It was an interesting role to play.

The day after that, Bob went to upstate New York, to Syracuse, to make some speech and I drove him to the airport. He was sore that after the President had called him, the judge had not moved immediately the day before to release King. He was talking about calling the judge and raising hell about it. Evan, in writing his book, sort of explained to me what happened.

When I put him on the plane—There was a private plane to fly him up; I drove him out to Page Aviation—the last word was, “I'm not going to call him.” Then about early afternoon, Roger Tubby, who was handling press, came in and said, “The crazy judge down in Georgia says Bob called him on the telephone.” I said, “Just put out a denial; he didn't do that.” About an hour after that Bob called in. “Anything going on?” I said, “Yes, as a matter of fact, that crazy judge said you called him. I told Roger to put out—” There was a long pause and he said, “Well, withdraw the denial. I did call him.” He had called the Governor first, and the Governor said, “I think it might be helpful if you call him.” And of course he carried, I think, five southern states,

but it was a tough time. Teddy, during this whole time, was on the West Coast and you'd hear from him periodically.

Young: He was working out there mainly before the convention.

Seigenthaler: Absolutely. He stayed on mostly to continue—

Young: —with those delegations?

Seigenthaler: —with those delegations, and then to move to try to integrate the Johnson campaign with the Kennedy campaign. During that campaign, a very unhealthy movement started at the—What was the little hotel over there? The Carroll Arms Hotel. There was a fellow on McClellan's staff named Howard Hagarew [sp?] who called me and said, "I have to see Bobby for Senator McClellan." I said, "Come on." He said, "The Senator's worried. At the Carroll Arms Hotel, Scott Peek and some of the Smathers people are starting a separate southern campaign and McClellan says they're not saying the right thing over there," which I thought was interesting. It meant there was some racism coming out of there. He said, "They're raising money on their own and the Senator thinks Bobby ought to stop it." He talked to Jack, and it was Smathers who was really the architect of it. Jack talked to Smathers and they killed it.

Again, Teddy was far removed from any of that, but you would periodically hear from him. He would call in and sometimes he'd talk to me; sometimes he'd talk to Steve. If it was money, somebody who was a donor, he'd talk to Steve. If it was somebody wanting Bobby to call, to get them in line, to reassure them that we really loved them, you know, he would do that. Then if Bob were there, sometimes they'd just talk directly. It was a different world without cell phones.

Scoop was very much interested in what Teddy was doing, because he was from Washington State, and I'm sure they talked with some regularity. I think Scoop had taken Washington on for himself, but obviously Teddy wanted to get as much out of the west as he could.

On Election Night, I elected not to go to Hyannis Port. I didn't really see that there was much role, so my wife and I stayed up late at the hotel. We were staying at the Mayflower during the campaign. You know the next—[Benjamin A., II] Smith takes Jack's Senate seat, then the question is, is he going to keep it? Then, Old Lady [M. Harriet] McCormack pops up with Papa John [W. McCormack].

There was a good deal of contact between Bob and Teddy during that period. The thing I remember most about it is there was constant pressure on Ted to get tough, to respond in kind to the stuff like "If his name were Edward Moore, his candidacy would be a joke." Bob's advice was, "Let's not have a Boston Irish brawl. Stay above the fray to the extent that you can." I don't think he needed to tell Teddy that, but I think it helped to reinforce what his own instincts were.

Young: What about—Bob first says no to being Attorney General, and then he says yes. And, of course, what's Teddy's going to be doing? He's too young to replace Jack. But if Bob had not gone with Jack in the administration, don't you imagine that he'd have been looking at a Senate—

Seigenthaler: Well, he might have.

Young: Or his father might have.

Seigenthaler: He might have. His father, of course, said he wanted him to be Attorney General.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: Jack offered it to Abe Ribicoff first and Ribicoff said, candidly, “You’re going to have civil rights problems; you don’t need a Jew in that job. I’d like Health and Education.” He became Secretary of HEW [United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare], and then got pissed off at the—He thought there was a lot of finger pointing, as I think there always is.

George Reedy wrote a really insightful little book called, *Twilight of the Presidency*. There is a chapter in there on the Palace Guard, and I think Ribicoff never felt that he could penetrate the Palace Guard. [Wallace] Wally Turner, who had been with the *Seattle Times* and later went with the *New York Times*—He was their West Coast California correspondent for years and years—was Abe’s press secretary, and so we would hear about Ribicoff’s dissatisfaction.

Whenever there was a Cabinet meeting, the President would ask for candor and Abe would give him candor, and somebody would twist it and leak it, and he took it about three or four times and then came over to see Bob and said, “You know, it’s just not worth it. I’m going back to run for the Senate in Connecticut.”

But back to the point. I don’t remember how soon it was that Ted really decided he was going to wade into the hot water, but relatively early on. He was looking for something to do.

Young: I’ve heard that he kind of assumed that the Senate seat—that Bobby would be for that.

Seigenthaler: Yes.

Young: This was before it was decided that he was going to go out to the west, either to New Mexico or Arizona.

Seigenthaler: That’s exactly right. That’s exactly right.

Young: And his father said, “No, you’re staying.”

Seigenthaler: That’s exactly right. There was that flurry of activity and the old man not only wanted him to stay but wanted him to be Attorney General.

Young: Wanted Bob to be Attorney General. There is a lot of evidence in the record that people around Jack were not at all happy.

Seigenthaler: Oh, boy. And let me just tell you, it was a tough—

Young: They were a tough crowd.

Seigenthaler: Once Teddy’s—Once that decision was made—and you know it was a family decision; everybody got together on it—but then it’s a question of what to do about Bob. They

were trying; they were really stretching it. They wanted to send him over to the Defense Department to help [Robert] McNamara narrow the missile gap, which was a campaign rhetorical exercise that was fraudulent on its face. I think they really thought there was a missile gap maybe, until they got there and found out there wasn't.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: The President ran it up the flagpole in Florida playing golf—He told Bill Laurence from the *New York Times*, as I recall, and Laurence floated it, and the reaction was negative.

Young: This is about Bob?

Seigenthaler: About Bob. The liberals, particularly, didn't want him to be Attorney General.

Young: Yes, they were very conservative in that sense.

Seigenthaler: And Ribicoff had flatly, from the get-go, said, "No way. I'm not going to do it." I took Bob one morning—[Harry S.] Truman was in town one day and he went by and talked to Truman and Truman told him to get the hell out of the administration. "Give your brother a break."

A couple of days later he asked me if I'd drive him, and he goes to see Bill Douglas, McClellan, J. Edgar Hoover, maybe [J. William] Fulbright—although he didn't like him. He was against him being Secretary of State but I think he went to see him. There were the two Senators from Arkansas—There were five people: Justice Douglas, Hoover, McClellan—There were five older guys. There's somebody else that I'm forgetting. I'd drive him from place to place to place and he's in each place about 20 minutes. He comes out and he's disconsolate. I mean, we're right down to the decision now.

Young: Right.

Seigenthaler: I think at that time, still floating the idea of Teddy going west and reestablishing himself. We get back to the house at Hickory Hill that night. We got back late, because we had dinner in the bedroom.

Young: This was at his house?

Seigenthaler: At his house at Hickory Hill, yes. He recounts that everybody says to get out. Teach. Travel. Douglas had been on that trip to Pakistan with him, and Soviet Asia. McClellan says it's not the thing to do. The only person who is for it is J. Edgar Hoover.

Young: Really?

Seigenthaler: Yes. And Bob says, "He doesn't really mean it. He doesn't want me over there, but he knows I'm going to tell Jack. But he doesn't really want me." McClellan said don't do it. Douglas said don't do it. Fulbright wanted him to teach. There's somebody I'm forgetting. It'll come to me, I'm sure.

He said, “Well, I’d better call Johnny.” He called and starts saying, “Look, it’s just not going to work. This is what the old heads think and these are people that I trust. I think Hoover’s lying, but this is what he said.” Jack says, “I don’t want to talk about it tonight. Come over here first thing in the morning for breakfast.”

We go over the next morning for breakfast and I had the great, good fortune of being in on that meeting where Jack just said—and he was very—the conversation—It’s all three of them. Sometimes they don’t finish sentences and sometimes they don’t call names and sometimes they talk about—

Jack opens the conversation when we walk in by saying—and I’m sure he was eavesdropping on the other phone—that Dean Rusk had, I think the day before—Maybe he had accepted two days before and now he called—Jack told him to call Adlai [Stevenson]. I think he was on an extension, because he’s repeating what both of them are saying. It’s basically that Rusk said, “Now, Adlai, I’ve signed on to this man’s army and I’m here to tell you that the President and I want to elevate the United Nations to a Cabinet position. I signed on to this man’s army and I didn’t want to, and I know you don’t want to be Secretary of the United Nations, but I’m asking you to serve and we’ll share responsibility.” Jack is repeating this, and laughing about the clever way that Rusk had handled it.

