EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT SHRUM

July 7, 2009
Sagamore Beach, Massachusetts

Interviewer
Janet Heininger

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 of Public Affairs, University of Virginia.

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Heininger: This is an interview with Bob Shrum on July 7, 2009. Picking up from yesterday, why don't we start with the Willie Smith trial, because your work on that led into the '94 Senate campaign. When did you get called in, and for what purpose?

Shrum: I first heard about it because Marylouise [Oates] and I were in London and the phone rang in our hotel room. It was Ranny Cooper and she said, "Something's happened in Palm Beach." She told it to me and I thought, *Oh, my God, this poor guy.* I knew Willie and had known him for years. I like him. The first real discussions I had were—in the time period before and the run up to the trial, the focus was on dealing with the trial, and Greg Craig was the Senator's attorney. I was really not involved in any of that preparation, nor would I have been. The biggest thing I was involved in was the decision to give a speech at the Kennedy School. Everybody said he gave a speech where he apologized. Actually, it was two paragraphs in the entire speech. I felt strongly that he needed to say something, but the dilemma was he couldn't say anything specific because of the trial.

I was thinking about the '94 campaign, about his standing in Massachusetts. Ranny and I were talking about it, Larry [Horowitz] and I talked about it, he and I talked about it. He said, "Draft something and see if it does what we need to do." I did, and we went back and forth a couple of times on it. He delivered it, I think much to the surprise of a lot of people. He doesn't talk very well about himself. He never has.

Heininger: No.

Shrum: There's a line from Bobby Kennedy. He got asked in the '68 campaign by an interviewer who had interviewed all the candidates: "They all like to talk about themselves, why don't you talk about yourself more?" And he said, "Why don't you ask them why they like to talk about themselves so much?"

Heininger: That's actually a great line and very apt.

Shrum: That's sort of the extent of my involvement in it. Obviously, I talked to Ranny during the period.

Heininger: But you weren't brought in to actually manage his image during the trial?

Shrum: No, no.

Heininger: Was he having somebody else take care of the routine press? There had to have been massive press.

Shrum: There was the press secretary. The press office was doing it, but it was easy press challenge because the answer was, "We don't have anything to say. Watch the trial." The biggest piece of image management that we had to do, I guess, and I don't know if I want to call it that, was in Massachusetts, with a constituency that had stuck with him through thick and thin, that seemed, by every number you saw in the polling, to be melting away. I think after the statement at Harvard, combined with the verdict in the trial, things began to get better.

Heininger: I think you said in your book that your work on the '94 campaign began with your work on the Willie Smith trial and that speech.

Shrum: Not on the trial, on the speech.

Heininger: And that speech, yes. At this point, was there somebody polling in Massachusetts?

Shrum: There were a lot of public polls. We took a poll at some point—Tom Kiley took a poll—and it showed significant deterioration. We polled not because of this, but because we polled intermittently anyway. But there was significant deterioration after Palm Beach.

Heininger: Then when it gets to the election and he's now married Vicki [Reggie Kennedy], this is an election that was not expected to be a difficult one?

Shrum: I expected it to not be an easy one once I found out that Mitt Romney was going to run. We went through internally, in the campaign, various stages of denial: Maybe Romney won't do it, maybe he really doesn't have that much money. I thought some guy who paid himself an $11.8 million bonus in one year probably had a lot of money, and that this wasn't the first year this had happened. I thought it was going to be tougher than some people thought it was going to be, but partly that's because you don't want it to be tough. Why do we have to go through another tough thing again?

The more interesting thing was, when it got tough Teddy got tough. Early on, Romney had said almost nothing in his announcement speech of any consequence except, "I'm young, he's old." If you strip the speech down, the message was, "He's old, I'm young. He's heavy, I'm thin." That was its content, except he did have one proposal, either in the speech or soon after, to take welfare payments away from mothers who had a second illegitimate child. We had a conference call during which I suggested that we just agree with him, remove the issue from the election, and this was never going to happen anyway. Teddy basically took my head off and said he didn't need the Senate seat that much and he was not going to save the Senate seat or protect his Senate seat by taking food out of the mouths of hungry children. It was one of the things you admire about him. Every once in a while you just get reminded. It was like on the [Ronald] Reagan tax cut.

I don't know if I told you the story, but Larry convened a meeting in the office, about five or six of us, to talk about how he was going to vote on the Reagan tax cut in 1981, and he walked in and said, "What's this?" Larry said, "We're having a meeting on whether or not you should vote on the Reagan tax cut." And he looked at me like, "You too?" And then he said, "Well, you can have your meeting, but I'm voting against it." He just turned around and walked out, and then somebody said, "You might be the only one." And he said, "And I'm still voting against it." It's

something you admire about him, because he has these principled, bottom lines of things he won't do.

We filmed a flight of television ads. We went on television in May or June. We got a poll back at the end of July. I think we had a 19-point lead.

Heininger: So it didn't start off looking like it was going to be tough.

Shrum: Yes, but it had all the signs of being tough.

Heininger: You thought it was going to be, but—

Shrum: This guy has a lot of money and he's going to emerge from the Republican primary and everything. So I argued at the end of July that we should stay on television, that if we let Romney have television to himself for basically all of August and the first three weeks of September up to the primary, we could have a big problem. Almost everybody else disagreed with me and Teddy decided no, he wasn't going to do it. As he later said to me, "You're my friend, but you're my media guy and you make money off the television." There was also some talk that Romney might lose to the guy who was running against him, a guy named John Lakian, I think. I never thought that was going to happen.

A couple days before the Republican primary, we had put a poll in the field and Tom Kiley called me and said, "This is bad." He talked to me on the phone and there were two different ways of weighting the poll. Under the one, Kennedy was a point behind, and on the other he was a point ahead. In either case, it was a huge collapse. I said to Tom, "Let's make it a point ahead."

We had a meeting in a restaurant on Charles Street, at the base of Beacon Hill, with Michael Kennedy, myself, Tad Devine, I think Charlie Baker was there, and a couple other people. I think Ranny was there. No, Ranny wasn't there, not at this meeting. He went over the numbers and we then went over to the apartment that Teddy and Vicki had in Back Bay, still have as far as I know. I haven't seen them there in years, but I think they still have it.

Kiley went through the poll in a very clinical, straightforward way. He finished and Michael Kennedy said, "Well, I guess the first thing we're going to discuss is what's the budget." Teddy said. "No, the first thing we're going to discuss is Bob is going to describe what we're going to do to get this guy, to get back into this thing." He was going to spend the money that was necessary to fight back. He wanted to know what were we going to do in terms of the ads. We had fortunately tested a number of negative arguments in the poll, and the minimum wage, which was actually, I think, the second most powerful of the issue arguments, was going to be first, because we knew we could make the ad in a day and have it on the air. Health care we thought was going to come second, although it came later, because then we had the worker ads, which I'll talk about if you want.

Heininger: In June, you said there was a 19-point lead.

Shrum: July, end of July.

Heininger: End of July was a 19-point lead. Why did it drop so precipitously?

Shrum: Well, Romney ran a bunch of ads where he was young and vigorous. He ran one ad, which I thought was outrageous because ever since the plane crash in ’64, if Teddy had to get out of a chair or a bench, he had to do it like this because of his vertebrae. Romney had a picture in slow motion, of Kennedy rising from the bench, that sort of screamed “old, old, old, out of it, time to move on.” He attacked Kennedy for being soft on crime. If you dominate the airwaves against your opponent for six weeks, you’re on and he’s saying nothing, you’re going to gain.

And I also think at this point there were two things. There might have been a sense of fatigue, of people saying he’s been around a long time. A lot of people had grown up in Massachusetts and they knew his name but they didn’t know all that much about him. I remember we had a focus group where somebody said, “What’s his position on health care?” These were undecided voters, so they were not particularly well-informed voters, but they’re voters who matter. One woman said, “I think he must be for it, because I saw him on the boat with Hillary [Rodham] Clinton, and she wouldn’t be on the boat with him if he wasn’t for it.” This drove him to distraction.

But the other element—and it’s part of what I just said—and maybe it’s less fatigue than unfamiliarity—is that for all of the print press and all of the television coverage, even before the Internet age, I had the view that the communication that you did with a lot of voters, you did once every six years if you were in the Senate, when you ran a lot of television ads in a campaign. We’d done that in ’82 because we were using them, as you probably know from all of this, as an experiment, about ’84 and about the potential of his running for President in ’84, and we ran a lot of ads. In ’88, nothing. So basically it had been 12 years since people had seen any of these ads, so I think that that sort of fed the unfamiliarity or the fatigue.

The second factor is I think there was a sense of people wanting him to prove himself, wanting him to fight for it. At the time I didn’t know that, because you could look at—on a lot of the internals, we were behind Romney, you know, “has new ideas.” I think we were still ahead on “cares about people like me,” but on things like “has new ideas, is the right choice for the future, can lead Massachusetts or advance Massachusetts, help the Massachusetts economy—” on all of that stuff, we were behind.

The apartment meeting, I remember where people were sitting, I remember it so well. He just, it was, “No, that’s not what we’re going to talk about. Bob’s going to talk about what we’re going to do next.” At that point, there were three big things that went on. One, over the next few weeks everybody from the staff who’d gone on to other things came back. So Dave Burke, who had been his chief of staff in the ’70s and then had been Hugh Carey’s chief of staff and then had run *ABC News,* lives right here in Easton, came back and rode around with him whenever he was campaigning in Massachusetts. Ranny came back. All sorts of people just came back to help.

