



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW 2 WITH BARBARA SOULIOTIS

November 9, 2009
Boston, Massachusetts

Interviewer
Janet Heininger

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TRANSCRIPT

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Heininger: This is an interview with Barbara Souliotis on November 9, 2009, in Boston.

Let's go back to the early years. You go back farther than anybody else with Ted Kennedy.

Souliotis: Right.

Heininger: What was it like at the very beginning?

Souliotis: It was very exciting, because I always wanted to go into government. They said I'd have to go to Washington to do that and I wasn't sure I wanted to do that. I received a call telling me there was someone who might run for Governor or the Senate—the person I spoke with didn't know which one—and that I should go over for an interview. They didn't tell me who he was.

Heininger: Really?

Souliotis: It just happened to be the brother of the President of the United States, and the Attorney General. [*laughing*]

Heininger: But they didn't bother to tell you that.

Souliotis: They didn't bother to tell me that. I went over for an interview and there was another girl there, who was also waiting to be interviewed. He had a woman working there at the time, whom I saw first. A couple of days later she called me back and said that he wanted to interview me. He loved telling the story that I was the first person he ever interviewed himself. It was also my first interview, so it was—He always liked to joke about it, that he didn't know what to ask me. I interviewed with him and then I got a call to come back and work for him. He was just gearing up to make his announcement to run for the Senate.

Heininger: What did he want to know about you at that point? It sounds like he didn't know what he wanted to ask.

Souliotis: He didn't know what he wanted to ask. Could I type? He never asked me whether I was a Republican or a Democrat. He asked me if I knew someone in my hometown, a campaign worker for his brother by the name of John Linnehan, someone I didn't know.

Heininger: But somehow that didn't disqualify you.

Souliotis: It didn't disqualify me. That basically was it; I guess we just hit it off. He called me back to do scheduling for the campaign. We worked out on Bowdoin Street, where the President had his office, so that was interesting.

Heininger: The interesting thing is that he hit it off with you and he didn't hit it off with the other woman who was there being interviewed.

Souliotis: Right, right.

Heininger: Do you have any sense as to why?

Souliotis: I really don't. We came from the same school. I have no idea, but I just knew she was there being interviewed.

Heininger: That was serendipity, to put it mildly.

Souliotis: Yes, right. Shortly after that he announced, and then we moved to campaign headquarters down here on Tremont Street. That probably was the toughest, most exciting campaign, up until the [Mitt] Romney campaign.

Heininger: Yes.

Souliotis: But even with that one, the first one was tougher than any of them, because of [Edward J.] McCormack [Jr.].

Heininger: Right.

Souliotis: The Speaker of the House's nephew basically had the entire state legislature behind him, and he [Kennedy] was the brother of the Attorney General of the United States, and they thought the Senator was just a young kid who was running on his brother's name.

Heininger: And you were very young.

Souliotis: I was very young. It was a very tough campaign with many long hours.

Heininger: Who did he have working with him at that point?

Souliotis: Gerard Doherty, whom I'm sure you've interviewed, was the campaign manager. He had Senator John Culver and a couple of classmates from Harvard who did some of the issues and speechwriting. Five or six of us did the statewide campaign operation. There was Larry Laughlin, who was the head of scheduling, and then midway through the campaign, Steve Smith came up from New York.

Heininger: Were you the only woman?

Souliotis: No, no. There were at least five women who were coordinators of different sections of the state, coordinating the campaign workers. Steve Smith had a secretary who was a woman; John Culver's secretary was a woman; myself; then you had advance people, who were men.

Heininger: Of course.

Souliotis: All men.

Heininger: They always were.

Souliotis: It was unheard of to have a woman advance person in those days, although I must say that Steve Smith was not that way at all. Steve Smith didn't care whether you were male or female as long as you could do the job. He came and called me in, and asked, "What do you need? What's wrong with the campaign? What's right with the campaign? What do you need? Just tell me."

Heininger: Really?

Souliotis: He was fantastic.

Heininger: Where did that come from, do you think?

Souliotis: Probably his business in New York.

Heininger: But that was still an unusual attitude for the time.

Souliotis: Yes, at that time. And he would back you up. If he thought you could do the job and do it well, that's all that mattered, which I found very refreshing.

Heininger: How close was he, at that point, to the Senator?

Souliotis: Very close. Steve was like a brother and was even more so after the President [John F. Kennedy] and Robert [Kennedy] died.

Heininger: Why? What was it about—we've interviewed many people about it, and nobody's been able to—he's an enigma to us, an absolute enigma.

Souliotis: That's probably true. He was a very private person and very smart. Obviously, he had the trust of the entire family, of the family business, the trust of the father. He was very sharp, very impressive.

Heininger: But Jean [Kennedy Smith]'s not an enigma.

Souliotis: No. *[laughing]*

Heininger: She's not an enigma and Ted's not an enigma.

Souliotis: Right.

Heininger: But Steve, it's been—

Souliotis: I don't think too many people who knew him were that close to him. I don't know. I just met him when he came up for the first campaign. I worked with him a lot on building the Kennedy Library, with which he was very involved. We just hit it off very well.

Heininger: Why did Ted hit it off so well with him?

Souliotis: After the assassinations, he became like a brother, and he's handled all the family business. He depended on him a lot, for his judgment.

Heininger: Yes. I know he was hit very hard by his death.

Souliotis: Yes.

Heininger: Very hard.

Souliotis: They were very close. And he was fun. From all the interviews, you have to know what a sense of humor the Senator had.

Heininger: Oh, yes.

Souliotis: And Steve did too. Steve was very quick-witted. Jean is too, but Steve was very quick-witted, and they loved to go back and forth. They always had a good time when they were together.

Heininger: It's been very interesting because of interviewing so many people and knowing who was close to the Senator. The personalities are *very* different. When you compare somebody like a Steve Smith with a Larry Horowitz, there's just no common ground there; or a Bob Shrum, again, they had completely different personalities. I asked Bob Shrum, "Why did you become such good friends with him?" He said, "I don't know," and I was sitting there thinking, *How do such different personalities come together? What is it that causes the friendship to develop here and not with certain other ones?* Of all of them, it's Steve Smith—in part because we can't deal with him directly to assess it for ourselves—who is the toughest one to figure out.

Souliotis: Right.