Then we go in for breakfast and sit down and Bob said, “Well, I started last night, but let me tell you—” The President interrupts him and says, “Before you do, Bobby, let me just tell you what I think.” He said to me, “John, you haven’t heard this.” They’re facing each other across the table and I’m sitting at the head of the table. He reaches out and touches me, “*You* haven’t heard this.” And he starts talking to me. He says, “You know, I’ve got a Cabinet. Rusk is a good example, but McNamara, too—This guy [J. Edward] Day, who is going to be Postmaster, is out in California. I don’t even remember meeting the damn fellow, but Teddy says I did. Teddy says I was out there and in his house or he was a host or something. I don’t remember these people. Yes, Stu Udall and I served in the House together, and he’ll do a good job, but we were never close. I’ve got nobody in this administration that I can—”

He’s no longer talking to me. After 20 seconds, he’s right with Bob eye-to-eye and he just puts it right on him. “You know we’re going to have problems with organized crime; we’re going to have problems with civil rights; we’re going to have problems all around the world. I’ve got to have somebody in there who tells me what they think is in my best interest, not what they may think is in their best interest. And you know how it is when you get people together, Bobby.”

It’s Bobby and Johnny. I’d say it’s seven minutes hardcore “I need you. You can’t turn me down.” Bob had started by saying, “You know, I don’t think I’d better—It’s going to kill Dad, but I don’t think I’d better.” That’s when Jack responds, and I thought it was rather clever. He said, “John, *you* haven’t heard this.” But he wasn’t talking to me. He was really talking—

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: And he begins and then when he finishes, he says, “Now, John, do you want some more coffee?” I said, “Yes, I’d love some.” He gets up. Provi [Providencia Paredes] was in the kitchen, but he goes in and gets the coffee, brings it back in, pours it into my cup. While he was

out, Bob said, “Look, I’ve got to make some points with him.” I said, “I think he’s made the points.” He comes back in and says, “So that’s it, General. Let’s grab our balls and go,” which I thought was classic Jack.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: “So that’s it, General. Let’s grab our balls and go.” The next day we came over and came in the back door and went out on the front porch and he told Bob to comb his hair before he went out, or patted his hair down or something. Again, it’s not a Teddy story, but it is a Teddy story in the sense that there were going to be three of them in the government by that point, it’s very clear.

From the outset, there was concern about John McCormack and Eddie McCormack, and what the hell you do about that when you get to it, and I don’t think the final decision on Teddy came until—I don’t remember exactly when, but I don’t think it was that clear, even by the inaugural.

Young: No, it probably wasn’t.

Seigenthaler: Yes, I think it was not clear by the inaugural, but very early after we were in there, because you know that you’re going to have [Benjamin A., II] Smith.

Young: Right. But what happened was what the father wanted—

Seigenthaler: Yes.

Young: What Joe wanted. By other accounts, the argument that the President was giving, “I need you. You’re the only one I need,” was exactly the father’s point to Jack.

Seigenthaler: Yes. Well, I’m sure it was.

Young: And Jack just knows that this is going to be a dynasty.

Seigenthaler: I’m sure it was. I think this is true of almost everybody on that staff, and also Sorensen and his side of it. Dick Goodwin was sort of a freewheeling agent, not close to anybody over there. Larry, Dick Donahue and his side, separate from Ted, you know, friendly but distant.

Young: Kenny O’Donnell was in the—

Seigenthaler: Of course, Kenny and Pierre [Salinger] were—They were all Bob’s.

Young: Yes, that’s true.

Seigenthaler: So while they at times were ambivalent when the President was, they were very comfortable with it, both of them.

Young: Yes, I think it’s pretty clear.

Seigenthaler: But both of them were totally secure with Bob.

Young: Well, I think there was some feeling that Teddy was going to come in here and just mess it up. That something was going to happen.

Seigenthaler: I think that's right. Larry was constantly complaining during the campaign about Teddy riding bulls and—

Young: Jumping off ski hills.

Seigenthaler: Diving into shallow water. They were sort of shaking their heads about it, but the truth of the matter was he was giving interest to that campaign. That family campaigned as a family. Those teas, that core of women who worked around Rose, Eunice, Jean, Pat, with those teas. That was a national event. Those four or five women would pick up and go to a city and you would have five, six, seven thousand women filing through somebody's house, each one invited for a half hour, and it's just a constant flow. They were in the west as well. The whole family was a blitz. That campaign was a blitz.

Once he's elected—and I think there was a lot of contact, I don't remember how often. The telephone record, Angie Novello's book, would show, but I think there were conversations frequently with Bob and Teddy. I don't know how often he talked to the President, but he did talk to the Attorney General frequently.

Young: During his campaign?

Seigenthaler: During the campaign against [Edward J., Jr.] McCormack.

Young: Yes, '62. And of course the missile crisis was in there.

Seigenthaler: That's right. Yes, that's right.

Young: I think the President was giving some strategic advice to him, but he was hands off the campaign publicly. He didn't want to be associated with them.

Seigenthaler: And Teddy was not above creating little minicrises by breaking some photographer's camera who was trying to take a picture of him on a ski trip somewhere.

Young: Yes. But I think he was dead serious in this campaign.

Seigenthaler: Oh, no doubt about it.

Young: He is overshadowed by his brothers in many ways. He's got to become his own person.

Seigenthaler: I can't remember the date of it, but it's after the administration is in and after Teddy's in the race, but before the election. I guess it's a birthday party: Bob's party or Ethel's [Kennedy]. Let's see, it would have been—It was warm weather and we were all at Hickory Hill. Black tie. People are getting thrown into the pool, and Teddy is one of the people throwing people in the pool. Then he goes off the board himself and makes news. His father made that classic crack, "Wonderful. Everybody in Massachusetts wants to vote for somebody who jumps into a swimming pool wearing a tuxedo," which was a very wry reprimand.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: But what you said is true. He got what he wanted, even though he didn't force access. Somehow it worked out just the way he wanted it to work, the old man. I hadn't really thought about it in that context, but he had a plan all the way through.

Young: When Ted started in the Senate in '63, after the '62 election, he then takes a very low profile. There's no more jumping in pools.

Seigenthaler: That's right; that's exactly right.

Young: And he does his things with the old bulls in the Senate, visits them and makes a very favorable impression with Jim Eastland. He's deferential. He pays the calls. He doesn't give any speeches on the floor. He abides by the rules and he's not in the social circles in a way that you would know it.

Seigenthaler: Right.

Young: And that tells me he knew what he was doing when he was doing it.

Seigenthaler: Yes, he did.

Young: I think Jack may have coached him a bit.

Seigenthaler: I think that's right. From the outset, Jack was a Senator himself, but also he understood how that game was played, and far better than Bob.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: Teddy played by the rules. Bob was, from the outset, something of a maverick. Teddy relied—For once, the older brother relied on the younger brother in finding his way around the Senate.

Young: Now that was when they—This was '65—

Seigenthaler: Yes.

Young: —when they're both sworn in at the same time, in January. That was Ted's first time after the plane crash, and he was still new at it.

Seigenthaler: That's exactly right. I forgot that. I mean, you talk about a family crisis. When that crash occurred, there was real fear he was going to die.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: Or that he would be crippled permanently, be disabled.

Young: Well, he was running.

Seigenthaler: Yes.

Young: And Bob was running in New York.

Seigenthaler: That's right.

Young: And he had stayed for the vote on the Civil Rights Act of '64.

Seigenthaler: Yes.

Young: So he was late getting up there, too, because the Democratic Convention was waiting in Massachusetts.

Seigenthaler: Right.

Young: Do you have any sense of—There was that brief period in '63, before the President goes to Dallas, when the three brothers were all here in Washington together, now in very different relationships. Do you have any sense of those last months together, what the relations were between the brothers? Was Jack so concerned with—There was the Bay of Pigs and all that, but surely there must have been some bond or some relation among them.

Seigenthaler: Most of my sense of how it came from telephone calls Bob received or made to both of them, most often to Jack, but not infrequently to Ted or Ted to him. They all understood they had to stay on the same page. If he was going to maintain support in the Senate, he had to rely on Teddy.