Secondly, we had a television campaign that was proving to be brutally effective. I think we were helped by the minimum wage ad, but we had hired, earlier in the campaign, Terry Lenzner. At some point somebody wrote a pocket story that nobody paid much attention—a private investigator, a researcher like all campaigns have, except he was very high-powered. He discovered this plant in Indiana, SCM, that Bain Capital had bought.

People had been fired, some had been rehired. They took away their health insurance. Some of the rehires appeared to be done on the basis of whether you were pregnant, whether you were a

woman, whatever. And so while we made the minimum-wage ad and put it on, and my partner, Tad Devine, went out to film these workers at SCM. I thought to myself, *You know, what if they're inarticulate and they can't deliver?* I wrote a 30-second script that Tad took with him, and he called me an hour into the shoot and said, "Listen to some of these people." We threw away the script because the people were so authentic and so powerful: "Mitt Romney says he created jobs. I'd like him to explain to the people in Massachusetts why he destroyed so many here. They took away our health insurance. We had no rights."

These were just people speaking like people speak. They were very powerful ads and we put them on in an unorthodox way. We took four or five of them. I think we had six, so I think we took five, and instead of trying to get 500 or 800 rating points for each ad, we took 1,200, 1,500 rating points and ran the ads in rotation. They were all against the same background but different people, and it just gave a power and an authenticity to this argument that was overwhelming. Romney was tone deaf about it.

Heininger: Really?

Shrum: Some of the initial comments out of his campaign were things like, "Business is business and things happen when you reorganize businesses." But then the workers came—we didn't do this; they did, in their union. They hired a bus and came to Massachusetts and asked to meet with Romney, and for days he wouldn't meet with them. So the story just kept going and going and going. So the spots were, I think it's fair to say, very effective.

By the middle of October I was feeling good, and Marylouise and I and George and Mari Will were having dinner in an Italian restaurant that's not there anymore in Washington called Galileo, but that everybody went to. I think it was Mari's birthday. The maître d' came to me and said, "There's a phone call I think you should take in my office." So I went back to the office and it was Ranny, and the Senator was on briefly and she said, "The *Boston Globe* and the *Boston Herald* have gotten together, have set two dates for debates, have said they're going to control the format, and that's that," and if we didn't show up, the *Globe* was clearly not going to endorse us. At that point, the last week or ten days leading up to that, at minimum, I thought, *Why should we debate?* We were back ahead by like 15 points, 12 points. *Why do we want to debate this guy? It's his way back into this.* I'm glad we did, by the way, in the end. We had alternative proposals for debates. I can't even remember what they were like, but they were designed to not be accepted.

Then the *Herald* and the *Globe* stepped into this together, and so suddenly, we agreed to debate. We did five days of preparation at the end. Maybe four. We did a couple days in earlier weeks and then we did four or five days the week leading up to the debate. We'd do a couple hours in the morning and three or four hours in the afternoon. David Smith played Romney. I ran the preps and asked the questions, although when we would critique afterwards, Teddy would sometimes say, "You get up there and give the answer the way you would give it."

We worked really hard at it; he worked really hard at it. Vicki sat in on some but not most of the preps, because I think she worried that it would be a distraction or he would constantly say, "What do you think?" I don't know whether it was Ranny or someone, I think it was Ranny, but the basic rule was that everybody couldn't talk at the end of each thing. We had to have a very

disciplined way of going through this. And so I would critique it and if somebody else had something to say they would say it, but briefly, then we'd go back at it.

There were a couple of things that we knew in advance might happen. One was Romney had started going—I have this theory about debates and it has actually seldom failed me, that under the pressure of the spotlight, candidates will default to saying what they've been saying on the road. So if they're saying something on the road all the time, they're going to say it in the debate under pressure. If you looked at Dan Quayle in 1988 and Maureen Dowd's story about him comparing himself to Jack Kennedy on the road, you could just see that there was a chance that was going to happen in the debate. Now, the funny thing with Quayle was it took four times. It wasn't until, I think [Thomas] Brokaw asked the fourth question about experience, because he had obviously been warned by [James Addison] Baker and [Roger] Ailes and these people: "Do not compare yourself to John Kennedy." And the fourth time, and I think Brokaw began with the line, "I don't want to keep beating this drum—" but then he did, and he came out with it and [Lloyd] Bentsen killed him.

Romney had started going around—and it was a really dumb argument. He had started going around saying the Kennedys got a sweetheart deal to build the Furniture Mart in southwest Washington, sort of an implication that Kennedy had used his official position to make money. It's like going up a sheer hill in terms of voter perceptions; whatever else they thought about Kennedy, they didn't think that. It was like when Bill Weld tried to accuse [John] Kerry, in the '96 campaign that he inappropriately accepted free lodging from someone in Washington. Voters thought, *He's very rich. Why would—*

Heininger: Yes, why?

Shrum: Ridiculous. So we knew that was coming, and we also knew—by then we had all the facts. It was the trust, it was for the third generation. He had had nothing to do with it. And as you may recall, it's built next to the Southwest Freeway, and back then that was not exactly the ideal place to locate something. It was actually good for the city and the city wanted it, but we decided we weren't going to do that at all. He was just going to look at it and say something like, "My family didn't go into politics to make money, and quite frankly, we paid a price." The assumption was, by the way, that he would do this when Romney made his charge, and he had practiced the line several times. But in the debate itself Romney started complaining about negative ads and the things that the Kennedy campaign had said about him. He wasn't really answering them, just saying, "You're saying these terrible things about me. "

I was pacing as I always do, in the back, and I could tell what was about to happen. Kennedy then brought up the Romney attack on the Furniture Mart, stated it, and then used the line, and when he used the line the roof blew off Faneuil Hall.

The other thing we knew Romney was going to say was pro-choice. Romney has been forced to live ever since with Teddy's response, which was, "You're not pro-choice, you're multiple choice."

The afternoon of the debate I thought we were very well prepared. We didn't do anything. He went off to the Kennedy Library and I think sat in the replica of [John F. Kennedy]'s office, just

by himself and maybe with Vicki. Certainly Vicki may have gone along, but he was by himself basically, I mean none of us—Dave Burke said to me, "He's communing with ghosts." I think what he was doing was gathering strength. I remember walking into the debate and one Boston reporter who I did not particularly like said to me, "Did you come to see your guy destroyed?" That was sort of the attitude of the press. They thought we had ducked the debates. There was the [Roger] Mudd interview, there's this lore about how Kennedy would do in situations like this, which actually belied what he did in the Senate. But they didn't pay any attention to that.

Romney had fed an expectations game by constantly saying, "Why won't Kennedy debate me, why won't Kennedy debate me, why won't Kennedy debate me?" to the point where it looked like he really wanted one and Kennedy really didn't want one, so Romney must assume he was going to do really, really well. You knew five or ten minutes into the debate that it was going to be the other way around. Kennedy just didn't beat expectations, he just outright beat the guy. And it was an odd debate because most political debates for statewide office, for Governor or Senator, have relatively small audiences. This had an audience about equal to the number of people who watch the Super Bowl in Massachusetts.

There was one moment that was entirely spontaneous. Romney was complaining that he couldn't give any details of his health care program, "I just can't do that," and Kennedy looked at him and said, "Well, Mr. Romney, that's what you do when you legislate." So just every point, Kennedy was winning. Not only winning every argument, he was winning the sense and the impression of who was a Senator, who was in charge, who could fight back. It was terrific.

I do remember that Vicki sprained her ankle afterwards. As we were headed into a reception, her heel tripped on a pipe. But I was really happy that we did the debate in the end, because what put the seal on his victory was something that he did. It wasn't a television ad, it wasn't any of that. As someone said to me afterwards—who was it? It was some Republican, maybe it was Mike Murphy, "The Republicans will never run a serious candidate against him again. We're not that dumb." So I was thrilled he did the debate. The funny thing was, that was a year when a lot of Democrats tried to survive by running away from health care, the environment, [William J.] Clinton, education. Kennedy ran for all that stuff.

Oddly by the way, Paul Sarbanes in Maryland—we were doing his campaign—he had the first tough race he'd had in a long, long time and won by a big margin and refused to give an inch on what he believed. Chuck Robb in Virginia, you may remember, I was involved in his campaign. Chuck Robb had been against don't ask, don't tell, and for the repeal of the ban on gays in the military, and he went all over Virginia telling people and he won. Kennedy stood up—

[BREAK]

Heininger: This is resuming the interview with Bob Shrum.

Shrum: I was in Washington on election night; Marylouise and I were at Mary McGrory's apartment. Pretty early on, we had all the leaked exit polls, which I've learned since to distrust—

the hard way. There had been this sense among the kind of folks that Mary had over, that Kennedy had—in retrospect, nobody remembers it, but at the time a lot of people thought he was going to lose or thought there was a good chance he was going to lose, and he won by about 18 points.

Heininger: You're raising a very interesting point about this being an election, and you've seen it in other elections too, where there's a prevailing mentality and candidates will run from it for fear that it's going to work against them. Then there are those who say, "This is what I believe in," and stick by it, popular or no, and somehow it resonates.