Heininger: That's what everybody says; he's just a real enigma.

Souliotis: He was tough, but if he liked you and if he thought you were doing the job right, he would back you to the hilt. Everybody really appreciated that.

Heininger: Tell me about that first campaign.

Souliotis: He was young and he was learning, but he outworked everybody else; there was no question about that. McCormack, as I said, was probably the frontrunner and probably ahead up until that debate.

Heininger: Amazing what a few ill-timed, un-choice words can do.

Souliotis: Right, exactly. But the Senator was out at plant gates at 5:00 in the morning, at the Charlestown Navy Yard, greeting people, and we would end about 11:00 at night, every day, seven days a week.

Heininger: Did his energy ever flag?

Souliotis: No, especially not before the plane crash. He *never* stopped. He couldn't sit still for a minute. Our headquarters were right next door to each other, on Tremont Street.

Heininger: Oh, my.

Souliotis: They would have signs in the window, "When are you going to debate?"

Heininger: Really?

Souliotis: Oh, yes. It was back and forth all the time.

Heininger: Oh, my God.

Souliotis: The debate was in South Boston, which was McCormack's territory, and he was probably a little ahead in the polls until that debate. We were there. You couldn't gauge the reaction when he said, "If your name was Edward Moore." You couldn't really tell from being in the hall, so we didn't know who won the debate when we left there, but when we came back to headquarters the phones were ringing off the hook and telegrams were coming in like crazy, saying, "We were for McCormack, but not any more. We're with you." They changed just like that.

Heininger: It's funny. It was a cheap shot, but it was a cheap shot that, as we've seen so many times since, in so many other campaigns, generally works.

Souliotis: Right.

Heininger: It's interesting that the response at that point was—

Souliotis: The response was unbelievable: letters coming in, telegrams coming in, phones ringing off their hooks. We were pretty sure whoever won the Democratic primary was probably going to win the election even though the Republican candidate, George Lodge, was a good candidate.

Heininger: Yes.

Souliotis: The funny thing was that after the election everybody was waiting to see who was going to be asked to go to Washington, and we had a large staff. You say that Steve was tough, but he didn't want to tell people who was going. The *Senator* didn't want to tell people.

Heininger: No, no. So who had to do it?

Souliotis: Steve took off for the airport, to go back to New York. He was at the airport when they called him back. They made him come back and tell us who was going. They only took maybe five of us to Washington. It was kind of funny.

Heininger: Did everybody want to go?

Souliotis: Yes, pretty much. Not the Gerard Dohertys, who were older, living here in Massachusetts, but all of the young people did.

Heininger: Why did he take you?

Souliotis: [*laughing*] I don't know. I did the scheduling, which had me more involved with him than some of the others. I worked closely with Senator Culver.

Heininger: Did you get along with him?

Souliotis: Oh, yes.

Heininger: You had two pluses right there.

Souliotis: Right. And Steve Smith and I got along very well.

Heininger: Three pluses.

Souliotis: We did a decent job on the scheduling. He thought we did a good job on his schedule.

Heininger: He clearly was very comfortable with you.

Souliotis: Yes. We hit it off from the beginning. I wasn't on Bowdoin Street for more than a couple of weeks, maybe, and downstairs was this little deli; we'd go down there and get Cokes and stuff. One day they said to go down and get him a Coke, so I did. He had on a brand-new suit, and in the exchange, my handing it to him and him grabbing it, we both missed and the Coke went all over his suit. I was absolutely mortified and he started laughing. I was thinking, *I'm about to get fired*, but he started laughing, and I thought, *Well, this might last a little longer than I thought*. So I don't know, we just hit it off.

Then we went to Washington and he kept some people who worked on Senator Ben Smith's staff, maybe three or four of them: Joe McIntyre, who had been on the Hill a long time; the five of us; and Bill Evans, who had worked on the campaign. I did scheduling down there for seven years. I said I would go for three years and I ended up there for seven, because I kept saying, "I'm going back," and he'd say, "No, you can't go now." Later I'd say, "I have to go back to Boston." "No, you can't go now; Bobby's going to run." Finally, I had the opportunity and came back.

Heininger: What was it like in the early years? What was your reaction to the Senate?

Souliotis: There were all of those older, southern, Senators—[James] Eastland, [John] Stennis, and [Everett] Dirksen—who were impressive. They'd say, "Senator Dirksen's going to be

speaking on the floor,” and we would run over because he was quite an orator. When it was a really important speech, we would go over just to listen to him. It was very impressive. There was Senator [Philip A.] Hart, for whom the Senator had a great deal of respect.

He also was very respectful of the Senate. They thought, because his brother was the President, he was going to come down and be cocky. But I don’t think he gave his maiden speech for more than a year, on civil rights. They were prepared not to like him.

Heininger: Oh, yes.

Souliotis: Very much. But they couldn’t help liking him, because of his sense of humor and his respect for them. He went and met with all of them when he got there.

Heininger: He also had good manners. He was taught well by his mother.

Souliotis: Yes, she taught him very well.

Heininger: And he was deferential to—

Souliotis: Deferential to the seniority system. They couldn’t help liking him.

Heininger: But in many ways, it was a stuffy, stodgy, hidebound place in the early ’60s.

Souliotis: Yes, and very male oriented.

Heininger: Very male, very clubby.

Souliotis: Very clubby. I don’t think they had what’s going on today, though.

Heininger: No.

Souliotis: The hate and the—In those days, if they gave you their word, it was good, and they could work together more. They might disagree all day long, but I don’t think it was as—I’ve never seen it as bad as it is today, and the Senator said it too.

Heininger: No.

Souliotis: It’s a very different place.

Heininger: It was, in many ways, a fraternity. It’s remained a fraternity of sorts, but you’re absolutely right. The institution itself changed. I saw it change in the late ’80s, early ’90s.

Souliotis: I’ll bet that Ranny Cooper was probably the first woman AA [administrative assistant] on the Hill, or if not, the second. It was unheard of, to have a woman AA—

Heininger: Yes.

Souliotis: Or a woman advance man in the campaign, or a woman in other high-level jobs, committee jobs, too.

Heininger: Yes.

Souliotis: We changed that.

Heininger: What was it like, being a staff member in the early '60s? Staffs were very small then.