He was not getting much help from Lyndon. I was at the house at Hickory Hill pretty early on, and they were trying to get civil rights votes; I don't know whether to get it out of committee or somewhere. Bob had a trot line to run and Teddy had a trot line to run and the President—Everybody was trying to line up votes and get votes. I don't know whether it was a conference call among the three of them, or Bob's conversation with one or the other or both, but I'm listening only to one end of the conversation. They're not mentioning his name, but it's clear to me that they're talking about the Vice President, and that he won't get off his ass and go over and help horsewhip Congress into line, and he won't use his influence with Sam.

Teddy's reporting from the Senate about how it's going, what he's feeling. So there is this conversation in which I know they're talking about Lyndon. Bob says, "We were right about him at ten, two and four, but not at six o'clock," as if to say, "We're not getting any help out of him and we knew we wouldn't anyway."

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: "He got us where we are. There's no use crying over spilled milk, but we're not going to get any help out of him."

Young: Do you think Ted really could do anything about this? He was just very mute.

Seigenthaler: No, I think he was—Nobody was paying attention, but I think he was eyes and ears over there.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: He'd move around, and you couldn't have had a better pulse-feeler over there. I think he knew that Lyndon wasn't anywhere around there when he should have been around there. He wasn't presiding and was not making any effort. Lyndon's relationship with Jack was civil and courteous, but about as distant as you can imagine.

He was constantly almost paranoid about Bob, and I will tell you the God's truth: During the time I'm in the Justice Department, we didn't give Lyndon Johnson a second thought. Pretty early on, Walter Jenkins called me and asked me to come over and we had lunch at the White House Mess. This is really early, maybe two or three weeks in. He said, "John, we've got to keep our principals apart, and there are going to be times when we can't, but we've got to make sure we've got buffers in there whenever they're together at social events that we can't control," which told me that Lyndon was paranoid about him.

I don't want to bore you with another whole story, but there comes a time when he—It really explains Lyndon's attitude. Walter called one day and said, "The Vice President would like to come see the Attorney General." I said, "Fine, when?" "John, the Vice President specifically told me to come at Bobby's convenience. When will the Attorney General be around?" I said, "Come on, Walter. Any time he wants to come, Bob will cancel anything he's doing. Come right now. I think even if the President wanted to talk to him, if the Vice President wanted to come see him, they'd both understand." I'm thinking that's a fact. Finally I said, "Just hang on, let me check. Nine o'clock in the morning." "Are you sure the Attorney General will agree?" "Yes," I said. "Yes, nine o'clock in the morning."

"Well, he's bringing a guest with him." I said, "Good. Who?" He said, "John, the Vice President told me specifically not to say." I said, "Walter, you can tell me. God, we've talked about this." I don't know it, but Lyndon is standing right over his shoulder, probably, and I'll tell you how it comes about. I said, "Look, what's it about? Bob's going to want to know what it's about, and he's going to want to research, if we're talking about some lawsuit or something." He said, "John, if you were in my position, you would say exactly what Bobby told you to say, and the Vice President has said he does not want me to tell you why he's coming or with whom he's coming." And I said, "Well, I'll make absolutely certain that Bob will be here and be ready for him and it's not inconvenient at all."

At 8:45 the next morning I was out in the foyer. In came Lyndon and Sam Rayburn. I rushed them back and Bob said, "Do you want John to take notes?" Lyndon said, "Yes, that will be fine. I don't know if there's anything we can do here. We're just going to make a request of you, Bobby, and I know you can't fulfill it. I've already told Mr. Sam that I'm here because he's my godfather in politics." Of course, Dick Russell was his godfather at other times.

Young: Right.

Seigenthaler: He made this pitch that Mr. Sam has a woman in Texas who's too old to be a judge and he wants her to be a judge. "I know you've told Bernie Segal at the ABA [American

Bar Association] that you're not going to name anybody who's over 60 years old, and this woman is a few months older." Sam said, "Bobby, you shouldn't be asking the woman her age anyway. If she's competent to be a judge, then you ought to name her a judge." Lyndon broke in and said, "But I know you can't. I have told Mr. Sam, you live by rules. You make rules and you live by them. And you're a principled man."

He said, "You know, Jack and I had an agreement. We want to be reelected in 1964 and I've got patronage in Texas, and I have exercised that and we're protected in Texas. I am here to tell you that I have not spoken to you about a single U.S. attorney, a single U.S. marshal or a single U.S. judge, not one. You know that's true. And let me tell you, you've done a wonderful job. You've been fair. You tilted toward [John B., Jr.] Connally, but you've taken care of [Ralph] Yarborough. I congratulate you on that. Texas is in good shape, and you've helped make it that way. But I know you've got your rules and you can't violate your rules."

Bob said, "Is there anything else about the woman besides her age?" "Nothing." He said to me, "Go call Byron [White]." I went out and tried to get Byron. He wasn't in. I said, "As soon as he gets in, ask him to come up." So I went back. "He's not in. He'll be in in 20 minutes." Lyndon said, "I don't have to bother you with this. We understand." "Mr. Vice President, I'll be in touch with you immediately on this." They left.

He got Byron up in the middle of the morning and said, "We're going to do it. I mean, Johnny will be on my ass constantly. Lyndon will wear me out on this. We're going to name this judge." Byron complained about it and didn't want to tell Segal we were going to do it, and Bob said, "Well, we ought to name a woman." So they did it. By the middle of the afternoon, they knew they were going to do it and there was nothing—I mean, great record, just too old. I said, "Do you want me to call Walter and tell him? He said, "Why don't you call him and tell him I want to see the Vice President at the Vice President's convenience."

So I called him and Walter said, "Is Bobby standing by you?" I said, "No, is Lyndon standing by you?" He said, "You know damn well he is." Bob went by at 9:00 the next morning and when he came in the office he said, "You won't believe what Lyndon said. I told him, 'We're going to name her, and her name will go to the President today, and I have no problem with Byron because Byron is totally supportive. We have confidence she's going to make an outstanding judge.'" Lyndon said, "Bobby, we're spending Mr. Sam's nickels here; we're not spending mine."

Now, the punch line is that it's Sarah Hughes, who swore Lyndon in as President, in Texas. Again, it's not a Teddy story, but it is a story, I'll tell you. It is one *hell* of a story. But you know, it didn't make any difference in terms of their relationship. It didn't bring them any closer together, but it showed that when they were together, they were mostly congenial and convivial.

If I go down that road, I'll never get to Teddy, because that is a whole other story. [Robert] Caro is going to get into some of that in his book. I've talked to him a couple of times and, who knows? He's talking to other people as well. I think he understands Lyndon.

Young: Yes. I have infrequent conversations with Bob Caro.

Seigenthaler: Yes.

Young: You know he's sort of interested in these two projects.

Seigenthaler: That's right.

Young: We compare notes.

Seigenthaler: Yes, that's exactly right.

Young: He sees them as complementary, you know.

Seigenthaler: I think they are.

Young: Ted becomes the—

Seigenthaler: Well, it ought to be a great resource for him.

Young: Yes. How are these brothers—Well, maybe I'm jumping ahead. Let me just ask: How were these brothers alike? And how were they different?

Seigenthaler: I think that's a good question.

Young: They're all Kennedys.

Seigenthaler: I think all three of them are very much alike in that they all have that same commitment to public service. There is no other way to—And it's unique in a family; nobody interested in a business, nobody interested in making money. I don't mean that they didn't like money. They enjoyed their father's wealth and enjoyed their own wealth, but the commitment to public service is—Given the fact that their father, while interested in government and participating in government, was basically a businessman. I don't think they were turned off about business. It was just not of any interest to them.

Young: The father said that anybody can make money, but the great men of the next generation will be men of affairs, not of business.

Seigenthaler: Yes.

Young: The idea of giving back something, and also of carrying on and doing public service, was, I think, instilled in all of the family, even the women.

Seigenthaler: Even the women, that's right, I mean, Jean going as Ambassador, and Eunice with the foundation and with the Special Olympics.

Young: Not with Kay. She sort of opted out.

Seigenthaler: That's right. Yes.

Young: And Rosemary couldn't. But it's extraordinary, the drive and the persistence.

Seigenthaler: That's right.

Young: And none of them retired.

Seigenthaler: But how are they alike? I mean—

Young: Jack once said that Ted is the best politician.

Seigenthaler: Yes. I don't think there's any doubt of that.

Young: Well, that's what I'm getting at.

Seigenthaler: That may be what his father saw even earlier. When he said that Teddy may be the brightest, that's what he's really thinking about. Teddy is more Boston Irish than either Jack or Bob, and Boston Irish in the sense that Joseph P. Kennedy understood. Teddy was more like his daddy and more like Honey Fitz [John F. Fitzgerald].

Young: Honey Fitz.

Seigenthaler: Yes.

Young: Did he ever talk to you about Honey Fitz?