Shrum: I would argue that in '94, the Democrats, some people would say it was Maryland and Massachusetts, although Virginia was hardly a safe Democratic state—that the people who stood up for what they really believed in and fought for what they really believe in did better than the people who said, "Actually, I don't really agree with Clinton on this and I think he's wrong on that, and I'm not really for health care." Because Kennedy has this old line: "The last thing the country needs is two Republican parties." If you've got a choice in an election between—in a year when there's a certain gestalt out there—the faux Republican and the real Republican, they're going to vote for the real Republican. And that could be true the other way around too.

Heininger: Have you found this in other elections, that candidates who put a finger to the wind and blow accordingly have more difficulties than those who stick by what they believe in?

Shrum: There are places where obviously putting your finger in the wind works; otherwise, we wouldn't have some of the people we have in the Senate or even in the White House. I don't for one minute think that for example, George H.W. Bush thought Michael Dukakis was unpatriotic or wanted to give murderers furloughs. He just put his finger in the wind and found the only way to win.

I think one of the most precious assets you have in politics if you're a candidate is people's belief that you actually stand up for what you believe in. I'm certain that there are people who don't agree with Teddy Kennedy and who think that he's too liberal on some issues who vote for him. I think other people have been hurt in circumstances where they've allowed the sense to be—I mean it's not a race that you'll—

I did, as a consultant, the [Alan] Cranston-[Edwin] Zschau race in 1986, for Cranston's last reelection for the Senate, and Ed Zschau was this moderate Republican Congressman from northern California who had won the Republican nomination. We were desperately hoping he wouldn't, because the state basically—there wasn't a good argument you could make, a positive argument, for Cranston. I loved Alan Cranston, thought he was a terrific guy, but he'd run for President, dyed his hair, run a campaign on jobs and peace, and the people in California thought, *What's this about?* And so the only hope you had was to really disassemble Zschau, and he helped tremendously, because to make sure he got the Republican nomination, he took a lot of positions that were contrary to positions he'd taken early in the Congress. The day after the primary he went to Hawaii, I think, on vacation, and we started an advertising campaign about Zschau the flip-flopper, and we just kept going all the way to November and Cranston won by about 115,000 votes out of seven million cast.

So yes, I think it's really important to stand up and stand your ground, and it's an asset that Edward Kennedy has always had in this state. I think after '94, the Republicans would have preferred to have no one run against him. In 2006, effectively, no one did run against him. They wanted to try to win the Governorship. The last thing they wanted was to have a serious candidate against Kennedy, which would energize all the Kennedy people. They weren't going to win the Governorship anyway, but they didn't realize that.

Heininger: When you look back at the beginning of the '94 campaign, why did he put Michael Kennedy in charge, who had never run a campaign before?

Shrum: Oh, there had been a long family tradition of doing this. Teddy had run JFK's campaign in 1958 and Joe [Kennedy] had run his campaign in 1976, and by all accounts, done an excellent job. I found Michael easy to work with in the campaign.

When we got into this battle in the fall, strategically, I probably had a voice that was not only literally, but effectively, bigger than anybody else's, and Ranny was making everything work. There was a guy named Jack Corrigan who was an organizer up here, an old friend of mine who was assigned to help, so I didn't have to deal with any sort of details and dreck, wash back from the campaign, and I could keep my head on strategically what we were doing. I certainly would not blame Michael for the fact that we fell behind Romney. He had nothing to do with it. Maybe it would have happened even if we'd stayed on TV, but it was a decision that I think Senator Kennedy would have made anyway, and most people agreed with it, to go off TV. As I say, there were underlying things; either fatigue or unfamiliarity and a sense of the guy has to prove himself.

[BREAK]

Heininger: This is a resumption of the interview with Bob Shrum. So Michael's running the campaign and you go off the air, and come September Kennedy says OK, he's really going to throw himself into it and get tough.

Shrum: We got a poll saying we were going to lose.

Heininger: That's a good prompt. Who called Ranny in and who called Dave in?

Shrum: Well, Ranny—I'm sure Kennedy called her and said, "Do you have some time?" It was all hands on deck. Carey [Parker] took a leave from the Senate for a few weeks and came up to Boston the last few weeks of the campaign.

Heininger: What did she do that was different?

Shrum: Well, we suddenly had a much bigger surrogate operation, and I think she sort of became the chief operating officer of the campaign. For me that was fine because she and I get along extremely well. So I could do my piece and she could do her piece and it could all work.

Heininger: When did you make the transition from—or had you all along been doing media stuff as well as speechwriting?

Shrum: In ’80, as I said, I worked with David Sawyer on some ads for the Kennedy campaign. Then in the early ’80s, Bob Squier used to hire me to—this is when you could make extra money on the side in the Senate, it wasn’t against the rules. He used to hire me to write scripts for some of the 30-second ads, and actually hired me to write, along with Carter Eskew, who was a new person he had just hired who was going to become a good friend of mine, the Democratic telethon that John Y. Brown was running in, it’s either ’82 or ’83.

The year I was with the Fund for a Democratic Majority and Teddy and I were doing this I talked with a number of people about potentially going into the media business, and I did it in 1985 and was a media consultant and a strategic advisor from then until the end of 2004. But I guess I’d been a strategic advisor before that, when I was a speechwriter, and the one thing I could not escape was speechwriting. I didn’t do it as a matter of course anymore. Senator Kennedy would not ask me to help on every speech, but if there was a big, important speech, he would usually ask me to help. For other clients, I would help on the announcement speech and that sort of thing.

Heininger: Did you work on the agenda-setting speeches that he did in the late ’80s that he would give as a major speech?

Shrum: Sure. I remember one actually. It was in the mid-’80s, the Hofstra speech, which was where he said something nice about Reagan, eerily similar to what [Barack] Obama said during the 2008 campaign and was criticized for. It was a conference on JFK at Hofstra, and he talked about Reagan restoring the dignity and authority of the Presidency. He, in that speech, began to talk about the need for the Democratic Party to look—again, this is in the convention speech too—at new ways to achieve enduring values. Some of the agenda-setting stuff for the late ’80s that would come over to me as a draft and I would just edit the draft and then send it back. Sometimes I wouldn’t do much and sometimes I would do a lot.

Heininger: You moonlighted for Gary Hart.

Shrum: Just briefly.

Heininger: Briefly in that when you were working as press secretary. What was it that you found attractive about Hart?

Shrum: Oh, I had liked him; he was a friend from the ’72 campaign. I probably inordinately and unfairly devalued [Walter] Mondale, in retrospect. First of all, by the way, nobody was going to beat Reagan in ’84, but Hart might have carried five or six states or eight states. Part of it was probably a hangover of my reaction to ’80. There was a point, and I don’t know whether Larry told you this, or Bill Carrick, if you’ve interviewed him, there was a point when we all—when Larry said, “Look, you’ve got to be on the team, and we’re going to recommend to him [Kennedy] that he endorse Mondale. We think he’s going to do it.”

Mondale was calling him all the time, and this is long after I had been busted for the Hart stuff—helping him with the announcement—and even after I’d been helping Pat Caddell and Hart as

they went into the Iowa contest and New Hampshire with Mondale, where I helped write a speech that basically challenged Mondale as nothing but the old politics. So I said fine, that's my primary loyalty, and so we had this meeting out at his house again, in Virginia, Larry and Bill, and I think Ranny went through what we would do. I don't know if Ranny was there; I can't remember. I think she was. I hadn't said anything and at the end he said, "Are you for this?" I said yes and he said, "Well, I'm not doing it. The guy has got to go out there and earn the nomination himself. This is ridiculous. I'm not doing it." So that was the end of that. I think it was one of the few times that Larry just misread the whole thing. I think he thought it was wired; it was going to happen.

The Hart stuff—I think the last time I saw Hart was in 2004—there were several points along the way. This isn't an oral history of Gary Hart, but the question in the Iowa debate: Can you name what you disagree with the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations] on? The speech in Council Bluffs, before Iowa, which Jim Johnson, Mondale's campaign manager and my close friend, apparently looked at it and immediately said, "Shrum wrote this speech. What's going on here?" The Illinois primary, where I tried to persuade the Hart people that they could not pull an ad that Pat Caddell had put on. Gary wanted to pull it over the weekend. He was ahead in Illinois, and I said, "You may be offending Ed Vrdolyak and the machine, but it doesn't matter. You're going to win the primary, you can make up later." He went out and announced he was taking the ad off the air. It couldn't come off. It looked like he couldn't even control his own campaign, and he lost the Illinois primary. Mondale was prepared to withdraw, I later learned, if he had lost Illinois. So those were the parts I was involved in.

I went and saw Gary in May, out at his house, when he was in Washington for a day or two. What I remembered most vividly about it was he was still talking about Illinois and Vrdolyak and his whole thing was who's running for President, Pat or me? To which my response was, "You get to be President." Early on I think Hart was mad at me about a line in the midterm convention speech, something like, "We don't have to choose between being the party of the bleeding heart and the party whose heart has turned to stone." It wasn't aimed at Hart at all but he, Hart, apparently thought it was.

Heininger: I raised the question about Hart because Tom Rollins has also talked about being inspired by Hart's ideas of a new way of getting old, traditional Democratic ideas—finding new ways to do them. Did you find that with Hart too, and that Tom brought that in?