Souliotis: Yes, they were very small. Before you get to be chairman of a committee, your staff is very small. As I said, we had probably four people from Senator Ben Smith's staff. There was Joe McIntyre, Senator Smith's AA, and probably three or four of his caseworkers, and then we had a receptionist, legislative assistant and a press person. There were maybe 10 or 12 people total in D.C., and up here in the Boston office, maybe five.

Heininger: How many do you have now?

Souliotis: We have 12 or 13, and a lot of interns, a *lot* of interns. We had the greatest volume of mail, because his brother was the President. We received mail from all over the country, and you normally only get mail from your home state.

Heininger: Right.

Souliotis: We got it from *everywhere*. We almost got to the point where we'd tell people they'd have to contact their own Senator.

Heininger: Who was in the office in that first year you were there? Go through the five of you that he brought down. Who were they?

Souliotis: There were Diane Stoddard, Diane Luce, Bill Evans, Mary Jane Duris, and me.

Heininger: And then who was there from Ben Smith's staff?

Souliotis: There was Joe McIntyre, who was the AA for Smith; he was on the Hill a long time even before. Oh, then Louise Stapleton came down from Massachusetts and was a receptionist. I can't remember their names; there were maybe three other women who worked for Ben Smith, including Barbara LaHage, Mary Scarinci, and Mary Grimmel, doing case work.

Heininger: Was the bulk of the case work handled in Washington?

Souliotis: In those days, it was in Washington, and then it switched and it all came to Boston.

Heininger: Are there any caseworkers down there now?

Souliotis: No. Very early on it was switched and all the casework came here.

Heininger: What was it like being a woman in the Senate in those days?

Souliotis: For myself?

Heininger: Yes.

Souliotis: I never had a problem with it. There was some—It could be tough, working with the men.

Heininger: Who did the typing?

Souliotis: A woman.

Heininger: Who did the filing?

Souliotis: A woman.

Heininger: Who did the dictating?

Souliotis: [*laughing*] A man.

Heininger: That's just the way it was.

Souliotis: That's just the way it was. The AAs tended to be very male chauvinistic. That's just the way it was. Ranny made a huge change. When Ranny came in, she put women in high positions. She made a huge change.

Heininger: Ranny *is* Ranny, after all.

Souliotis: Yes. Did you interview Ranny?

Heininger: Yes.

Souliotis: That made a change in the Senator too. The Senator would say jokingly, down the Cape, just within the last two years, "If I want to get something done, I get a woman," which was a huge change. That was just the way he was brought up, but he was the one who changed the most, by far. He also lived the longest. He did a complete change.

Heininger: What caused it, do you think?

Souliotis: As I said, Ranny, and there were women on the committees who were very sharp, very smart women that he hired; then it didn't matter to him. If you could do the job, it didn't matter. It didn't matter to him at all, and he probably had more women than most, particularly in the committees, and he had several AAs: Ranny Cooper, Danica [Petroshius], Mary Beth Cahill, and myself up here. He had a real change.

Heininger: And it was a real sea change, because—

Souliotis: A real sea change. Eddie Martin was an AA. Eddie worked as a reporter for the *Herald*, a Marine. I loved Eddie; he had a great sense of humor and Eddie was great, as was David Burke, Larry Horowitz, and Ken Feinberg.

Heininger: I wonder how much was affected by the shift over to computers. I watched this in my own career. In the offices I worked in, it was easy to pigeonhole women into being the ones who did the typing when there were typewriters and somebody who could dictate. But when

computers came in and everybody had one sitting on their desk, and everyone had the ability, dictation ceased to be a means of composing things.

Souliotis: Right.

Heininger: Filing, in many ways, ceased to be a form of organization, which is not to say we don't all have files, because we do, but—

Souliotis: Right.

Heininger: That wasn't the way it was then, when everything had to be done by hand.

Souliotis: You're probably right, but our change was before computers. Many interns did our filing and stuff, because we were just so busy. We couldn't survive up here without interns. We've had as many as 20 interns in here.

Heininger: Wow.

Souliotis: They weren't full-time, but we could never survive here without the interns, with the volume of mail and phone calls that we get. They do a lot of that. The change in our office was definitely *before* the computers, and that was *definitely* from him.

There was a move on when—The head of the Boston office was Larry Laughlin, the scheduler in the campaign. He became the head of the Boston office after the first campaign, and then Jim King was the head of this office, and then Mary Frackleton after Jim, and then Eddie Martin came back. Eddie was AA in Washington for a while, then he became regional head of HUD [Housing & Urban Development], and then he was AA here. When he was getting ready to retire, there was a move on to put another man in here, and the Senator said no.

Heininger: Really?

Souliotis: The Senator said, "No way. It's Barbara's."

Heininger: That's interesting, because that was quite early.

Souliotis: That was very early.

Heininger: That was quite early. And you wanted to come back to Boston.

Souliotis: I was already working in the Boston office at that time as his scheduler.

Heininger: What did you think about living in Washington?

Souliotis: I'm glad I did it. I'm glad I got both experiences, and I'm glad I got to work in the Senate in D.C., to see how that worked and to see the whole operation, which was very helpful when I came back to Massachusetts, but I never intended to live there forever. I found it very transient and I couldn't stand the summers. I'm used to being 20 minutes from the beach—

Heininger: Not there.

Souliotis: And half an hour from skiing. I was a sports nut and they didn't even have—Well, they had the Redskins, which you couldn't get tickets to, anyway.

Heininger: We can now.

Souliotis: You can now for sure.

Heininger: They're so bad.

Souliotis: They had baseball, on and off, but mostly off.

Heininger: On is only a very recent phenomenon.

Souliotis: Right. So it was three hours to go to the beach on the weekend, and they didn't have a subway system.

Heininger: That's right.

Souliotis: I never intended to stay, and I wouldn't want to live there.

Heininger: And even in the '60s, Washington was still very much a southern town.

Souliotis: Yes. It drove me a little crazy—things just moved at a different pace.

Heininger: And the taxi drivers still have a southern mentality.

Souliotis: Right. I wouldn't want to live there permanently. I'm glad I did it, but I wanted to be here, in New England.

Heininger: After the first year, things settled into a groove. He settled into being a Senator, and then Bobby came down. What was it like having another brother there?