Seigenthaler: Oh yes. Occasionally Toodles [Elizabeth Ryan] would come up in the conversation and they'd laugh about it, but never would go too far with it, you know. Most people I know who are around them were astounded when Doris Kearns Goodwin's book comes out and Toodles is all over it. But they knew; the three of them knew.

Let me think when it was, because it was during my Nieman year, '58. Jack's running for the United States Senate, Bob is managing the campaign, and Teddy is all over it. I wrote something about it in an article later, after Jack died, but there is a place, and I don't remember where it is, that is the traditional last appearance on Election Day in Boston. There is a gathering on the night before the election, a traditional place to gather. The three of them agreed to go to Mattapan, which was a Jewish community in those days, after that.

Wally Turner, who was in my Nieman class, and I knew they were going there, so we didn't go to this traditional place; we went to Mattapan. People were saying, "Well, they won't come, or they'll send one of them." Then Pat [Patricia Kennedy] Lawford came and everybody made over her a little bit, and then all of a sudden, one brother, two brothers, three brothers—and then they start singing. Teddy is the leader of that.

Young: Really?

Seigenthaler: "Come on up here, Jack. Come on up here, Bobby." These fellows can't sing. Bobby can't even carry a tune. He can't carry a tune in a bucket, but he is clearly the master of ceremonies and he tells them, "We don't want anybody here to say we were here tonight because we know you'll all be laughing about it, you know. We came out here because we knew you were here, and we want you to join in on these Irish songs with us." You know, "Those Wedding Bells Are Breaking Up that Old Gang of Mine," and—

Young: And, “Won’t You Come Home, Bill Bailey?”

Seigenthaler: Yes. “Won’t You Come Home, Bill Bailey?” and then, “Irish Eyes,” but none of the old Gaelic, none of the old—No “Four Green Fields,” no “Erin Go Bragh.” It’s just hale, hearty fun, but politicking in the best sense. Teddy goes through one of these things: “All right, now in this chorus, we’re going to do this. We want to hear all of the sopranos in the front,” you know, and he’d go on, “women over 40.” Nobody. He’d laugh. He’s terrific.

Young: Yes. He loves that.

Seigenthaler: Yes.

Young: Jack didn’t really have that gift.

Seigenthaler: I’ll tell you. I rode with Jack and Kenny and John Powers, who was head of the Massachusetts State Assembly, two or three days while I was a Nieman Fellow, and I think this is a difference. See if you agree. We would be driving down the street and Powers would say, “Stop the car. Jack, this is Mr. Rooney up on the ladder painting his house. Now, Rooney is the guy—His wife makes six o’clock mass every morning at St. Agnes and Rooney never goes to church. Now, he’s up there on the ladder and everybody around here loves the Rooneys, and they have a lot of fun saying Rooney is going to hell, but his wife is going to heaven. But he’s a good man. Anyway, have some fun with him.”

He literally directs Jack to get out of the car, go over to the ladder and say, “Mr. Rooney, Mr. Rooney,” and so Jack yells up, “Mr. Rooney, Mr. Rooney!” Rooney is painting and looks down, and Powers has to get out of the car. “Mr. Rooney, it’s Jack Kennedy down here. You know, Senator Kennedy.” “Oh, Jack my boy! I’ll be right down.” And he comes down. Now, Teddy would have been up the ladder.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: Teddy would have been up the ladder. We go to another place, and I think I understood for the first time Jack’s back problem. We go to a factory and you’ve got to walk up a long flight of narrow stairs to get up there. There are a lot of young, Irish women up there who weren’t long off the boat. I thought he moved through there in a rather—The difference between—Teddy would have been all over them. He would have had everybody’s name. Jack was a little slow to—and partly it might have been that his back was hurting, but I was a little surprised that he was—

Bob was that way, too. I can’t remember where we were, but Jack was marching in a parade somewhere, and [John P.] Chuck Roche, who was an old journalist working on the campaign and tough as nails—Jack was waving at the crowd with his hands down by his hips, I mean really a strange gesture. We got back in the car and Roche said, “For Christ’s sake, Jack, why are you waving with your hands down by your hips?” It was really tough criticism over a small matter, but I think everybody noticed. So gradually his hands went up, you know. He had been elected a number of times. I’m sure he’d marched in parades before, but nobody had told him.

Teddy, you know, was Teddy Bear. He'd bear-hug you, put a hand on your back. He and Claude Hooton would be singing songs before you turned around, wherever they were. Politics for him were real fun. Not work, fun. Now, that's my impression.

Young: He once said—This wasn't in this project, but he said this—"I love the street politics." This was in Massachusetts, about the campaign.

Seigenthaler: Right.

Young: I've had interviews with him on campaigning, and you know, I'd have an itinerary out there and he'd go like this.

Seigenthaler: Sure, that's right. The ways they're alike is their interests. Where's their difference? First of all, I just think Teddy was clearly the best politician.

Young: A people politician.

Seigenthaler: Yes, that's right. Jack was a little uncomfortable with it. I don't mean that he didn't enjoy it, but he just wasn't as outgoing, and Bob was not, either. Now, they were different. The two of them were different in a lot of ways. Bob was maybe a little more a reluctant dragon than Jack. I don't think it came easy at all to him. He understood the formality of it, what you had to do, where you had to go, how to make a speech, and he could be passionate and powerful. But there was substantial distance between Teddy and Jack in terms of the outgoing nature of street politics, and another distance between Jack and Bob.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: On the other hand, they were alike in that all three of them had not just a love of history but a curiosity about history, and unlike any politician since, used history as a political weapon. They all used some of the same stories. If it's a rough audience, there's the story about "What do you do to put out the fire? Do you put water on it? Do you put oil on it? Do you put sand on it?" They all used that story; it was a getaway story. If the audience wasn't that hot, "Let's get the hell out."

Jack used to use that story about Colonel Somebody in the Massachusetts Legislature during the first eclipse. Both of them came at times to use that story.

Young: I haven't heard that one.

Seigenthaler: Well, the colonel stands on the floor of the legislature of the Massachusetts assembly and says, "If this is the end of the world, may God find me at my post standing here." Jack would tell that story over and over. About midway through the campaign, he knew we were all laughing, all the journalists were. We knew, when that story starts, it's time to go head for the bus. He started dropping the names of journalists in the crowd. "Lo and behold, he was 'Colonel Eugene Roberts.'" And, you know, nobody knew a damn thing.

I think he had the most subtle sense of humor. Bob's was the most self-effacing. Teddy's could be raucous and riotous. But again, when you talk about the ways they are alike, when you talk to

Teddy about when [David] McCullough's book came out—Teddy was just all over David, all over him, and all over other members of the family to come listen to David talk about John Adams. He's still talking. He will tell you about John Adams—From my way of thinking, he doesn't deal heavily enough on the Sedition Act.

Young: David doesn't?

Seigenthaler: He [Ted] goes down to Civil War battlefields occasionally and he'll get a historian to go to the battlefield with him.

Young: And he brings certain members of the family.

Seigenthaler: Members of the family, and they tour the battlefield together.

Young: He says Jack started that. When Jack was President, they would go in a helicopter someplace, then he'd go and get a historian or something, and he sees himself as carrying on.

Seigenthaler: Right. And you know, Bob's visits in the field were not—I remember the first time he came to Nashville to testify against that judge in the impeachment case. I said to him afterward, "Where would you like to go?" He said, "I'd like to go to Andrew Jackson's homeplace." I said, "OK, let's go out there and then I'll get you to the airport." So we go out and I can't get him out of the damn place. It's time to close and a curator comes in and I said to her, "We'll be through in just a minute." She said, "If he wants to stay, I'll stay with him." And she takes him through. He misses the damn plane and he stays overnight with us. He calls Ethel when he gets to my house and says, "I can't get back tonight. Andrew Jackson kept me."

That visit aside, he was more likely to use field visits to stir controversy, as opposed to enrich his sense of history. He'd be in the [Mississippi] Delta in the same way he went to South Africa, and the same way he went to Poland. We were in Indonesia and he made some speech. I can't remember what he was talking about, but this kid got up—I mean, as usual it was the poor and the powerless and the government's responsibility. The kid gets up and says—The first question, right off the wall—"What do you say about the role of your country in the Mexican-American War?" He says, "It was not our finest moment in history." And that makes the headline.

The next day, both Jack and Teddy wire that Lyndon is raising hell, saying, "We're going to try and get reelected in 1964 and I'm going to do all I can to carry Texas, but there are a lot of heirs from Goliad and the Alamo who are going to be pissed off about what Bobby said about 'not our finest hour.'" They needled Bob about that. Both Jack and Teddy needled him about it when he got back.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: I think Ted immerses himself in history for the sense of history and learning. It's almost as if he slept through history class and now he's filling in the gaps.