Shrum: Thematically, yes.

[BREAK]

Heininger: This is a resumption of the interview with Bob Shrum.

Shrum: I think thematically I would agree with it. One of the problems with the Hart campaign was he kept talking about new ideas and he had a hard time saying what they were. One of them was, I think, an individual training account, which was not a very big new idea. I would give

Kennedy credit from the mid-'80s on for saying if we're going to get this done, we've got to do it in a different way. He's principled and pragmatic, a rare combination. So when the Hillary health care plan lost, he goes off and recruits Nancy Kassebaum to do portability of health insurance, recruits Orrin Hatch to do children's health insurance, and takes an incremental approach. And then when Obama comes around he says, "Now we can do the whole thing."

So I think there was a pragmatic sense that you had to do it differently, which is where notions like "public enterprise" came from, but you still wanted to do the same fundamental things. You'll actually find the theme, as I said about the '80 convention speech, where he distinguishes between enduring values that never wear out and old programs.

Heininger: Did you find him—?

Shrum: No. For me, and I don't think Gary was the heart of it—but who knows? He's in a milieu and he's talking about all of this, and Kennedy's thinking about it too, and you have to look at the Hofstra speech where he talks about this.

Heininger: Did you find him energized when the Democrats took back the Senate in '86 and he was going to get to be chairman?

Shrum: Yes, but I never found him less than energized. I don't know what Tom told you, but during those Reagan years he was fighting and sometimes winning on lots of stuff.

Heininger: But it's a defensive battle at that point, not setting the agenda.

Shrum: Well, how would America be different if the Voting Rights Act hadn't been renewed?

Heininger: True.

Shrum: You may call it defensive, but it's a pretty big and consequential thing. But he always likes being in charge. He likes running the committee and setting the agenda. The funny thing was—I don't know whether anybody told you this story—we had had a discussion and he had decided that he was going to move from Judiciary to Armed Services, because he'd never been on Armed Services. I think it was in '83.

Joe Biden apparently got up in the caucus and said, "Look, I don't care what rules we have about how many people are on 'A' committees. He's got to stay on the Judiciary Committee. I don't want him off the Judiciary Committee. Let's have rules for the rest of us and then for him, we're going to let him have three 'A' committees." Which I think is how Kennedy—because I was down in Barbados actually, on a trip, and I got a call and was told this whole story. But that was a decision not just to go on Armed Services; it reflected the decision to shift from being the ranking member on Judiciary to being the ranking member and then the chairman on what do we call it now—the HELP [Health, Education, Labor and Pensions] Committee.

Heininger: HELP now, but it was the Labor Committee then.

Shrum: The funny thing was that he had valued it, his brothers had valued it, a number of other people valued it, but a lot of people thought of it as the bottom rung of the top-tier committees. No one thinks that way anymore. Everybody wants to be on it.

He was thrilled, I think, that the Democrats were in charge, and had a whole bunch of things he'd like to do, but I wouldn't say "energized," in the sense that I never saw that he was less energized before that.

Heininger: All the Democrats were absolutely thrilled to be back in charge.

Shrum: Because it had been stunning in 1980. I had given him a memo saying we could lose the Senate, like a week before the election. He'd had breakfast with Bob Byrd, who just dismissed it as ridiculous, and then we did.

Heininger: Think of who lost in '80. I mean, Gaylord Nelson. There were a whole bunch of people that you never would have expected.

Shrum: John Culver, George McGovern. It was a whole generation of people in the party, and really good people. McGovern lost by a lot, but a lot of them lost narrowly.

Heininger: How did Kennedy feel about Reagan? Did he get along with him personally?

Shrum: He got along with him personally and liked him, and I think thought very well of him personally and respected the way he had reestablished the Presidency and the authority and position of the Presidency. He disagreed with him on a host of issues.

I remember once he was amazed when he called to see the President about something and they wanted to know, "What are the questions you want to ask?" Then when he went down to see the President, the President had file cards in front of him. But he said to me later, '89, '90, he said, "This guy was a very consequential and significant President and people pay attention to all these little details, like whether he had a card when he was seeing you or whether he could remember." There was one meeting with a bunch of New England Senators, where no matter who asked a question, Reagan apparently began the response, "Senator Kennedy." Kennedy's view was none of that mattered in the end. The guy had a few big things he really cared about, some of which Kennedy agreed with him on in the end, like how to deal with the Soviet Union. He didn't agree with him at the beginning but agreed with him at the end. Reagan of course had moved on the issue.

Also Reagan was generous. He presented the Robert Kennedy Medal shortly after he became President, which had been just sitting there for a year and a half. Congress had voted it, but President [Jimmy] Carter had not awarded it. Somebody tells me it was inadvertent that he hadn't awarded it. I just don't know the truth about that. When the Kennedy Library was in financial trouble, Reagan did a fundraiser for it at Teddy's house, which brought out more than the usual cadre of Democratic givers, and gave a wonderful speech about JFK. I bet you if you looked, the two Presidents that Reagan most quoted were FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] and JFK.

He had a grace about him in the sense that he wasn't personal or angry. Years and years later, when he was given the Congressional Gold Medal and Nancy Reagan was accepting it for him, there was a big dinner the night before, and I think Newt [Gingrich] was speaking or Dennis Hastert was speaking. There were two Republicans; one from the Senate, one from the House, and Kennedy was scheduled to speak, I think at Mrs. Reagan's instigation. Republicans complained about it and she said, "He's speaking." Obviously I wasn't there, but that's what I was told by people who were involved in the dinner. Kennedy did speak and it went extraordinarily well. Actually, people who listen to this can go read the speech, but you know that's the kind of thing where he would call me and say, "This is what I'm doing. Let's work on this together." Or the speeches leading up to the Iraq War.

Heininger: How did he feel about George Bush the first?

Shrum: I think he thought Bush had no interest in domestic policy, and to Kennedy that's a big problem. Kennedy has never personalized. With very few people, if any, has he personalized politics. I mean even Jimmy Carter. I think Carter intensely dislikes him, from everything I can see, but he doesn't feel any of that back. We didn't talk a lot about Bush, but I think he had a basic respect for him. He totally disrespected and thought the campaign that Bush ran in '88 was profoundly ugly. At the same time, he was very frustrated with Dukakis for the kind of campaign he was running. It's interesting; we just didn't talk much about Bush. Reagan was a subject of constant fascination.

Reagan, like Kennedy—they're larger than life figures. Whatever you think of him, the first George Bush is an interesting President. Good or bad, depending on your perspective, but no one would ever say he's larger than life.

Heininger: Well, on the *Newsweek* cover, where they asked people how tall George Bush was, and they thought he was about five-ten when he was really six-two—

Shrum: And they called him a wimp. But the guy did come back from that to win the Republican nomination after getting in deep trouble in Iowa. Bush is interesting because—I think it was just before the Iraq War started—he gave the Bush foundation or institute or library life achievement award to Teddy.

Heininger: Really?

Shrum: I was told there were some calls from the White House to the former President saying, "Why are you doing this when he's out there really going after your son on the Iraq War? You shouldn't do this." Bush's answer apparently was, "I'll do what I want to do." And look, Bush was maybe the last in the Republican Party of a generation that was different from what the Republican Party has become. There is a tremendous personalization of politics on the part of a lot of Republican leaders. You just don't see John Boehner and Nancy Pelosi actually sitting down and having a civil, interesting, nonpolitical conversation. There are a few people left like that—Hatch. So Bush was, in that sense—Kennedy never had any trouble talking to him, getting along with him.

I remember he was amazed at the change in [Donald] Rumsfeld, whom he had known from the time of the first Bush period to the second Bush period, and they live right near each other in

Kalorama and would have dinner. I guess one night Kennedy's talking to him about Iraq and suddenly Rumsfeld looks at his wife and says, "Joyce [Rumsfeld], let's go home." He just went home. I'm being candid, since you said be candid.

Heininger: Yes. Well, what was his relationship with Clinton?

Shrum: I think he was really glad to see Clinton elected. He would have preferred the health care stuff to move earlier, but since they were trying to move it, he was fully onboard. I think that he believed, after '94, that Clinton sort of—well, there are two things here. In '94, I think, he got Clinton, over the objections of the State Department, to give a visa to Gerry Adams from Northern Ireland. I think that opened the door to a peace process that actually worked, and he admired the fact that Clinton made that decision, stuck with it, really worked on it, and believes Clinton should get credit for it.

On the domestic side, I think he was deeply disappointed by Clinton's decision after '94 that the only way he could save himself was to basically adopt Dick Morris triangulation—Kennedy voted against the welfare reform, voted against DOMA [Defense of Marriage Act]. He was appalled by Clinton and DOMA. Kennedy's been—we didn't talk about this at all, but back in '80, when he made the decision that we were going to push for gay rights in the Democratic platform, some of the staff was very disappointed because I argued the other side. They had made a political argument and I said, "Look, maybe issues can be tough, but sometimes when they come to you there's only one right answer. It's like your brother and civil rights, when the issue comes to you and you can't escape it, there's only one answer." And he said, "Well, if put that way it's a little tough. There's only one choice." Then he looked at the person and said, "It's OK, it's OK. It's the upside of my downside. Nobody will think I'd have a self-interest."