Souliotis: It was interesting to watch the dynamic between the two of them. It was different because the Senator was the senior Senator, but within the family—

Heininger: Not.

Souliotis: He was not. I don't think Bobby was as well liked by his colleagues as the Senator was.

Heininger: That's well known. His personality was very—

Souliotis: His personality was more—He wasn't as outgoing as the Senator.

Heininger: He was sharper.

Souliotis: Yes. It wasn't all that long, because the Senator had his plane crash in '64. Bobby came in '65. It wasn't that long that they were together.

Heininger: No, it was not that long.

Souliotis: Once he announced his candidacy for the Presidency, the Senator went to help him campaign, and I went to Indiana, Oregon, and California. The Senator was in and out of Indiana, based on the Senate schedule, and Oregon and California too.

Heininger: Did you like to campaign?

Souliotis: I did, yes, in those days, but I was younger.

Heininger: Yes, it's highly suited for 22-year-olds.

Souliotis: Right. It was good, and many people from Massachusetts came. I knew them all and it was fun.

Heininger: He liked to campaign, didn't he?

Souliotis: Yes, he liked to campaign.

Heininger: Why?

Souliotis: He liked the people. He liked being out with the people. He always said that campaigning was where he learned—especially in his own campaigns in Massachusetts—what people were thinking, what was up, what was on their minds. He enjoyed it. It got tougher as his back got worse. It got worse and worse, so it was hard for him. I don't know how he did it. He was in so much pain all the time, but he kept on going.

Heininger: You have to have a special kind of personality to really enjoy campaigning—

Souliotis: Yes.

Heininger: Because it is grueling, and you're always on.

Souliotis: Always on. It was especially so for him, with everybody tugging at him and seeking autographs. I don't think he enjoyed fundraising particularly.

Heininger: I wonder if there's anyone who does.

Souliotis: I don't think anybody does. That's probably the worst part of campaigns.

Heininger: Having to ask people for money.

Souliotis: No. He *hated* that.

Heininger: Did he like public speaking, or did he like the shaking hands, the one-on-one contact, the crowds?

Souliotis: All of that. He loved Q&A. Every place we went, he always liked the Q&A, that back and forth. He loved open town meetings.

Heininger: That was back when you could say something and not have it instantly distorted.

Souliotis: Right. The town meetings were really—We started those. We did a lot of those in the early campaigns.

Heininger: I would think that would be a favorite of his.

Souliotis: Yes, he loved Q&A, because he liked going back and forth.

Heininger: Whereas now politicians are very fearful of that.

Souliotis: Very fearful, but not in those days, and that was fun. He would always say, “Set up some town meetings,” and we’d do them in different parts of the state, on college campuses, even town halls.

Heininger: Was he worried about media coverage of them?

Souliotis: He wasn’t really, unless there was a hot issue like the “notch babies.” That was very hot at the time. We were doing town hall meetings and you’d know you were going to get the elderly there, getting really upset about that. Abortion was always tough, but he wasn’t afraid to do those.

Heininger: Now, for so many politicians, that kind of environment is so potent and so dangerous for them—

Souliotis: Right.

Heininger: Because one wrong word—I’m looking over the totality of his career, and it had to have been an absolute sea change for him, to the point where one word could—Then in some ways, he probably escaped much of it because of who he was.

Souliotis: Right.

Heininger: But for today’s current crop of politicians—

Souliotis: It’s just awful.

Heininger: One word can sink you.

Souliotis: One word, everybody’s there, and it can sink you.

Heininger: Absolutely sink you.

Souliotis: It’s too bad, because the press has caused many problems in this country.

Heininger: What was his relationship with the press?

Souliotis: It was good. He always did editorial boards. He’d have to do the *Globe* and the *Herald*, but even when we went into small towns campaigning, he always stopped for the paper,

always did editorial boards with the small papers in Massachusetts. They liked that, even the ones that were Republican leaning. That had to be included in every schedule, every day. Whenever we went to a town that we hadn't been in for a while, we would do the editorial boards. He always got the haters—you can't avoid that—reporters who didn't particularly like him.

Heininger: Yes, but my guess is his personality helped a great deal, because he liked people so much.

Souliotis: He liked people and they liked him. He was so quick-witted too. I don't think it showed all the time, but he had a lot of President Kennedy's wit.

I remember one story—This has probably been out. After the plane crash, Eddie Martin was his press person and was at New England Baptist Hospital when he was recovering for those six months. The press was outside, and Eddie came in one day and said, "Hey, Senator, the press just offered me \$500 if I'd lift the shade so they could get a photo." Eddie was very funny and very witty. They loved going back and forth with each other, to see who could top whom. Then he said, "But you know my integrity would never allow me to do that." The Senator said, "Eddie, lift the shade and I'll split the \$500." [*laughing*] This was going on all the time. His sense of humor was—I really miss that. Everybody does.

Heininger: That's a great one. I had not heard that one.

Souliotis: And he and John Culver were very funny together. I don't know if you saw Senator Culver's eulogy at the [John F. Kennedy] library. He has a hundred of those stories.

Heininger: What was he looking for out of his staff in those early years, when he first got to Washington? The things we've heard are Boston, Massachusetts, first; the nation second; and "I'm the Senator from Massachusetts."

Souliotis: That's true.

Heininger: Yet by the end it shifted, while never losing touch.

Souliotis: No. It was very much the Tip [Thomas P.] O'Neill philosophy that all politics is local, and he always said constituent service got him elected. Whenever we campaigned anywhere, wherever he was, he'd always have down time at somebody's house to make calls to Washington and see what was going on. And always the next day he'd say, "Where are the thank-you notes?" Or he'd call everybody. Anybody who had a fundraiser, he wanted the note on his desk the next day. That was all from him and you just did it; everybody knew that. He knew that it was very important to have good constituent service. In Washington, he always had a great staff. He wasn't afraid to have people who were smarter than him. In particular, he wanted heads of committees who were experts in certain things. He always attracted the best and the brightest. You can see where they all ended up—

Heininger: Yes, right.

Souliotis: Justice [Stephen] Breyer, Greg Craig, Ken Feinberg.

Heininger: They're everywhere.

Souliotis: They're everywhere.

Heininger: You went to Washington with him. Did you have a sense as to what he wanted to accomplish in Washington? The issues evolved as the years went on, but at that very beginning, what did he want to do?