Young: I think another characteristic of his, and maybe this is true of all of the brothers, I don't know, but his reputation in the Senate—and it's well deserved—is that he's the best prepared, in general.

Seigenthaler: No doubt.

Young: And the way he gets himself educated: he has issue dinners; he has seminars; he has people come to comment on an issue. He'll do the same thing with history. He brought Bob Caro down to talk about the history of the filibuster to himself and other Senators. On healthcare, on immigration, he just calls in all of the relevant people he can think of, to learn about the issue. The description that people give, on this project, of how those issue dinners or those seminars run is really quite fascinating, because they say that you don't know—He's not saying anything—"What are we doing here?"

Seigenthaler: Right.

Young: And that he's got it all—By the end, he'll say, "Well, it's time to break up, and here's what we accomplished or learned."

Seigenthaler: He's great at summing up.

Young: And he's got it all, including the subtleties. "You and you were not agreeing on something you said. They didn't say that. So I'd like to hear more of that sometime, have the two of you talk this out, because you're really not together on that part of it." It's a real gift, I think, and it turns to very good account in the Senate. Bob Byrd says he comes to the Senate with a head full of knowledge.

Seigenthaler: Right.

Young: He said he's always been very well prepared. Yet this was the guy who, back in the campaign, it's the street politics and all these issues. It's fascinating how he has developed his style. Some people say he's the one with the legislative temperament.

Seigenthaler: Sure.

Young: The street politics part of it also becomes the negotiation, the compromise—finding out how to get people with him, or together on something.

Seigenthaler: I was sitting at home one night watching C-SPAN, and David McCullough was a witness before a committee of two: Teddy and Lamar Alexander, who was chairing. Lamar lives about half a block from us and we don't agree on much, but we're good friends. There's a little lake in front of our house, and he and Honey [Leslee Alexander] would come over and walk around it. I saw him out there a couple of days later, on a Sunday, and I walked around with him.

He was by himself, and we talked about it. He said, "It was Teddy's idea to do it. And I think it was the most productive—I'm so glad C-SPAN had it. But it's interesting to hear freshmen members of the Senate come in there on my side and they're all very negative about Kennedy. They've all abused him in the campaign, they've all attacked him, and then they come in there and find out that he knows more than anybody else knows. And not only that, he knows how to get things done." And they see him standing to one side with Orrin Hatch in a very friendly conversation, patting each other on the back, laughing, pointing fingers at each other. They don't know what the conversation is about, but they're saying, "What the hell is this about?" And

Lamar said, “And I find people looking at me, when I’m talking to Kennedy, in exactly the same way.”

[William] Frist lives another block up the street. He’s rebuilding his father’s house as the White House. He really went in with a chip on his shoulder toward Teddy, primarily because he knew that Jim Sasser and Teddy were close, close friends and he beat Sasser, of course. During the campaign, he had taken a couple of cheap shots at Sasser for being a friend. Within six months he understood that if he had any chance to get anything done anywhere in the Senate as majority leader, he had to at least talk to Teddy and find out whether—And Teddy was willing to talk. That’s the other thing about it. You know, you talk about “the other side of the aisle,” but who the hell goes across? Except he does.

During one of the [John F. Kennedy] Profile in Courage Award—I chaired that committee. The year we gave it to [John] McCain and [Russell] Feingold, it was a nighttime event and it was wonderful, and then the next day there’s a public presentation. The nighttime event is really a fund-raiser, but the awardees are there. They speak very briefly, and Teddy and Caroline [Kennedy] will introduce them. Then the next day the formal ceremony takes place and we go out for lunch. Teddy presides at lunch and the families are there. So he’ll ask the daughter of one winner, or the mother of another, or a cousin, or he’ll hear that Aunt Sally has a story about Feingold, and then move to McCain.

It came time for McCain to speak at that private dinner upstairs and he said how honored he was, and how happy he was, and how great the event has been, and how gracious Caroline had been, and how gracious Ted had been. Then he stops and says, “But now, I want to tell you, there are times when Teddy just drives me”—and he got furious—“Teddy just drives me up the goddamn wall!” We burst into laughter, and he’s laughing and angry at the same time. I don’t know what he was thinking about, but he says, “You can’t make any headway and it just infuriates me, and sometimes people I’m counting on are with him.” He knew we were laughing and he was laughing at himself.

Young: But he was red in the face.

Seigenthaler: Then they embraced. He’s a remarkable politician, and again and again and again that happens.

He never misses those Profile in Courage Award meetings. He sits in on all of the preconference phone calls, and he’s got ideas. It’s a very independent-minded committee. It has both Thad Cochran in Mississippi and Olympia Snowe on it. McCullough was on it for a long time. Now [Michael] Beschloss is on it, Paul Kirk is on it, and David Burke is on it, and it’s interesting to see how his former staff members will disagree with him and how he laughs about it.

Caroline usually listens, says what she thinks when she thinks it makes sense, and will let you know if she thinks things are going in the wrong direction. But for a long time the committee had trouble because the book sort of suggests—and Ted Sorensen wrote the original guidelines for the committee—that only elected politicians who put their political life on the line are entitled to be considered. Well that, for years—Not John Lewis, who was a walking profile in courage by any consideration, because every position he took was very popular with his constituency.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: I pushed a little against that, and gradually we began to broaden it and made the biggest breakthrough and the toughest discussion. Teddy was a masterful force in this and he was quite spontaneous. We had decided we were going to give John Lewis a lifetime achievement award. And who was going to get—Sometimes we gave more than one award—Feingold and McCain, both were profiles in courage in different ways. Gerald Ford was on the table. It was the toughest, the most candid, the most controversial—and there were some people who just absolutely did not want to give it to Gerald Ford.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: And there are suggestions that, “Well, what are you going to do if history proves he cut a deal?” Even—You know, he hadn’t done anything since but play golf and collect money from making speeches.

Between McCullough offering a sense of history and Teddy sort of putting his blessing on—“Look what we’re doing here. We’re honoring two men who have shown different sorts of courage. We don’t have this opportunity that often. I believe if Jack were writing the book again—Gerald Ford clearly lost his election because of it. There were other reasons, obviously, but he lost to [Jimmy] Carter because what some of you are saying at this table now was what many people were saying about Gerald Ford and on behalf of Jimmy Carter at the time, that a deal was cut. There was just simply no evidence of it, and time has proven that’s not the case.” When he got through, there were still some reluctant dragons, but they all went along. Now he doesn’t do that. He says what he thinks. But if he hadn’t been there, I don’t know how we—It would have carried, but it wouldn’t have been an absolute consensus.

There haven’t been many times when we’ve had that sort of controversy. Usually it gets down to he has one point of view and somebody else will have another point of view, and he’ll lose as often as he wins. He probably wins more than he loses, but he makes you think. He makes people sitting around that table think. As chairman for all of those years—I’m not a very strong chairman, a sort of laid-back, indolent, non-gavel-wielding chairman, and he makes fun of me about that and does it in ways to make a point. He would say, “Well, Mr. Chairman, are you ever going to get a vote called here?” I’ve seen him in close range and talked to him privately a number of times before we got up there. It’s a strong-willed group and the qualities of leadership are there.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: At times, I think the decisions have made some people unhappy, but they all leave with grace, largely because both he and Caroline demonstrate it. One other thing about that, just thinking about him with Caroline and her children—All of Jack’s kids, all of Bob’s kids, all of Pat Lawford’s kids, even though there is more distance there, really at one time or another have leaned on him for help.

Young: Well, he became head of the family. And this wasn’t in anybody’s life plan.

Seigenthaler: No, that’s right.

Young: And suddenly.

Seigenthaler: That's right. You think of Chappaquiddick and you think of the times when he's done things that have disappointed people. I remember going into a restaurant over on—I used to go all the time to a place called La Colline. I was in there one day and the proprietor came over and said, "I love having Senator Kennedy and Senator [Christopher] Dodd in here. But last week they were in here and I had a real problem." "What's that?" "Well, when they were leaving—You know, I have all of these photographs of all of the people who have come here—they took every picture of every Republican and broke it on the floor." I said, "Well, did you bar them from the place?" And he said, "No. I said I'd send them a bill for breakage. I don't want them to go away. I wish they wouldn't do that, but I don't want them to go away."

Young: When was this? Late '60s, '70s? Was it after Bobby's death?

Seigenthaler: It was after Bob's death, yes. It would have been in the early '70s, maybe. The restaurant is no longer there, I don't think.