Heininger: [*laughter*] True.

Shrum: And from that point on, AIDS [Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome]—he was really there pushing CDC [Centers for Disease Control] and Larry was pushing CDC early on. I knew a guy named Jim Foster who had worked for us in northern California who came to see me, and I took Jim and a guy named Larry Bush, who reported for the *Advocate*, to talk to Larry, because at the beginning the medical establishment didn't take AIDS seriously. Kennedy started pushing to find out more and more about this, started pushing federal legislation on it. He became the prime sponsor of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

By 1996, Clinton was—it was a Presidency of small ideas that didn't stand for much. Kennedy and I talked about it after Clinton was out of office, but even by the early 2000s, you could look back and say: "Well, maybe you can say his great achievement was balancing the budget, but that went away and that's not an enduring achievement. Your predecessor can always undo it." Clinton's was a Presidency of lost potential. For 45 years, the Democratic Party lived off the legacy of a President who had been killed. [Lyndon] Johnson started off brilliantly but ended tragically. Carter was certainly not the person you were going to invoke when you talked to the country about what kind of party you were. Clinton could have been that person. He was immensely gifted and talented, but I think he lacked nerve and he was too calculating, and he too often changed.

One of the things that impressed me about Obama is he just goes straight ahead. He just sticks with what he believes in. So I was not surprised when Teddy called me and told me he was going to endorse Obama.

Heininger: Why?

Shrum: I think he thought there was a prospect that this could be a President who would stand for really substantial and consequential change, that the campaign Hillary Clinton was running, if it was a precursor of the kind of Presidency she would run, would just mean you'd have a repetition of that '95 to 2000 period; a few incremental things, no big things. He really wanted to get health care done and I think what he said in that speech he believed, which was that Obama and the movement behind Obama reminded him of what was happening in 1960. As he said, "Once again, it's time for a new generation of leadership."

Heininger: Because this really is a generational change.

Shrum: Yes. It was not just a verdict on the Clinton Presidency, although I think that had something to do with it. It was not just a verdict on President Clinton's conduct during South Carolina and afterwards. I think it was more than anything else an affirmative statement about Obama, but it came against the backdrop of a feeling of disappointment in the Clinton Presidency. I think Kennedy's view would have been it would have been better to try a few more big things, even if some of them failed, than to just retreat. In defense of Clinton, and I think Kennedy would say that from the beginning of '98 on, with the [Monica] Lewinsky thing—I don't know whether this is in defense of Clinton—but the distraction was so immense.

Heininger: There was a distraction that was immense.

Shrum: The distraction was so immense that setting an agenda—and I was there, involved in writing the State of the Union messages—was tough. I think Kennedy's decision to endorse Obama played a major role in Obama winning the nomination. The Clinton people, after Super Tuesday, tried to say, "See, he couldn't even carry Massachusetts." That wasn't what it was about. It was certainly not going to hurt Kennedy in Massachusetts.

What it was about was, number one and probably most important of all, literally passing the torch and saying, "This is the kind of inspiring figure who can make a difference for this country in the years ahead," which was a feeling that was out there already but he could uniquely put a stamp or a seal on it. The second was one of the elders of the Democratic Party in the country was saying, "This guy's up for the job of being President." I think in the speech he had a line, "He is ready on day one," which was a kind of answer to the Clinton charge. And of course in that speech he quotes the Harry Truman criticism of his brother: "You're too young. You don't have enough experience. Don't you think you should wait?"

Heininger: Had he known him well in the Senate? Did you get a sense that he did?

Shrum: I think he knew him well enough. He certainly knew Hillary better.

Heininger: Didn't Hillary expect his support?

Shrum: I don't know the answer to that. I think John Edwards half expected his support in 2004. I don't think he sits there and makes decisions like that. I don't think it's how many times have we had coffee or dinner. It's the reading of what he thinks is right for the country and the party.

Heininger: And this was really a reading of history and what the future could bring.

Shrum: Yes, and a candidacy of hope.

Heininger: So it's more than just Caroline [Kennedy Schlossberg].

Shrum: Oh, I think the two of them talked to each other and coordinated this, but I don't think Caroline would say, "I made this decision and got him to do it." I think it was the two of them, and Vicki.

Heininger: Had she come to the conclusion that she wanted to support Obama before Kennedy?

Shrum: I think so.

Heininger: Really?

Shrum: Well, I don't know before Kennedy. Look, it could be simultaneously with Kennedy. You can't discount the fact that she's from Louisiana.

Heininger: True.

Shrum: And that her father and her family had stood up for civil rights and for JFK at a time when that was not popular in the South, and that that would tend to make you react in certain ways to the kinds of things that Clinton at least was alleged to be doing, that I think he was doing, during South Carolina. He has elaborate explanations for them now, but at the time, most of us heard them a certain way. Most of us heard him say basically he [Obama] won South Carolina because he's black, and I think people were repelled by that. I felt sorry for Hillary, because I think their strategy was to leave South Carolina alone, not to make a big deal out of it, and the President said, "No, no, I can go down there and win it." And he's paid a big price. If you look at that Virginia gubernatorial primary, his power with African-American voters seems very depleted.

Heininger: He's paid a price for it. Let's back up to the 2000 election with [Albert, Jr.] Gore. What was Kennedy's role in that election? Had he been close to Gore at all?

Shrum: I wouldn't say close, but he knew him well. I think he hoped and believed that Gore would be less incremental once he was President than Clinton was. He also thought—I mean, I don't want to put thoughts into his head. In my conversations with him, it was clear to me that he didn't see [William] Bradley as a strong preferable alternative to Gore. Bradley was running on the issues of child poverty and political reform. Kennedy's reaction was not that those were issues Bill Bradley had fought for hard, especially child poverty, when he was in the Senate, because Kennedy had been there fighting on that issue. And on health care, which was kind of a Bradley centerpiece, Kennedy had long been leading that battle. Bradley had voted right, but he hadn't been in the front line, in the trenches of the battle.

Teddy and I talked a number of times. There were some people who actually tried to persuade him to endorse Bradley. I think Dave Burke did. We've talked about that. I had gone to work for Gore. Carter Eskew and I were what you call senior advisors. At least in my case it referred to age I often thought, rather than influence.

Heininger: Did he agree with the choice of [Joseph] Lieberman? Did he think that was going to add to the ticket?

Shrum: We didn't talk about it at the time. Going back to the primaries, Gore was going to win Iowa anyway. We won Iowa going away. But Kennedy was critical in certifying Gore on health care, because Bradley wanted to say, "Gore is nowhere on health care. Look at my plan; it's bigger and better." And the truth is Democrats weren't going to read all the plans, but when Kennedy said Gore's health care plan is better, that's what most Democrats concluded was probably the case.

Kennedy played a critical role in New Hampshire. We landed in New Hampshire, having won big in Iowa and having like a 12-, 15-point lead in New Hampshire—18 at one point—and there was a snowstorm, which I still remember because Carter Eskew and I walked to get a doughnut at the Dunkin' Donuts from the debate practice hall, and by the time we got back it was a blizzard and nobody else could get in. So we had to do all the debate prep with just the two of us and me holding up little cards with the minute signs on them. It was the Vice President of the United States coming back to local politics, in terms of the resources and infrastructure that we had.

Heininger: But the debate coach is used to this.

Shrum: Tony Coehlo had said, "I pulled off a real coup. I talked to the President, and he's going to give the State of the Union the Thursday before New Hampshire." And of course it had been announced, it was immovable. I said to Carter, "Oh God, this is awful," and Carter said, "You're right." I remember Carter's exact line. He said, "It's going to re-infantilize him. After all the work we've done and all the work he's done to make himself his own man, he's going to be like the little doll bobbing up and down behind Clinton." And I said, "Well, maybe we can hope for another blizzard on Thursday."

On Wednesday night we had a debate, where for the first and only time in the campaign Bradley attacked Gore. He attacked him on abortion rights, for votes that Gore had taken when he was in Congress, long before. And the next day it didn't snow and Gore went to Washington and promptly was re-infantilized, and we began—you could see actually—the debate didn't seem to hurt us in the nightly tracking polls, but the night after the State of the Union message, we just started going down. I think it was not just re-infantilizing him. The struggle constantly in the campaign—and I know Clinton thinks we should have done this, but all the data we had said it wouldn't work—was whether we should be saying Gore is actually a third Clinton term. People had cognitive dissonance about Clinton. They thought he'd been a pretty good President, but they were just as glad that he was not going to be President.

So I called Kennedy in Hyannis Port and said, "You've got to come back up here." He said, "I thought this thing was done." I said, "You've got to come back here, it's slipping away." He

said, “Well, I’ll come and let me get every Kennedy in sight I can and just use them all over the state.” We had this huge rally in this barn in Somersworth, New Hampshire, where he gave an amazing speech about Gore and his father and the Gore family and the Kennedy family, about standing up for values you believed in and the whole thing. We won New Hampshire by so little that you can attribute it to any number of things. You can attribute it to Michael Whouley sending the Vice President out into heavy Bradley areas to campaign on election day, and Gore’s on the phone saying, “But people can’t get to the polls.” I said, ‘Michael, you’ve got to tell him that’s the point, you don’t want them to get to the polls.”