Souliotis: He wanted to finish some of the major legislation that President Kennedy and Bobby Kennedy did, because he took up the civil rights. Senator Robert Kennedy was very much involved in poverty and the Indians, and he got on those committees so that he could hold hearings. We went on a tour of the Indian reservations that we set up and went on in California, Nevada, Arizona, and New Mexico. He was very focused on that in the beginning. We were caught in a blizzard in New Mexico. Who would ever expect to have a blizzard in New Mexico?

Heininger: I've been in New Mexico in the winter, and it can be really cold.

Souliotis: We ended up driving about ten hours to get to a hearing. I think we were in Arizona, and were supposed to charter a plane to go to Albuquerque, but we got snowed in by a blizzard, so we had to drive. It took us about ten hours; you couldn't even see. But the people never left the room; they were waiting for him.

Heininger: Wow.

Souliotis: We couldn't believe it when we got there.

He did the Indian hearings, and healthcare—He always did healthcare, but more so after his experience with Teddy [Kennedy, Jr.]. And civil rights education and immigration. He always had those same issues.

Heininger: What were the things he cared about most in Massachusetts?

Souliotis: He always cared about jobs, the economy, unemployment, attracting visitors to Massachusetts. He always had hearings on that sort of thing, was on the phone trying to bring business to Massachusetts.

Heininger: Fishing?

Souliotis: Oh, yes, big time. That was a major industry. He always thought the fishermen were the hardest-working people in the country. It was such a tough life. I remember him always saying how tough it was. He did a whole lot for the fishermen; he was always involved in that.

Different things happen; that's routine for any Senator. We had a major fire in Lawrence at Malden Mills that destroyed a whole building. They manufactured fleece for major stores and for the military. He was up there the next day to help them get assistance and to make sure they would be able to reopen and workers would remain employed.

The 9/11 families will tell you how much he's done for them. They were having a very hard time going through all the red tape after they had lost their loved ones, trying to deal with Social Security, financial problems, and life insurance, etc. They had problems with their children who had lost a parent and he got the lawyers and social workers together and had them assist them for free, and assigned one to each family.

Heininger: Wow.

Souliotis: They wrote to him all the time. They stayed in constant touch. That's just the way he was. I don't know anyone who was as caring as he was about things like that, because he went through it himself, all the tragedies. People knew that he went through that, so there was a bond there. It was different for him than for other people.

Heininger: How closely did he work with the different mayors of Boston?

Souliotis: He worked very closely with them, as did the staff, because he was in Washington a lot. But whenever he traveled around the state, we always went to city halls and met with the mayors. He was closer to some than to others. He was very close to, very good friends with, Mayor [Thomas M.] Menino, but we always went to all the major cities, saw all the mayors. We always stopped at city hall, or they came in here if they had a particular problem, or went to Washington. He usually had receptions down there. When they had the mayors' conference in Washington, he always had something at his house.

He had clambakes down at the Cape. The one for the press was the big one, and for all the campaign workers, usually in August of a campaign year. He always had a press clambake for all the Massachusetts press people. He stayed pretty much in touch with everybody.

Heininger: What about with the Governors? Unlike some other people in other states, he was well known for not being one to go mucking around in local politics. He was known for *not* wanting to do that.

Souliotis: No, he didn't want to interfere in local issues that were under the mayors' control. He didn't do that.

He was close, depending on who the Governor was. He worked very well with [Francis W.] Sargent, who was a Republican. [Endicott] Peabody, Mike Dukakis.

Heininger: That's even a real old name.

Souliotis: He worked closely with all of them, even Romney, with whom he worked on the Massachusetts health bill. He worked very closely with Romney on the base closings, when they were going to close Hanscom [Air Force Base].

Heininger: That was a huge issue.

Souliotis: He worked very closely on those.

Heininger: What was he like as a father?

Souliotis: Oh, he loved kids, *loved* kids. He'd go into a Head Start and the kids would be a little awed at the beginning, and five minutes later they'd be sitting on his lap and he'd be reading them a story and doing imitations of animals. He'd read his book. After he did his Splash book [*My Senator and Me: A Dog's Eye View of Washington, D.C.*], he would bring the book, to read it to them. He'd do "Itsy Bitsy Spider." [*laughing*] He did that all the time.

Heininger: Anybody who has had a kid knows how to do "Itsy Bitsy Spider."

Souliotis: Right.

Sometimes I wonder how we ever survived without cell phones. Campaigning in Massachusetts, we'd have to pull over and go to a pay phone and make calls, because he would check in every night with Patrick [Kennedy] and the kids, because it was tough after the assassinations, and they wanted to make sure he was safe. He would call and he'd be telling them stories and doing imitations on the telephone. He was a good mimic and was good with stories. He called all the time to the kids when he was away. I don't know how he did it in a time of no cell phones and computers.

Heininger: I don't either.

Souliotis: He went to all the school things. Of course, then he had all his nieces and nephews. I don't know how he did all of that. Graduations, weddings, baptisms, confirmations—he went to all of them. Many of Robert Kennedy's kids were in prep schools up here, and he went to see them when he was up here. He went to all of their major events. I don't know how he did it.

Heininger: Were there any of his nieces and nephews with whom he was particularly close?

Souliotis: Caroline [Kennedy] was a favorite of his. Sydney Lawford he was very close to, and Joe [Kennedy II]. They ran different campaigns, in the different years: Joe Kennedy, Max [Kennedy], Michael [Kennedy]. The last one was run by Joe's sons, Matt and Joe, terrific, terrific kids. They trained them as they came along. They were all involved. John [Fitzgerald Kennedy, Jr.] campaigned. He used to come up. Caroline came up and campaigned; all the nieces and nephews did.

Heininger: How did Teddy's cancer affect him?

Souliotis: You mean Teddy Junior, his son?

Heininger: His son.

Souliotis: Oh, that was very tough, particularly when they had to amputate his leg because it was in Teddy's bone. It came as a complete shock, because nobody knew it was even there, until there was a bruise. Dr. [Philip] Caper, who was on our staff at the time, was the one who saw it and told them to get it checked. That was tough. And then he came to Boston for chemo. He came up with him every time, and that was tough. That was experimental at that time, and he was always so sick. He stayed with him at the hospital and always made sure he had movies and company. One of his cousins, Joe Gargan, used to visit him and stayed with him, brought videos.