Young: Well, you look at the '60s in that family—How old was he? He goes to the Senate. His brother is President. The family has succeeded in its highest ambitions for public service. Jack is knocked off. Bobby's thrown for a loop, I'm sure. He comes back, makes a second start at the Senate himself, which Ted has done, and runs for the Presidency. And I think Ted didn't think much of that idea. Bobby was going to do it.

Seigenthaler: Oh, absolutely did not think much of that idea, and let me know he didn't. I didn't want to go to work in that campaign. By that time, I'm editor and publisher. He came to Tennessee and said, "I badly need you in Northern California. Could you please come out?" So I took a six-week vacation and went. I said, "You know the paper can't endorse you, Bob." He said, "Do you think that makes a hell of a difference to me? Do you think I'm going to do anything in Tennessee?" But Teddy came. Teddy worked like hell in that campaign.

Young: He did in Indiana.

Seigenthaler: And against interest. And you know, the people who come through with him would tell you exactly what they thought, which is what he thought, which was, *This is not going well*. But I'll tell you, he was a real champion. And on election night—and I should certainly relate this. On election night, Bobby called me and said, "When are you coming down?"

Young: This was California?

Seigenthaler: California. "When are you coming down?" And I said, "I'm not coming down. I'm going to stay up here on election night." California was tough. Gene McCarthy was in there early. That college community locked in on him, and I really had to—I worked every liberal—Arthur [Schlesinger] came, [John Kenneth] Ken Galbraith came, old Hodding [William, III] Carter came from Mississippi. John Glenn came. We really had to work every way to get Northern California. Southern California was going pretty well. [Jesse M.] Unruh had Southern California pretty well set up, because he was down there.

Young: Right.

Seigenthaler: But the north, including Sacramento, just didn't have everything right over there. When Teddy came in, he worked his head off. Even then, I knew he didn't feel good about it. Bob said, a couple days before the election, "Are you coming down?" And I said, "No, I'm going to stay up here. You're going to need these people on election night and we've really got it going up here now, and we're going to carry Northern California, so I'm going to stay here. But I want somebody up here. I want a Kennedy up here. If he'll come, Teddy is best."

And the machines broke down—the first effort at electronic voting in California—and for two hours, we couldn't get anything, except we were covering the precincts anyway and Phil Burton was the Congressman in San Francisco. [Joseph] Alioto was the mayor and Lyndon had him by the balls, but he was helping us a lot.

Teddy came up. The idea was that Bob would claim victory at the hotel, and we were having a rally at the Masonic Temple, so Teddy and I went over. Once Bob was sure we were going to carry the north—and we were about an hour behind Southern California in being able to say we got it—he said, "Well, I'm going down now. Will I see you tomorrow?" I said, "Yes, I don't know when we'll fly down." My family had come out. My mother and wife and son were going to drive down.

Ted and I went down and watched it on the television and it went off and we got in the car to go back to the hotel and it was on the radio. By the time we got back to the hotel, they had a plane ordered for us, and my wife had gotten back up and gotten my bag packed, and Ted and I flew down with Bobby Fitzgerald that night.

Young: Was Dave Burke with you?

Seigenthaler: Yes. He was still alive when we got there. The thing I remember about that was that Teddy was solicitous of *me*. He was talking on the telephone, constantly getting reports, and immediately coming back to me. I mean, he was like my brother. He embraced me as a member of the family at that point. I'm not saying that he didn't feel close to me before, but it was like he was, by sharing every piece of information he had, every time he got a piece of information—He was keeping nothing to himself.

He wanted me to know, "It's really going to be bad, John. It doesn't look good at all. We've got this specialist coming in from Massachusetts and I know the guy and, you know, if it can be done . . ." Then another call and they'd be back. Then we got on the plane. It was a military plane. It was like we were in mourning, but I mean he's in mourning, too, and he's worried about me. I should be asking, "How are *you* doing?" It was an overt effort that was generous and loving. I was devastated, but God, think of how he was. I'll always remember that.

Young: He's a very caring person.

Seigenthaler: Oh, boy.

Young: I mean, of anybody who's sick—

Seigenthaler: That's maybe the most graphic example of it I can remember. When we got there, when we got to Los Angeles, there was a helicopter that was going to fly us to the hospital, and

he said, “Bobby, there’s no room for you on the helicopter. John and I are going to go.” And you know, Bobby Fitzgerald is a cousin. He said, “There will be a car here for you and it will be right there, but John and I are going to take the helicopter to the hospital,” which we did, and Bob was—His brainwaves were flat by that time.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: It was just—It’s something you wouldn’t expect. It’s something I wouldn’t expect. You know, it was tearing him up. My son was an intern for him while he was in Duke, maybe in his junior year, and he did some work on the deregulation of the airlines. Teddy would stop and say, “How’s it going?” and, “Did you know about this, and did you hear about that?” and, “You might call So-and-So.” He does that, you know.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: “You might call So-and-So, and he might be able to give you a little different insight.” You know how he is. “Well, we’ll go on down there and—” I would have to say that his conversation rhetoric can sometimes be—It’s different. But my son was taken by his kindness. He went out of the way to say to a junior at Duke, “Look, you’re doing good work, and thanks very much.”

So, 1980 comes and my son was going to go to law school. He came home and said, “I’m bushed. I want to go to Europe, and I’ll go to law school next year.” I said, “How long will you be in Europe?” He said, “I want to stay a year.” I wasn’t happy about it, but he’s a bright kid and the last thing you want to do is tell him you can’t do what you want. “Go.” Three months later, he’s home. After a little while, he gets tired of doing nothing, maybe a month, and he says, “I want to go work on Teddy’s campaign.” I said, “That’s the worst thing you could do. You don’t want to do that.” He said, “No, I definitely do.” I said, “Look, that campaign is going nowhere.”

Young: This is the ’80 campaign?

Seigenthaler: Yes. I said, “That’s going nowhere. Don’t do this.” And we drop it. He knows I really don’t want him to do it. He said, “Is the paper going to endorse him?” I said, “What’s that got to do with it?” And he said, “Well, you know, you endorsed Carter last time. Are you going to endorse Teddy?” I said, “I don’t want to say this, but yes, we’re going to. It’s not going to make a damn bit of difference, but yes, we’re going to endorse him.” He said nothing.

Weeks go by and we’re not endorsing early. Steve Smith calls me on the phone and said, “Your son came up here today and gave me a \$1,500 contribution and asked for a job. He’s the only volunteer I have who brought money with him. All of these other kids are coming here asking for money. I’m taking him on and we’ll pay his expenses and that’s all he wants.”

Next thing I know, we’re at the convention and my son is floor-managing Minnesota. He had one hell of a time, but during that campaign, interacting with the media, he decided he wanted to be a journalist. I pushed him the other way as often—without demeaning journalism. But he met the guys covering that campaign. [John] Chancellor was very nice to him. A lot of people were, so he decided he wanted to be a television journalist and that campaign led him into it.

Interesting thing, the morning after the nomination, I got a call from [Walter] Fritz Mondale, who said, “Could you and your son come by for a cup of coffee this morning?” I said yes. I said, “You know, my son was working against you.” “Yes, that’s what I want to talk to you about.” So we went by and he said to my son, “You took seven Minnesota delegates away from me and I want to know how you did it.” My son said, “One of them did it—only one of them, who brought the other six—but they’re all gay. It made a difference. I didn’t exaggerate the President’s position on gay rights, but I did use it in every way I could.” And Fritz said, “Son of a bitch.” He said to me, “I couldn’t figure out how we lost these—Now I finally know. I’m going to make it up with them.” I told Teddy that later. I think that campaign was ill-conceived. It was not executed.

Young: Why did he do it?

Seigenthaler: It is absolutely beyond me. You know, “Why do you climb the mountain?” “Because it’s there.” I guess he just felt he had to do it. I remember going to a half-dozen meetings before he decided. Ted Sorensen and I and a lot of his staff—I think the two of us were there just to sort of put Jack and Bob’s imprimatur, in effect, on it with the staff. Neither one of us really added much to it, but there wasn’t really a hell of a lot to say. It was a failed effort. We both knew it, I think.

Young: Started late.

Seigenthaler: Yes. It started late and, you know, already their marriage was falling apart. My son called me from Chicago. He was advancing Joan [Kennedy]. He said, “I had a funny experience today. I put her in this suite and I was getting ready to leave. Everything was settled and she called me back from the door and said, ‘Come in here.’ She opened the ice box and there were six bottles of wine and two six-packs of beer. And she said, ‘Get that stuff out of here. Whoever rented this suite for me has to be a Carter supporter.’” I think that it was a great experience for him, but he knew as well as everybody else knew that it was going to be a losing campaign.

Young: Yes. And he stayed in it even after it was lost.