But I think without Kennedy, Gore would not have won New Hampshire. We had a meeting in California a month or so later. We were planning the convention and someone said who was going to speak in prime time, and someone objected to Kennedy because we had some veterans of triangulation from the Clinton years and someone said do we really want him in prime time, et cetera, et cetera? I was about to jump out of my chair and Gore said: “He’s speaking in prime time. He’s speaking whenever he wants because if he hadn’t done what he did, we might not be sitting here planning this.”

Heininger: So Gore was grateful and understood the role he played.

Shrum: Listen, people think Gore is a stiff. He’s actually very funny. He’s sardonic sometimes and funny, but he’s a pretty generous person actually.

Heininger: You’ve called Kennedy in a number of times to campaign on behalf of other clients that you’ve had. Is he responsive when you do that?

Shrum: Oh sure, but I mean he’s never been—I didn’t have to call him in to campaign for Barbara Mikulski. He loves Barbara Mikulski. John Kerry, I could argue that he called me in, because I went down to Hyannis Port when he and Vicki invited Marylouise and me to have dinner one day in the fall of 2002. We sailed and had some food and sat on the porch. There was this assumption in Washington that he was going to be for John Edwards, and he and Edwards really liked each other. The truth was Edwards had been my client in the ’98 Senate race and had told me he didn’t like Kennedy and I said, “I think that will change when you get to the Senate,” and it did.

I know Kennedy was a little disappointed that Edwards hadn’t—he’d done a really good job and thought he was very talented in working on the Patients’ Bill of Rights and watched him negotiate with [John] McCain, but that he hadn’t gotten a greater depth of seriousness in the time he’d been there. Everybody assumed, and I think Kerry worried that he was going to get dissed and Kennedy was going to maybe endorse Edwards. I don’t think that would have happened. But Kennedy could have stayed out of it. We’re sitting on the porch and he said “Look, I can’t tell you what to do and it’s your business, but I hope you go to work for John Kerry.” Vicki strongly felt the same way and we talked about it, and of course that’s what I ultimately did.

Kennedy played a role, I think, both in the initial shakeup of the Kerry campaign in November of—well it’s odd, it’s ironic—in November of 2003. He played the same role in 1996 when Kerry was in trouble in the Senate race against Bill Weld, and I think he and Teresa [Heinz Kerry] had pushed John to change the way the campaign was being done. I was in Boston

filming some ads for Congress for Joe Kennedy—they were really designed to seed a 1998 run for Governor. I got this call from John saying, "Can you come to dinner tonight?" I said, "I just so happen to be in Boston, so I can." I got there and he and Teresa basically said, "Will you take over the media strategy in the campaign?" In 2003, I think Kennedy, behind the scenes, played a similar role in terms of counseling Kerry.

Heininger: Was this when the change came to Mary Beth [Cahill]?

Shrum: Yes. The first thing was the change from Jim Jordan, who had spent some time with Kennedy, who came away unimpressed with the discussion.

Heininger: Kennedy came away unimpressed, or Jim Jordan?

Shrum: It didn't matter whether Jim Jordan came away unimpressed. I'm trying to be clinical about this.

Heininger: Yes.

Shrum: I had actually been talking about Mary Beth, about some role in the campaign, but suddenly we had to have someone who knew what the hell he or she was doing and that became Mary Beth. But then Kennedy went to Iowa and Michael Whouley, who had been out there in 2000, was totally intent on getting Kennedy there for Kerry. He said, "I just watched it with Gore." We didn't need it with Gore, but it's just huge when he comes into the place, it just has an electric impact. Kennedy went early in January, when we were still totally written off. At this point we had been riding back and forth to New Hampshire. I was with John most of the time, and we had no press following us. We'd sometimes have them show up at an event and then we'd come back to Boston for the night. We had made the decision, and it was tough for John, that we basically were going to abandon New Hampshire and go to Iowa and just settle in in Iowa for the last 18, 17 days.

Heininger: Which was a risky thing to do.

Shrum: It was a very risky thing to do, except it was—strategy is sometimes necessity and the only way to do this was we had to get back in contention in Iowa. Kennedy had no qualms or reservations about coming out. He came out in early January, came out later as well. I was up here for the day, so I didn't fly out with him, but I flew out to Chicago commercially and then took a small commercial plane to Dubuque or something. You went into these rallies and suddenly we had thousands and thousands of people. Kennedy was great. He would say, "In 1960 the Iowa caucuses [which barely existed then] supported my brother." He doesn't talk about his brothers easily. "And in 1968 they supported Bobby, but you know, I came here in 1980 and I lost." The crowd could go hhhuuuuhhh. He'd say, "So you've got to make it up to old Teddy and you've got to stand with John Kerry." Then he would go into an argument that Kerry couldn't explicitly make for himself.

My notion of the Iowa caucuses is people play around the year before and then a month or so before they get serious, and there's a question that forms. The question last year, for example, was, Who stands for change? The question in '04 was: Who could or should be President?

Who's Presidential enough, who might beat Bush? Howard Dean wasn't really the answer to that question.

Heininger: Was it the answer for the question of who might beat Bush, or who ought to be President?

Shrum: Both. I don't know if you could disaggregate them.

Heininger: You can't separate the two, OK.

Shrum: But Kerry in a debate had to ask a question and his question to Dean was, "Governor Dean, you recently said that we couldn't assume that Osama bin Laden was guilty. What in the world were you thinking?" The whole question. He actually had a little preface to it, but, "What in the world were you thinking?" The truth is when voters heard that they'd say, "That guy can't beat Bush." It doesn't matter if he gives an answer, "Well, under our system of laws and civil liberties" and all this stuff. Anyway, Kennedy could make the argument explicitly that Kerry was the strongest candidate, the best candidate to be President and the strongest candidate against Bush, and that's what he did. He was a huge part of what happened for us in Iowa. It's odd, because in '04 I think the most critical role he played was in Iowa, and in 2000 it was in New Hampshire and on health care.

About John Kerry and him, there was always a myth that they didn't like each other. There were tensions between the staffs, but they became closer and closer and they're very close now. I assume you've interviewed John. You should if you haven't.

Heininger: What role was Mary Beth playing and what role was Kennedy playing with Mary Beth?

Shrum: He would talk with Mary Beth, he would talk with me, he would tell us what he thought. I remember getting on the plane when I flew back from that first day of events in Iowa, because I had to do something in D.C. Then before I went back out to Iowa; Mary Beth and I went back out together. Kennedy and I are on this charter plane and he looks at me and says, "You know, I can just feel it. I think you guys have a chance." He does have a great instinct, a great feel when he goes into a situation. I saw that the night of the first debate in 2000, where the initial reaction by everybody, including me, was Gore won. Yes, he'd sighed and he'd done this other stuff that he'd been told not to do, but he'd won on the issues.

I saw Teddy and Vicki as they were leaving, because I was about to go into the spin room, and they were worried. They were worried not about the content, not the clash, but the effect. Most people in the hall hadn't even noticed it. Most people only noticed it on television. But he has almost a sixth sense about what's happening.

So in the 2004 primaries, he played a very big role. I think in three successive Presidential contests he's played a major role in determining who the Democratic nominee would be.

Heininger: What surprised me in talking with Mary Beth was the amount of contact there had been. That was really not widely known, that he was talking with Mary Beth all the time, he was

talking with you, he was talking with Kerry, but there was a lot of behind-the-scenes involvement that was not public and was not widely known. That kind of surprised me.

Shrum: But that was true even before Mary Beth came. I think he and Kerry were talking and that's why he and Jordan ended up sitting down. I think Kerry sent Jordan off to see Kennedy.

Heininger: So why did Kerry not win?

Shrum: Because we lost by half a football field's worth of participants in Ohio, because it's very tough to beat an incumbent President in time of war, unless people have turned against the war, which they had not by then. I don't want to sound defensive, to use your earlier word, but Kerry came closer to beating an incumbent President in time of war who got renominated than anybody in American history.

Heininger: In the wake of 9-11, could anyone have won?

Shrum: Sure. I think Kerry got so close in Ohio. In an Ohio that was not controlled at that time by Ken Blackwell and a Republican Party apparatus that was very strong, could we have prevailed? Not impossible. Look, when you're talking about a swing of sixty or seventy thousand votes in a state that big, lots of things make a difference. I think that the Osama bin Laden tape the Friday before may have made a decisive difference. It's sort of amazing that people—

Heininger: He does know how to use technology, doesn't he?

Shrum: People couldn't figure out that in slamming Bush, what bin Laden was trying to do was help Bush, because Bush was in some ways the best recruiting device he had. With the exit polls on election day—I should have known better after 2000—we thought Kerry was going to win. About 2:15 or 2:30 in the morning, Mary Beth had talked to him, and then he said to me, "What do you think?" I said, "It's not going to happen; the odds are less than 50/50. It's not going to happen." Then I went back to write a concession speech in the hotel and John had said, "Can you show up by 8:30 or 9:00 in the morning?" When I got there Vicki and Teddy were there. That's very Teddy. He was there that morning, right away, and we sat around and talked about the speech. He had a few suggestions, Vicki had a few suggestions. John had some things he wanted to do. Kennedy has a very deep sense of loyalty.

Heininger: What does he like about campaigning?