It was tough, but he was—As Teddy said at the funeral, he was the one who encouraged him to keep going.

Heininger: That was an incredibly moving speech he gave—

Souliotis: It's all true, too.

Heininger: Given that his public profile—He stayed so low, I think it came as a real surprise to a lot of people when he—

Souliotis: Right. People were surprised to hear him speak. They hadn't seen that much of him—

Heininger: No.

Souliotis: Because he was in Connecticut. He wasn't really that public. Teddy did the campaign one time, Teddy and Kara [Kennedy].

Heininger: Did they?

Souliotis: Yes. Campaign workers came to know him with that. I don't know which one he did, but he did a campaign, so they all had a chance.

Heininger: What was his relationship with Joan [Bennett Kennedy] like when they came to Washington?

Souliotis: It was still very good.

Heininger: Was she around the office much?

Souliotis: No, she didn't come into the office that much. That was just the way she was. She was into her arts and piano. She campaigned; after the plane crash, she did the whole campaign.

Heininger: That had to have been hard for her.

Souliotis: Yes, that was tough for her, because she wasn't—she was very nice, but I don't think she particularly enjoyed campaigning, but she got into it, though. She did the teas with the sisters during President Kennedy's campaigns a little bit, and then she did almost all of the campaigning after the plane crash, because he was in the hospital from June to December. She did really well.

Heininger: It takes a certain personality to not just enjoy campaigning but to thrive on it.

Souliotis: Right.

Heininger: Clearly the Senator did.

Souliotis: Right.

Heininger: I couldn't, and I can't imagine that it could have been easy for her.

Souliotis: No, I'm sure it wasn't easy, but she was very good. She could really get into it after a while. Everybody liked her. She got one of the highest percentages. That election, I think he finished with one of the highest percentages.

Heininger: That's a real compliment to her.

Souliotis: Yes. She did anything anybody asked her to do. She was very willing to do it; that was good. At the time I wasn't around that much, because after the plane crash, he wasn't going to be needing any scheduling. I was still in Washington and they were in the process of planning the Kennedy Library. Steve Smith called and said, "Well, you're not going to have any scheduling to do, so why don't you go on the road with the Kennedy Library?" We went all across the country with the traveling museum, raising money for the construction of the library. I was basically gone from June until October.

Heininger: What was that like, traveling around?

Souliotis: That was unbelievable. The crowds were amazing. We couldn't close at night, because they had been waiting in line for four or five hours to get in. We would go from city to city. The truck would travel overnight, then come into the next town. I'd be there ahead of time, because I would fly ahead, and then set up the museum.

Heininger: What things did you have?

Souliotis: We had the desk, with the coconut. We had a film of the "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech, and we had—

Heininger: Did you have the rocking chair?

Souliotis: We had the rocking chair. We had many of those huge pictures. We would set up and have a press event in the morning, in the city, and would have a private showing for people who were contributing. Then we'd have the display open to the public for—depending on what city we were in—one or two days. We were supposed to be open until 8:00, but in many of the cities we couldn't close; we were open all night.

Heininger: Oh, my God.

Souliotis: In Cleveland, we were up all night. The film would keep breaking.

Heininger: That was in the days when you had to use projectors.

Souliotis: Projectors, oh, my!

Heininger: Big, huge projectors.

Souliotis: Oh, my God.

Heininger: The film would go flapping around.

Souliotis: Right. I didn't get back until just before the election, and that was when Joan was doing that campaign.

Heininger: How do you think the plane crash changed him?

Souliotis: He had many professors come over and do briefings. He did a lot of reading, and had many briefings on healthcare. There was a question of whether he was going to walk again.

Heininger: I know.

Souliotis: Obviously, he changed as far as pain in his back, because they never operated. Who knows whether they should have or they shouldn't have? At that time, it was more risky. Probably today they would have. But he was in a lot of pain after that and it got progressively worse, to where it was very tough to stand for a long time. He had to lean against something. He was in a lot of pain all the time.

Heininger: Did he ever complain about the pain?

Souliotis: Not really.

Heininger: How could you tell he was in pain?

Souliotis: You could tell. He would be limping more or you could see it in his face. Sometimes, going into a reception or something, he would say, "I can't stand that long; make sure I get seated." And he didn't want to be seated in a reception where everybody else was standing—

Heininger: Right.

Souliotis: So it was tough, even at a podium sometimes. It wasn't in the very beginning, but it got progressively worse. Standing at a podium would be tough if it was a long speech. You'd have to be more and more aware of making sure that he was leaning against something or seated. You could tell. It was pretty obvious when it was bad.

Heininger: How did he react when Jack died?

Souliotis: He was on the Senate floor, presiding, as freshmen Senators did. I was in the office and he was on the floor when they came and told him. He just came back very briefly and then left to go home and find out where Joan was, and to get his mother and father and talk to Bobby. He didn't know he was dead at that time. Then he was away, but not that long. He was up the Cape and then came back to Washington. It was a little tougher after Bobby.

Heininger: Why was it tougher after Bobby?

Souliotis: I think it was the age difference. The President was a little older, but he and Bobby were in the Senate together. That was the last brother, too. I guess, after losing so many, you'd begin to wonder. He was out longer then, before he came back.

Heininger: He was out for quite a while.

Souliotis: He was down the Cape sailing.

Heininger: What did the sailing do for him?

Souliotis: He loved the sea and the calm. He describes it better than I do. He just got away from everything, had time to think.

Heininger: There are people who are water people.

Souliotis: Right.

Heininger: I'm one of those. I understand completely the necessity—the reaffirmation that water can give—but I've also wondered whether it was the only place that he could go and truly be away from the scrutiny—

Souliotis: That's true.

Heininger: Where there weren't cameras.

Souliotis: Right. It had to be. He loved it. He couldn't wait to get to the Cape, get on the boat. He really enjoyed that, because he couldn't ski anymore after the plane crash. He couldn't golf—he never was a big golfer anyway—I guess the President played a little more than he did. He never golfed that much. Sailing was the one thing he could really—He loved it.

Heininger: How did Vicki [Reggie Kennedy] change his life?