Seigenthaler: Yes. That’s right.

Young: You know, you’re running against all of the advice that he was giving Bobby.

Seigenthaler: Yes.

Young: “Tear up the party,” “You shouldn’t run against an incumbent—”

Seigenthaler: See? It’s exactly the same, and I think the drive within him is the same drive that was in Bob. I pleaded with Bob not to run. I got on an airplane—I went up for the Gridiron that year and called him and said, “Do you have any time this afternoon?” And he said, “No, I’m going to Iowa. I’m going to speak for [Harold Everett] Hughes, the Governor, who is running for the Senate, and there are going to be three other Governors there. You come go with me.” I said, “Hell, Bob, why are you trying—?” He said, “If you’ve been to one Gridiron, you’ve been to all of them. Come on go. We’re going to have some fun.” So I said, “Good.”

Peter Edelman and John Reilly and I get on the private plane going out there and immediately we're in a fight. They're both pushing him one way and I'm pushing him the other. Finally, after I listened and listened—Peter's got the hammer all around—"McCarthy won't do anything for the poor, won't help with race. He's a one-issue candidate." So we go, and he sits back and listens as if we were back in the Justice Department.

Every two weeks we'd have a roundtable meeting. The one thing he couldn't tolerate—and I don't think any of them could tolerate—was a "yes" man. If you didn't challenge him when he knew you should challenge him—I mean, you wouldn't be around. You wouldn't get a question. He'd never ask you a question if he thought you wouldn't give him an honest answer. Now, convincing him was tough, but you at least had to try.

But at this point he said, "I'm not going to do it," and Peter is pushing him hard, saying, "This is a moral responsibility." I said, "Look, let's be realistic. I don't like the analogy, but you've got to play [Richard] Nixon this year. You've got to help every Democrat in trouble so that four years from now they've got no place to go but you. You can't beat a sitting President at a Democratic Convention. Forget it. You might beat him in a primary. You're not going to beat him at the Convention and you're not going to beat him in many primaries. Sure, he's unpopular. But you get in, he hates you, you hate him, he'll never get out." Reilly is sort of torn, knowing I'm right, but still helping Peter. We argued most of the way to Des Moines.

Then he goes down for the speech. [William] Guy was there from North Dakota, [Warren] Hearnes from Missouri, and [George] Docking from Kansas were the three other Governors. When it was over, we all go up to his suite and sit down and as soon as we walk in, Hughes says, "Well, we're obviously going to have a political discussion." A guy who was the editor of the *Jayhawker* says, "Well, if it's going to be a political discussion, I want to hear what Kennedy says about his campaign for President."

And he said, "Well, I said I'm not running, but I'd be interested in hearing what everybody thinks." Docking says, "After all your brother did for my father and my brother, I'd have to be for you." Guy says, "I can't carry the state for you, but I'm for you. I'll be for you over McCarthy." Hearnes thinks he's got a shot at being Vice President and won't commit, but the other three were very strong. When it's over, we go back down to Bob's suite for another drink and Peter says, "I told you, Bobby, they're going to fall in line." And I said, "Bullshit. None of them is going to buckle in on Johnson. They'll be for you, but don't expect them to say they're against Lyndon Johnson. They're going to make Lyndon Johnson be there for them." "Well I believe that's probably right."

Anyway, the next day we fly down to Delano. César [Chávez] is going to break his fast. That's when I knew I had lost. Reilly went back to Washington. Peter and I continued the argument. We get there and there was going to be this mass and he and—César's going to take communion and wine and that's breaking the fast. We go into this long adobe building, and César is stretched out on the cot. His wife is there. Bob goes over and says, "How goes the strike, César?" And Chávez says, "The question is not that, Bobby. The question is how goes the campaign?"

I thought, *Shit!*, and the next thing I know, he's in.

I do think that there were a lot of people—The [Iran] hostages were there, interest rates were going off the roof at 20 percent or more, and there were a lot of people telling Teddy, “You have to do it, you have to do it, you have to do it,” including members of his staff.

Young: Very much so, I think. But the hostages were a negative for him, weren’t they? Because it was a surprise. That wasn’t in his—

Seigenthaler: Yes. I think that’s—

Young: And Carter wouldn’t debate, wouldn’t do anything.

Seigenthaler: Yes, I think that’s right. But, you know, there was a feeling that Carter had basically botched diplomacy, foreign affairs. There was nothing he could do about the hostages taken, but there were a couple of aborted attempts at rescues. I mean, in one case they couldn’t get the sand—The helicopters blew it, and then there was some—and his popularity was down.

Young: Way down.

Seigenthaler: There were people telling Teddy, “This is it, this is it.” And some of them should have known better.

Young: Yes. Chappaquiddick was—

Seigenthaler: That’s right, absolutely. I got a call at Chappaquiddick and I said, “The last thing we need is a conference of old heads.” By that time Burke Marshall was down there, and I said, “I can’t help you. I can help you on the telephone, if I’m any help at all. I can tell you what I think, but—” I think I pissed them off a little bit, you know. You don’t say, “I won’t go,” but I didn’t—I just thought it would be a mistake for me to show up, particularly when there was not a damn thing you could say except “I’m sorry.” And do the best you could with it politically.

Young: Some people speculate it was something he had to get out of his system. He couldn’t *not* run.

Seigenthaler: I think that’s the way it was with Bob, too, you see.

Young: He couldn’t not run, and the question was, how many more chances is he going to have? He’s not going to do it in ’72, wouldn’t run going in Vice President, wouldn’t step in, in ’68, in Bob’s shoes. Wouldn’t do it the next time; he had his own ’70 campaign for the Senate.

Seigenthaler: Yes, that’s right.

Young: And how many more—? Wouldn’t do it against Carter for the nomination, the first nomination. So this is, *How many more chances could I have?* I don’t know, but some people say he did it because he had to do it, and maybe his heart wasn’t really all that much in it.

Seigenthaler: At the ’68 convention—I thought that at that convention there was a moment when there was a real shot. A demonstration started for Robert Kennedy. Carl Albert was in the chair. He was really crude; I think he was probably drinking. As is always the case, you know,

there were a large number of repeat delegates there in '68 who remembered that phenomenal ovation.

That was the moment. I ran into Steve on the floor and said, "I think he ought to do this. I think he ought to come on out here and do this." And Steve said, "I don't, but I sure think you ought to call him and tell him. If you really believe that, I hope you'll call him and tell him." I said, "What do you mean, you don't?" He said, "I've just had enough." What he was saying was, "I've had enough death. There's been enough tragedy." But he said, "If you really believe it, I hope you'll call him. Here's where he is right now." He gave me the phone number. I went and called him, and he was very appreciative, but said, "I'm not going to do this. I'm not going to announce." The moment was here. It was.

Young: But what was his state of mind at that point? My God, look what he just went through.

Seigenthaler: I couldn't blame him. I couldn't blame him. But it was—Now, you know, he had the moment, but having not taken that moment, then four years later, I mean hell. Then to say, "I'm going to take him on," that's eight years later. No, it was 12 years later. Yes, '68.

Young: Right.

Seigenthaler: Yes, it was '80.

Young: Well, he had gone after Carter on healthcare at the midterm. And labor was all—such as it was. But Meany and all the—Whoever it was, they were all for a Kennedy. They had real beefs against Carter.

Seigenthaler: Yes, they were, and I think that was another encouraging sign. [Thomas Bertram] Bert Lance told me that Jimmy Carter will believe to his dying day that Teddy beat him. I told Bert that his high interest rates were what beat him. Bert had told Carter, "Once you get reelected, you can balance the budget by raising taxes, and don't worry about the deficit; you can handle it," which was terrible advice, too. Of course, Bert was gone. Bert's probably right. Carter still—

Young: I was at a meeting down at the Jimmy Carter Historic Society. I'm on the advisory board for that down in Plains. We had broken up the meeting and I had told him, "I'm doing this project with Edward Kennedy."

Seigenthaler: Yes.

Young: He just keeps a deadpan, and I said, "You know, a couple of years ago we were going through these people and you said you had this forgiveness list," and we were down to the person we were talking about. I said, "I'm just wondering, is Ted Kennedy on that list?" And he just stared at me and walked away. I told Ted that story.

Seigenthaler: Did you?

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: I guess, you know, we sort of begin with Joe telling him that public service is it, go as far as you can. The other thing that surprises me is—Some people were surprised to read [Adam] Clymer's book and the conclusion, you know—Here's [Daniel] Webster all over again. But I think members of the Senate, most of them, already had it. They knew who he was and how good he was and what he did.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: Every year at the Profiles in Courage Award kids do a little essay. They have a national competition. The chairman makes that award, but at the program, Teddy is always the next person to speak and I introduce him. I never miss the opportunity to say, "You know, there are people all over this country like me. And my Senators are nice men, but they don't vote and they don't stand for issues that represent me or people who think like me. The Senator does." And I think that's right.