Shrum: Oh, he likes people. I think he enjoys the sheer theater of it too. And something else: He and his brothers, and I think Obama may have this too, it's a great gift: There's always a little part of them, a little part of Teddy, that's off in a corner observing all of this with a smile. I think that's what he means when he says, "You take issues seriously, but you don't take yourself too seriously."

Heininger: Definitely with a smile.

Shrum: He loves that. He got very frustrated in the early days in Iowa in 1980 because the Secret Service was so terrified that something was going to happen to him, "the third Kennedy brother," as one of them said to me. Kennedy would be on the stage, there would be a vast

expanse of empty space, a big railing, and then a bunch of people crowded behind it and all the way out the building.

Heininger: He doesn't like the space in-between.

Shrum: The space in-between, and they didn't like him going down and shaking hands, which he started doing anyway. If he's in a campaign, he likes to campaign, he likes to be with people. All you have to do is watch that speech endorsing Obama at American University. He's serious but he's also having a lot of fun. It's not a chore for him.

Heininger: Tell me about working with him last summer for the Democratic Convention speech.

Shrum: Vicki called—well, we had gone down there to have dinner on the 4th of July and then she called me, a week later or so, and said, "He's going to try to speak at the convention. We're not going to tell anybody about this and we don't want anybody involved but you." He told me some of the things he wanted to say, some of the thematic ideas, and then I wrote it, sent it, Vicki and I talked about it with them.

I started going down there quite regularly. I don't drive, so Marylouise was nice enough to drive me, but if you time yourself and you don't hit the bridge wrong, it's only 25 or 30 minutes. We worked on writing the speech and then we'd have lunch or do something else, and we worked on it for a fairly long while. Then we worked for a long while on actually delivering it, because as Larry Horowitz explained to me, with the disease he has, one of the hardest things actually is reading a TelePrompTer, because it involves so many different parts of your head, of your brain. So we worked on it, and worked on it, and worked on it, and worked on it.

Heininger: To put it as much as possible into his memory?

Shrum: Not his memory, but make him comfortable with seeing it on the prompter.

Heininger: Did you have to make adjustments in font size on the TelePrompTer?

Shrum: Yes. You didn't want words falling off onto the next line, but we've been doing that for years. Obama does that.

Heininger: I mean adjustments for his illness.

Shrum: No. We were using the same font size, but we had to make—you'd like certain phrases to be on the same line, not to be broken up.

Heininger: So when he sees it, he's seeing the whole phrase.

Shrum: Now, he could talk this to you, but when he had to read it, that was the challenge. So we did that and he worked very hard at it. It was basically Vicki and myself and him, and we would modify it to make certain parts of it more comfortable, more in his language. Then we left for Denver.

Heininger: Was he still sailing every day then?

Shrum: He was sailing a lot. He kept saying, "Let's go sailing." I kept saying, "I've got guests, I've got to go." He was sailing last week, and when I was down in Florida with Larry at the end of February 2009, we went sailing and it was clear to me that he—I told you the story about getting on the boat—it was clear to me that he knew every buoy and every shoal in Biscayne Bay, so contrary to what was written in *Vanity Fair*, he'd been sailing constantly down there.

So we took the plane, got out there. We were going to have dinner in this apartment that he was in and then practice, and he just started feeling really bad. Larry wasn't there yet. Larry Ronan, his doctor from Mass General, was there. Suddenly Kennedy was standing there looking at me, saying, "I'm sorry, Bob, I've got to go to the hospital." And I said, "Don't worry about it, whatever we have to do, we'll do." So he goes to the hospital and of course it turns out it has nothing to do with the brain cancer. It's a kidney stone. It's unbelievable.

Heininger: It's just unbelievable to get kidney stones on top of a brain tumor.

Shrum: We'd flown out, we were in good shape, we were all ready. So Larry says, "You can't leave the hotel room because we don't know what's going to happen and you may have to rewrite at any point."

Heininger: Pass the kidney stone and not only that, kidney stones are incredibly painful.

Shrum: He gave it with the kidney stone still in him.

Heininger: Oh, ow, ow, ow.

Shrum: Larry and I talked early in the afternoon and decided that I would cut the speech, which was about 900 words. I cut it down to like 550, and that would make it easier for him to give. We still didn't know whether he was going to come, and that I would also have a 30-second version. At 5:00—Vicki has told me this story, right afterwards—he gets up and says, "I'm going." He's still in pain and he's ordered them to take him off the painkillers because the painkillers make it almost impossible to give the speech. I think Vicki put his makeup on and combed his hair, because all the stuff that had been set up at the convention hall, makeup artists, all this wasn't there, and she had to do her own hair. Somebody had to take her clothes out to her, and they rode in and Larry told him there was a 30-second option that I had written and he said, "I am not standing up in front of the Democratic Convention and talking for 30 seconds."

[BREAK]

Heininger: What's your favorite story about Kennedy?

Shrum: Oh, I don't know if I have one favorite.

Heininger: You can tell multiple.

Shrum: During the ’80 campaign, Carey and I sent him into a *New York Times* editorial board interview.

[BREAK]

Shrum: I can tell endless stories.

Heininger: Story time.

Shrum: So Carey and I send him in with his briefing paper to the *New York Times* editorial board. Somebody from the staff comes out midway through and says, “You gave him a wrong fact and he has insisted on it and it’s been proven to him that it was wrong.” So he comes out and he looks at both of us and says, “Get in the limousine.” So Carey and I get in the limousine with him and he says, “I’ll thank you to let me make my own mistakes. As you may have noticed, I’m very good at it.” He never said another word. Now how could you not be loyal to somebody like that?

Heininger: Right.

Shrum: When I first worked for him and I didn’t fully understand him and the way he reacts to things, we’re on our second trip to Iowa and I wrote what he calls an opener, a joke. He has had some marvelous openers through the years, “I don’t mind not being President. I just mind that somebody else is.”

Heininger: That’s a great line.

Shrum: He said, “I return to Iowa to discuss the critical issues of ‘fam farmilies’ and the Wabash Railroad.” Both of which he had referred to when he was there the first week, calling them “fam farmilies” instead of farm families, and the Wabash Railroad, which didn’t exist anymore. I show him this thing and he looks up over these half glasses and says, “I don’t think so.” Carey Parker grabs me, we go back and sit in our seats, and he says, “Oh God, Bob, you can’t do that, you’ve planted it in his head.” [l*aughter*]

Heininger: Which you did.

Shrum: We did, because we were in some smoke-filled hall that night. Everybody smoked then. In audiences people smoked. He didn’t say Wabash Railroad I don’t think, but he said “fam farmilies,” and everybody started laughing because it had gotten so much coverage when he had done it before. He looked up and said, “I think there must be something in the air out here.” He never said anything to me about it. There’s so many from ’80, ’84. I told you a bunch of them, actually.

Heininger: What do you like most about him?

Shrum: What I admire most is the genuine adamantine sense of commitment, that this is someone who could have had the world's easiest and most comfortable life, alternating between a ski lodge in Aspen and a place in the south of France, and then spending the summer here. Instead he actually believed that if you pushed against the wall often enough, eventually the wall would break down, whether it was on civil rights or health care or the minimum wage or education. The persistence to me is very powerful. I said before that he's not only carried on the legacy, he's enlarged the legacy. So that's what I most admire.

I guess what I most like is the genuineness, the authenticity, the friendship, the sort of fun we've had together even when things have been tough, a sense of loyalty. I think I told you yesterday, I got a thank-you letter from him a couple of months ago and you could just tell from the handwriting it was clearly very difficult to write, but it was obviously something he wanted to do. There are other stories too.

I remember at the end of '80, when [Patrick] Caddell called me and I think we were scheduled to do Michigan at the end, and he said, "You have to go to Massachusetts." I said to Teddy, "We have to go to Massachusetts." He said, "Massachusetts? This thing is really over." And they scheduled us for some event like at 9:00 at night, our last event, at a senior citizens' home somewhere on the Southeast Expressway. Well, do you know that in early November at 9:00 at night, senior citizens—[*laughs*]

Heininger: Senior citizens are not as alert as they might be at 9:00 in the morning.

Shrum: Right. Then we drove back down to Hyannis and I said to him again, "I think we're going to lose the Senate" and he said, "God, I hope not, because Reagan's going to win." Ninety-four, I told you a bunch of those stories.

Heininger: Do you feel that Vicki has changed his life?

Shrum: Well, sure, Marylouise has changed mine. I think if you find somebody who you genuinely and deeply love and who resonates with you in a really profound way, it changes your life. It gives you a happiness and a contentment and a centeredness that you probably never had before, and that's what I think he was saying to me when he was telling me I ought to marry Marylouise. His own hope and sense that maybe someday—maybe it would never happen, but maybe someday—he would find somebody that he felt that way about, and he did. She made him give up cigars.

Heininger: Oh, I didn't know that.

Shrum: It took a few years.

Heininger: That must have been painful.

Shrum: It took a few years, but I remember one birthday I had a friend who was an Ambassador from a Latin American country and who got me a box of Cuban cigars to give him. I had it delivered to his house before his birthday; we were going to go to his birthday party the next night. Vicki called me and said, "Bob, he's really grateful, but I've taken them away. He's given up cigars."

Heininger: That had to have been hard.