Souliotis: He had a really happy home to come to. She was very intelligent, very witty. She knew what was going on in the Senate. They could talk about all of that, the politics. That was great. She went sailing with him. She enjoyed campaigning with him. He was really very happy.

Heininger: Do you have a sense that she centered him?

Souliotis: Yes, she was a very calming influence.

Heininger: It was like a big sigh of relief—

Souliotis: That's true.

Heininger: That it was his time to really be happy.

Souliotis: Yes, very much so. He was very happy. He could talk to her about politics. She was a good writer. The two of them, both of them, could write poetry. When they went to a friend's anniversary or something, they would sit in the car and come up with a poem that they would read at the event.

Heininger: That's impressive.

Souliotis: It used to really impress me, how they would do that.

Heininger: Some people are raised learning to memorize poetry.

Souliotis: Right, but that's different. They could *write* it.

Heininger: The fact that you can write it *is* an entirely different skill.

Souliotis: They could write it. They used to love the poetry and give it to the person. It was very impressive. They could do it on the way, half an hour before we got there.

Heininger: That is impressive.

What was his relationship with her kids?

Souliotis: Oh, it was very good. They lived in the house in Virginia after they got married, until they went to college. It was very good. He went to their games. Curran [Raclin] was into baseball. Caroline [Raclin] liked to sail, so that was good; Curran got seasick, but it was very good.

Heininger: He must have loved having small kids around again.

Souliotis: Yes, he loved kids. Caroline was a good artist, and he painted, so that was good.

Heininger: Tell me about his last year.

Souliotis: First of all, he was very courageous, *very* courageous, never complained.

I got a call the morning he had the seizure. I got the call from the house that they were on their way up to MGH [Massachusetts General Hospital], so I drove in to meet Vicki. They didn't really know what it was at the time. They thought it might have just been a seizure, so we all heaved a big sigh of relief. Then they took some more MRIs [magnetic resonance images] and came back and said it was a tumor. We were there for four or five days, and then he went to the Cape while they were deciding what they were going to do. He was at the Cape a couple of weeks, and then went to Duke. Kathy Kruse, who was his senior counsel in Washington; Tom Crohan, from the Boston office; and I went down to meet him. Kathy and I were in the hospital for those five days, while he was there, and that was very—You know, we just didn't know what the result of the operation was going to be.

Then he flew back to the Cape. He was going to have whatever treatment they decided on, but he would come up to MGH once a week or once every two weeks, whatever it was. He flew down to Washington in July for a Medicare vote, and then back to the Cape.

There was the convention, which was really—He had promised he would go to the convention. We flew into Denver and the day before the speech he went into the hospital. We thought, *Oh, my God, it's something with his brain.*

Heininger: I can't believe it turned out to be a kidney stone.

Souliotis: We didn't know what speech he was going to give, whether he was going to make it, whether he was going to shorten the speech, which they did. We were just crossing our fingers that he was going to make it to Convention Hall, which he did, and Caroline Kennedy and Vicki were on the podium. Then the next morning, he came to a breakfast with all of the people from Massachusetts, his friends, supporters and pals. He came to that and then flew back to the Cape, and then he went to Florida. He flew back at least once for votes when the President [Barack Obama] asked him to come. Vicki said it was great to be down there for those months, to sail. He could sail every day, which was really good, and work on the book.

Heininger: It was quiet, without a lot of scrutiny.

Souliotis: Yes. That was great. The most important thing about that year was that it gave him the opportunity to do the things that were so—He received the honorary Harvard degree, which they were supposed to give him in June, at the commencement. Obviously, he couldn't make that, so they had a special December event, and all of his friends and his classmates and colleagues and Vice President [Joseph] Biden were there. He didn't want to leave the stage, if you look at the clip. Then they had a reception afterward, at the Harvard president's house, with Senator Culver and all of his friends, and that was great. Then he received the highest civilian award from the government of Chile; the President of Chile came to the Cape.

The birthday party at the Kennedy Center was unbelievable, with *all* of us: everybody from Massachusetts, all of his friends, all of his colleagues, all of the former Senators and the President. He loved Broadway; he loved to sing, as you well know.

Heininger: Yes.

Souliotis: Bill Cosby and all the Broadway people doing his favorite songs was just spectacular. They had a reception afterward upstairs in the Kennedy Center, where all of his friends came up; probably that was the last time many of the Senator's friends saw him, and that was in March.

Throwing out the first pitch at the Red Sox game was something. He really enjoyed that day. The owners of the Red Sox had asked him to throw out the first ball in 2012, which was going to be—the 100th anniversary of Fenway Park. His grandfather, Honey Fitz [John F. Fitzgerald], threw out the first ball when Fenway Park opened that year.

Heininger: Oh, my God.

Souliotis: And 2012 was going to be the anniversary of Fenway Park. They had already asked him to do that and he had said, "I'll be there," so, knowing that he had this health problem, that his time was limited, they invited him to throw out the first pitch in 2010. He had a ball. [*laughing*] He was practicing throwing at the house in Washington. He threw out the first pitch and then went upstairs and watched the game with some of his pals. That was great fun.

He was able to do all of that, and he finished his book. He wrote the letter to the President, and wrote the letter to the Pope [Benedict XVI]. It gave him that time to do all of that, which was very good.

Heininger: Did he feel acutely how little time he had?

Souliotis: He knew his time was limited, I'm sure. He never talked about it, though.

Heininger: He never talked about it.

Souliotis: No, he never talked about it. When he came up for treatments at Mass General, there were kids there who were having the same treatment, and he got very close to some of them, because they came at the same time, particularly a six-year-old girl from Belgium, I think. He brought them books, knew what they were going through, and got very attached to some of them there. They loved him. He just kept on going, kept on fighting. It was amazing.

Heininger: Do you have a sense that he was spending his time saying good-bye to people, to events, and to things?

Souliotis: In the last couple of months, maybe he was. He had people down the Cape.

Heininger: Was there a stream of people who came in to see him?

Souliotis: Not a stream. There weren't a lot, but people he was particularly close with: Senator Culver, Senator [Christopher] Dodd, Paul Kirk, Jim Hanan. He went to the Harvard football game that previous November. Every year about ten of them got together and went to the Harvard-Dartmouth game. It would be his cousin, Dick Clasby, Bill Cleary, Senator Culver, and Paul Kirk, and other people who went to Harvard who were his pals or graduated with him. They would go every year to the game. They would have dinner the night before and then they'd all go to the game. He went to that this year and it was *freezing*. We didn't know if he was going to be able to do it, but he did.