Clymer was down in Nashville. I took him to dinner a couple of months ago. He's in pretty bad shape, walks with a cane now, but still very bright. He said he thinks that book is the best thing he ever did. He said, "I didn't know where I was going when I started, but the deeper you get into him, the more you realize what a powerful influence he is."

Young: I've talked to Adam a lot, of course, and he's been very helpful in giving us his insights and his notes. But that book came out at a time when Ted was not seen outside as a hardworking, really accomplished legislator.

Seigenthaler: That's right.

Young: And so it was Adam's book that was about Ted Kennedy as a legislator. That made it a striking book, that made it a really good contribution. There is an interpretation that says that it was only after he had lost in 1980 that he really buckled down to become a Senator. That's the theory I've heard. And the more deeply I get into the project, the more I think that that's not really—

Seigenthaler: I don't think that's right.

Young: I think he was a Senator and—

Seigenthaler: Yes, I do too. If you could just think again about how were they alike, and I don't know how Jack was alike after Joe died, but I do know that Bob, after Jack, and Teddy after Bob—I think Bob showed it more than Ted, but I think there was a black period there for both of them.

Young: Oh, yes.

Seigenthaler: And not easy to come out of, you know. Again, again, again, and again, people talk about Bobby's growth and you couldn't go through the ordeal without coming out of it—

Young: It either kills you or you had to—

Seigenthaler: Yes, that's exactly right. I think both of them survived it. There were a lot of threats in San Francisco, and the first time he came to town, Alioto had a guy named John De Luca who worked for him call me on the phone and he said, "The mayor and I want to come over and see you in the hotel," and I said, "Let me come over there." "No, we're in the car and we'll be over; we'll be right there." Sure enough, they were, and we went into the office and closed the door and he said, "Look, I've got to tell you about these threats to kill him. We will do anything you want us to do." I said, "Well, I don't know how I'm going to handle it with him, but the first thing I have to tell you is I'd do two things: All of the plainclothes support you can give will be helpful—and use them close—and as much uniform as you can show on the periphery would be helpful. Beyond that, if he has any other thoughts, I'll let you know."

So he comes up and was not going to stay overnight, but Ben Swig was all over my ass to get him so he could say he stayed at the hotel. Swig said, "Just get him to fart in the bathroom. It will be all I care about. I just want to say he was there." So, sure enough, he came up and took a deep bath. I'm sitting on the scales and going down the agenda, and I said, "You know, I've talked to Fred Dutton." Dutton was traveling with us. I said, "I've talked to Dutton about this, and he suggested that the best thing for me to do is just tell you straight up, and it's not something you haven't heard before. The Mayor and De Luca told me this afternoon, and they're very friendly, but here's what they say. And here's what I said."

He cut me off and he said, "Look, I've told Joe Dolan and I'm telling you, whether I'm in Southern California or Northern California, don't take me into any basements, any rooftops, or any backdoors. If I have to do that, I'll know what you're doing and I can't do this. Get whatever security you can to protect me and take me where I ought to be. If I run from people, I'm not going to be able to do this." I think that's got to be on Teddy's mind.

Young: Oh, yes.

Seigenthaler: I remember walking once with Ted into the Senate Office Building. I think we had been to lunch at one of those places around there, but anyway, we walked. And because of his back, he walks very slowly. It was about three blocks, maybe, from somewhere. We got right there, just across from the Senate Office Building. There was a red light and he turned left and walked down the street. I walked with him, and he got down and waited for the light to turn and then went across. I thought, *He's uncomfortable standing still*. Maybe I'm reading something there that's not there, but you know it has to be with him.

Young: Well, I don't think it's there now.

Seigenthaler: No. I don't either; I really don't.

Young: It's not there now.

Seigenthaler: I will tell you something else—and I talked to [Edmund] Ed Reggie about this a couple of times. I don't know whether you've gotten to him yet or not.

Young: Her parents have been interviewed.

Seigenthaler: Have they?

Young: I didn't do the interview. Yes. They've done it.

Seigenthaler: Ed says that he thinks the marriage has made one hell of a difference, and I do, too.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: And he's close to it. Of course he's been with Kennedy since Day One.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: Funny man.

Young: Yes. No, Vicki—

Seigenthaler: She's special.

Young: She really is. To this day, I still wonder whether we'd have this project if it weren't for her. She's just very good and very smart. I told Ted that I want Vicki to be there in the interviews with him, if it's OK with him. She doesn't participate, except in the one she was really involved in, like the '94 Senate campaign.

Seigenthaler: Right.

Young: Or the [John] Kerry-[George W.] Bush election. She was in on that. He has a real—You know, he has to prepare for these interviews like everything.

Seigenthaler: That's right. That's exactly right.

Young: "Let's just put the book away and we'll just talk."

Seigenthaler: That's right.

Young: And it's very difficult for him to do it, but she makes a real difference. Getting back to that '80 campaign, I don't know why he stayed in it even when all was lost, though I'm not so sure he thinks all was lost. The speech he gave was like a victory speech.

Seigenthaler: Yes.

Young: It was that line, "The dream shall not die," you know, that wonderful thing. That's carrying on the line, carrying on the tradition, "picking up the fallen standard," as they said once about Bobby. Maybe that's why he stayed in the campaign, so he could make that—

Seigenthaler: Make that speech, yes.

Young: —to a nation—

Seigenthaler: Well, there's something to be said for that. But, beyond the speech, it was not a good performance that night of the inaugural. Turning his back on Carter was bad form.

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: People around him—and I also think it reinforced Carter in a sense, that this is what lost the campaign. The truth of it is, Carter was out of his league against [Ronald] Reagan. They awarded Robert Kennedy the Medal of Freedom or something like that, and Carter wouldn't present it. Carter would not present it to Ethel. Reagan comes in and immediately says, "We're going to do it," and he invites all of us to come to the Rose Garden and it's a great event.

They had two microphones. He and Teddy came out and Ethel and Nancy [Reagan] came out. Teddy begins by expressing appreciation on behalf of Ethel and all of the members of the family, and then accurately quotes Bob as saying the toughest debate he ever had was on international television with Ronald Reagan. And Reagan, off the cuff, responds, "Yes, I remember it quite well," and he actually recalls an exchange.

Then when it's through, he says, "I'd like to go down and meet some of your friends." He comes down and Teddy's friend, Jack—an Irishman, it will come to me. Anyway, we're sort of standing there, about five of us there, and Reagan comes down—and you know how Teddy is—"Now, Mr. President, we'll just go on down there. Now this fellow right here, this is Jack—You know, what we really need to do is get you up there to the Cape. This fellow, he races and I can't beat him. You tell him, Jack. He's really—I don't know when you're going to be up that way, but we'd love to have you and you'd have a great time. Tell him about the racing, Jack." And Jack says, "Well, Mr. President, we'd beat Teddy."

Reagan says, "Well, you know, I'd love to do it, but I don't believe I'd get my horse in the water." I thought, *The son-of-a-bitch is real*. Up to that moment, I had thought all of that stuff about, "I hope you doctors are Republicans," somebody made that up. Unbelievable. "I don't believe I could get my horse in the water." Teddy broke up. It's a hell of a thing for that to be the line that makes me think this guy is better than I really thought he was. But it's just—If you're smart enough to say that, you're smart enough to say, "Mr. [Mikhail] Gorbachev, tear down that wall."

Young: Yes.

Seigenthaler: Well, I'm glad you're doing this, I'll tell you.

Young: It's enlightening, very enlightening. Of course, I love the stories too.

Seigenthaler: Oh, yes, I'll tell you.

Young: And the songs.

Seigenthaler: That's right. That's exactly right.

Young: But to get all that on tape, it's really hard.

Seigenthaler: You know, every year after the Profiles in Courage Award, he always arranges for somebody to come and perform, sing. Then afterward, a smaller group might creep back and get on the elevator and go back upstairs for a drink. The performer comes and the honorees come

and the family will come and it's another songfest. Always, whoever is singing has an accompanist who comes up and it just goes on and on and on. And he is the damnedest fellow. He'll stay with it all night long.

Young: He is really full of energy.

Seigenthaler: He is. I don't know where it comes from, but he is. That's right.

Young: You know, the bag goes home every night and it's all marked up the next morning. I have trouble keeping up with him sometimes.

All right. Well, should we close down?

Seigenthaler: Sure, thank you very much. I may have other things that come to mind and I'll let you know.