Shrum: I think with her it's been easy and it's been an adventure. A couple of falls ago they went to Britain and then Italy. Our friends Linda Douglass and John Phillips—Linda is the spokesman for health care reform, a former ABC [American Broadcasting Company] correspondent. John made a lot of money and he owns a borgo, basically a village, outside a town in Tuscany. The borgo is called Borgo Finocchieto and it has a big palazzo, and Vicki and Teddy went and stayed there for several days. The whole town was so thrilled that when they went down the hill to dinner, people were marching around, and they marched Teddy and Vicki to the church, this little church in Buonconvento, which is 800 years old, and they took them up to the front, and there, it's either on the right or the left, is a stained glass window, and in the stained glass window are Martin Luther King, JFK, and Bobby. I think for him it was just a very moving thing, in this little place in the middle of Italy, and also an illustration of the power that a President can have if people in the world see him in a certain way. The notion that that endures all those years afterward is amazing.

Heininger: What's his relationship been like with his kids?

Shrum: As far as I can see, terrific. He's very close with Kara [Kennedy Allen], who went through her own terrible fight with cancer, very close with Teddy [Kennedy Jr.], very close with Patrick [Kennedy]. He's always been very centered on those kids. From many years ago when they were young, he's always been very centered on those kids and did not let—Teddy had to have his leg cut off. I assume you've gotten that story as you've done all this. The doctors saying it was hopeless—"Take him to Disneyland," in effect, or Disney World, and he said: "We're not going to do that." But after Teddy Jr. gets his leg amputated Teddy's getting him back on the ski slopes and he's learning to ski on one leg. It's a far-flung family—now they live all over the country and there are a lot of them—but if you were sitting in that family box at the convention in Denver watching these folks, there was no doubt that one way or another they all have a certain very real closeness with him. Some of them are very close. Maria [Shriver Schwarzenegger] is very close and Caroline is very close.

Heininger: Who else of the nieces and nephews? John I think was.

Shrum: Joe is. But I think getting into rating that would be difficult, because they all have their own individual—they're all adults, they're more than adults now. Some of them are 50 and 55 years old.

Heininger: And have their own kids.

Shrum: Yes. And some of their kids are soon going to have kids. So you know, I just don't think you can do it on a comparative basis. At least I can't do it on a comparative basis.

Heininger: Who has he been closest to in the Senate?

Shrum: That covers so many years, I mean Culver, [Michael] Mansfield, [Christopher] Dodd, McGovern, Hatch, Jacob Javits, [Charles Jr.] Mathias. It covers a lot of time and a lot of people. He's been in the Senate for more than a fifth and almost a quarter of the time the country has been in existence.

Heininger: Oh wow, what a statistic.

Shrum: He's been in the Senate for 47 years now and since the Constitution, we're 226 years, so it's a fifth of the time the country has been in existence.

Heininger: Wow!

Shrum: I'll give you another anecdote. When I was press secretary, we had a close vote one day and he and Hart had an amendment to crack down on Libya. This is before Reagan had decided to crack down on Libya. [Charles] Percy led the fight on the other side and Kennedy and Hart lost by a little wee bit, and I got a call from the *New York Times* saying we want to take a picture of the three of them for the front page tomorrow. So I go over and I collect Kennedy, and Percy's guy is getting Percy, and we're standing on the steps outside the Senate. I said to Gary, "We're going to go take this picture." And he just takes my head off. "I'm not taking that picture. You're not telling me what to do." Gary did have a bit of a brittle temper at times. Kennedy looks at him and says, "Gee Gary, I wouldn't talk to Bob that way," [*laughter*] which was a perfect way to diffuse the situation.

Heininger: He apparently did that at one point in a meeting over ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] with John Sununu, who yelled at one of the staff members present, and took Sununu's head off for not being nice to the staff member.

Shrum: He didn't take Gary's head off, he just said, "I wouldn't talk to Bob that way." And then a few hours later Gary popped into my part of the Kennedy office and said, "Hi!"

Did I tell you about when we did the midnight sail and he lost power on the boat; we went down there a couple summers ago and we were going to do the all-day sail. I thought I told you about this.

Heininger: You told me about the all-day sail where Marylouise and Vicki went out in the morning.

Shrum: But at the end when we're coming in, the boat loses power. As we're coming in the engine goes off.

Heininger: At night?

Shrum: At night. And we're coming into Hyannis Port Harbor and he sails the thing to the buoy and just misses catching it, and manages to come about in the harbor around all these boats, does it again, and perfectly catches the buoy, which people who sail all the time tell me is nearly impossible to do.

Heininger: Yes, that's not common.

Shrum: A couple years ago he won the race to Nantucket in whatever his class of boat was. When they announced the winner—the Nantucket Yacht Club may still have some reservations for people who aren't, say, WASPs [white Anglo-Saxon Protestants], and the Nantucket Yacht Club, instead of saying the winner is Ted Kennedy or Edward Kennedy, gives the name of his

boat. The winner is X. So he gets up and he says, "Let me introduce myself, I'm Mr. X." [*laughter*]

Heininger: What does he get out of the sailing?

Shrum: Oh, he clearly loves the sea. The other day he was getting ready to dedicate his book and he sent me a thing saying could I maybe find a quote about love and the sea, which I did. I think that he's always gotten strength from the sea. It gives him a sense that life passes but there's something in life that lasts, and he loves the sailing. God, we've been sailing with him in the winter—

Heininger: Is it also a way in which it's the one place where the press and people can't get to him?

Shrum: Well, the only people are the people he's asked to come along.

Heininger: To be the constant focus of the media wherever he goes, whatever he does, I would think that one of the very few places he could escape that would be on the ocean.

Shrum: That's true and that may be part of it, but also he's been sailing since he was so young. When he was born, they had a boat, I think called the *Eight of Us* or the *Nine of Us* and when he was born they bought a little boat called *One More*.

Heininger: I didn't know that. *One More*.

Shrum: Because nobody—he was a surprise. Nobody assumed he was coming along.

Heininger: One more.

Shrum: He likes to get out there and he enjoys the sailing. Sometimes on the water with him, you'll be in the middle of a serious conversation and sometimes you'll have a perfectly unserious conversation. Sometimes you'll be telling stories about people and he'll tell sailing stories. There's a famous sailing story. In those early years when I didn't know him particularly well, Eunice [Kennedy Shriver] decided to compete in a small boat race and she borrowed this small boat from him. I was the crew and I was of course not good being the crew. We were falling further and further behind so Eunice said, "Start throwing the ballast out of the boat." And I said, "What's the ballast?" Well it's these metal bricks. So I was down there tossing them off.

Heininger: You're assuming she didn't mean you.

Shrum: We all had dinner that night and he cannot get over that we had thrown out hundreds of dollars of these bricks. He says, "It doesn't make the boat go faster. It brings it higher in the water." [*laughter*] We've told that story for 30 years now. That story has lasted a long time. One day he was sailing; I wasn't here. He was sailing back from Maine and it was when we bought our first Cape house. He calls Marylouise on the phone and he says, "I want to figure out which house it is. Go out and wave a towel." So she's waving a towel from a balcony; he's waving a towel back. The first time he came here, when he got out of the car—my stepson named the house "Shrum-A-Lot." The first time he got out of the car he just started laughing.

Heininger: Is this before Larry did "Spam-A-Lot?"

Shrum: Yes, yes. "Shrum-A-Lot" from the beginning was actually that first house on the hill. We only lived in that for a year and then we came here in 2001 and had a lot of fun here. We had birthday parties; Teddy sings. He's a terrific singer. He and Vicki love to sing and they write songs. In fact, for the farewell party when I was leaving Washington, they had a lot of people, and Bob Novak said, "You know, it's sort of nice to be in Teddy Kennedy's house." I said, "Well, if you'd been nicer to him over the years—" which was a joke, because he and Bob always had a professional relationship. Teddy and Vicki wrote and performed a song called "Shrum-A-Lot."

Heininger: Oh really?

Shrum: To the tune of "Camelot," and they had somebody accompany them on the piano. You know about the birthday parties, people have told you about the birthday parties. Oatsie and I still think the most unbelievable one was sort of informally, everybody comes to the sense of who has the best costume, and we thought we were going to win when the theme was the 1960s, because I went as Pope John XXIII and she went as the Flying Nun. It's actually very hard to get a Pope costume. You can't go to your neighborhood costume store and rent a Pope costume. She had to get one from one of the studios. Barbara Mikulski came as Jacqueline Kennedy, with a little hairdo, a little pill box. Only she could get away with it.

Heininger: Yes, I think so. Well, last words on him?

Shrum: Those will be hard to say in any event, at any time. He is a great friend and undeniably, one of the greatest Senators ever and one of the great shaping influences of progressive politics in the last 50 years. I can't imagine having gone through a life in politics without him.

Heininger: And he's fun.

Shrum: He is fun, as I keep saying, he is fun. You've got to be fun. If you're not fun—it's a lot of work. Doing this is a lot of work, and if you don't have some sense of perspective and some sense of humor—you have to. He once told me why he sometimes spoke in broken sentences, and we were talking about the fact that Bobby did too and even JFK occasionally did. He said, "In my case, if you're the youngest of ten sitting around the dinner table and you're trying to get a word in edgewise—" [*laughter*]

Heininger: A phrase may be all you get.

Shrum: Yes, yes.