In the last couple of months, I sensed that he was saying good-bye. He asked me to go down, maybe a month or three weeks before he died, and I had the sense that he was saying good-bye, but never saying it.

Heininger: Never saying it.

Souliotis: We had lunch. Vicki asked me to come down. It was very nice. Then I was down there the morning he died. We had a meeting with Vicki, to go over some arrangements. We had no idea anything was happening then, but we obviously had to plan some things. Thank God we went down that day, because there were a lot of things that had to be answered that hadn't been answered. There was no sense at all that anything was going to happen that day.

Heininger: Really?

Souliotis: We met—Paul Kirk, myself, Ranny, and two or three other people—with Vicki at a hotel. He was at the house, and everything was fine when we left. I was driving home. I was in Andover when I got an e-mail from Vicki saying something was going on, that he didn't look good and had taken a turn for the worse. That night he died, so I went back down to the Cape and stayed through, until after Arlington.

Heininger: At that point, had everything been planned?

Souliotis: Some of it. We had talked about different things with Vicki, and the Senator had some very definite ideas of what he wanted. He selected that church way back, when Kara was sick. When he went there, he said, “This is the place.”

Heininger: Really?

Souliotis: Yes. We had an outline of things that they had discussed, but there were many loose ends.

Heininger: But the arrangements were incredibly detailed.

Souliotis: We were expecting to have a little more time, first of all to plan, and a little more time when it happened, to have a couple of days. But because he died on a Tuesday night, the funeral would have been on a Sunday, and you can’t do that.

Heininger: No.

Souliotis: That would have made it Monday, and there was no way Vicki could wait until Monday. We were going around the clock, trying to—I don’t know how it came off, but as always with the Kennedys, everybody comes from all over the country, former workers, former staff. They just come in to help because they were so loyal and loved the Senator.

Heininger: Had Ranny been involved in the planning ahead of time?

Souliotis: Yes.

Heininger: I assumed she had been.

Souliotis: There were about four or five of us: Paul Kirk, Ranny, myself, Vicki, and the Senator. We still didn’t think anything was going to happen then; that was pretty fast. But he had that 15 months to do all of these things, which was great.

Heininger: And he got them done.

Souliotis: I’m sure he would have liked to have seen the book come out, which he didn’t. I’m sure he would have liked to have seen healthcare passed.

Heininger: To put it mildly.

Souliotis: But he knew things were—He had high hopes for President Obama. He had high hopes that this finally was going to happen, healthcare, but it would have happened much easier if he had been there, I think.

Heininger: When did he last sail?

Souliotis: He sailed right up to almost the end. But when he didn’t go to Mrs. [Eunice Kennedy] Shriver’s funeral, people had a sense. He would not have missed that if he could have gone.

Heininger: I had two interviews with Terry Robinson, and she said to me, when I came back and interviewed her the second time, “I was just called and had my address confirmed. There’s something up.” And there was. I guessed they were making arrangements.

Souliotis: We were getting lists ready, because we knew we wouldn’t have any time when it happened, because the Kennedys always do things very quickly. They don’t drag it out. We did Rose Kennedy’s funeral in about one day. It was very fast.

Heininger: My God!

Souliotis: The Senator, especially, didn’t like things dragged out at all.

Heininger: For the memorial service on Friday and the funeral on Saturday, did things go the way they should have?

Souliotis: Yes.

Heininger: Wow.

Souliotis: They really did. I don’t know how we pulled it off. The Friday night event at the library was very uplifting. Yes, it really, it took a lot of people, especially Vicki, a lot of time, and a lot of—But we had the outline in place and we had the lists ready to go.

Heininger: Had the people who spoke been asked ahead of time?

Souliotis: No. Vicki had to make those calls the next day.

Heininger: Wow. So they all did that on that short notice too?

Souliotis: Yes. She didn’t make calls for speakers until the next day, until after he died. That was Tuesday night, and the Celebration of Life was Friday night at the JFK Library, so they had a couple of days.

Heininger: That’s still just two days.

Souliotis: Right. None of them—Those are all calls that she had to make.

Heininger: How has she been doing?

Souliotis: She’s been doing well. She has ups and downs like anybody else, trying to figure out what she’s going to do, I guess.

Heininger: How have the kids been doing?

Souliotis: It’s tough. Except for Jean Smith, he was the last one, but they’ve been okay. It’s going to take a little while. It took a little while for that really to hit them, but they’re doing okay.

Heininger: In some ways, after a parent dies, the toughest part maybe is about three months later.

Souliotis: Right, because you have to get through the event.

Heininger: There's the shock at the beginning, then come the arrangements and all the events.

Souliotis: It's a shock, right, and they have to be there. They have to—

Heininger: They're "on."

Souliotis: They're on and they have to shake hands with everybody, and they had to worry about their talks at the church.

Except for Jean Smith, that's it.

Heininger: Yes.

Souliotis: It's going to be a huge change for now. Huge.

Heininger: And for you. What are you going to do?

Souliotis: I am retiring.

Heininger: How does that feel?

Souliotis: I'm looking forward to it, because I don't want to work for anybody else. It wouldn't be the same. I'd miss his sense of humor. He always treated me like a member of the family. He really did. He invited me to the Cape house. Any time he had the visiting foreign dignitaries to the Kennedy Library, which was a huge thing—[Mikhail] Gorbachev and [Gerald] Ford, Nelson Mandela, and President [William] Clinton, the King and Queen of Spain—he always made sure I met them all, had a picture taken with them all. That was exciting.

Heininger: Yes.

Souliotis: But I wouldn't want to work for anybody else, and the commute is getting horrendous, so I'm looking forward to retiring. I'm looking forward to not having to do that.

Heininger: What are you going to do with yourself?

Souliotis: We'll figure it out, play golf, take some time, go to Florida probably, a little bit. I have a place with my family in Florida that probably I've gotten to only a week a year.

Heininger: You deserve more than that.

Souliotis: Maximum, I've spent ten days a year down there, so it's time. It's time.

Heininger: It is time. Thank you very much.