



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH BETTY TAYMOR

July 8, 2005
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Interviewer
Stephen F. Knott

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TRANSCRIPT

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Knott: Thank you very much for giving us your time and for inviting us into your home. We're very grateful.

Taymor: Oh, you're welcome.

Knott: If you could just give us a little bit of background about yourself, how you became interested or active in politics, that would be the best place to start.

Taymor: Well, I was thinking about that. Let's see, I got married in 1942 and had children soon after the war ended. And then, when we moved to Boston, I had two children very close together, less than a year and a half apart, and my husband was training in surgery and wasn't home very much. So after a while I enlisted a college girl, what we call a mother's helper, to live with me and help me. And she said to me, "You're not going to just do this for the rest of your life, are you?" And this is a long time ago. I looked at her in astonishment, because in those days—this was well before any women's movement of any kind. And I said, "What do you mean?" Then she told me how she had a friendship with Mrs. [Frank] Merrill—Merrill's Marauders, do you remember them?

Knott: Oh, sure, yes, yes.

Taymor: His wife, Lucy Merrill, I guess, I'm not sure about her first name. But in any case, she said to me, "You remind me of her a lot, but I want to tell you, she does a lot of things that I think you could do." She was inspiring me to think like that.

Knott: Interesting.

Taymor: And after a while, my husband and our friends got very interested in politics and especially in the formation of Americans for Democratic Action. That was just taking off in the late 1940s and beginning to fan out into suburban areas and in Boston, too, and in the cities. It was one of these things where young married people would get together with one cause or another. It was the time when [Harry] Truman was running against [Thomas] Dewey, and then there was [Henry] Wallace in the middle of it all, and the ADA began to get very interested in

that election. And then the people I wrote about in my book, I got to know some of them. And I was, and my family was, very much for President Truman, but of course, we didn't think he was going to win so it was a great surprise. After that, the ADA really took off in 1948.

And then, in the early '50s, along came a lot of threats to the things that we believed in, Joe McCarthy and all the rest. So I was getting really more into ADA in the local area, and as the '50s began to develop, with all these threats from McCarthy and what was going on in our country, I got more and more active—active in local politics, active in state politics, and very active in ADA. Eventually I became executive vice chairman of the state chapter. So that took up a lot of interest. It was really good because all our friends were involved in that as well, and it glued us together, it really did, and we had a lot of fun. Even though we thought we went through a lot of hell, we were having a good time. And we were having a good time with Adlai Stevenson's campaign and—and that's how I got going.

Knott: Okay.

Taymor: And then in 1956, when John F. Kennedy started thinking about running for President—I don't know when he started, but at least it became evident in that year—then he decided he needed to have control over the State Democratic Committee. And that's when they were looking for people—"they," meaning the Kennedy forces—who could support them, and I had already supported him in 1952 when he ran for the Senate for the first time.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: And so in 1956, I decided, with some help from these Kennedy forces, that I would be a candidate for the State Committee. I had to run against a woman incumbent. Half of the members were men and half were women, by state law.

Knott: Oh, really?

Taymor: Yes.

Knott: Wow. That seems ahead of its time, in a way.

Taymor: Well, I'm not quite sure—I should have looked that up, but I guess it must have happened after the 19th Amendment.

Knott: Oh, I see, yes.

Taymor: For the Republican Party as well, half members women, half members men. Of course, these women who were on the State Committee all those many years weren't very active, as you know. They would just passively be there. So I was astonished when I got there, after all my activity, to see these women sort of—they were the women with the heaving bosoms, and they'd nod their head, and they'd do what they—pretty much what they were supposed to do.

Knott: Yes, yes.

Taymor: So anyway, then we had this battle royal in 1956. Shall I tell you about that?

Knott: Please, yes.

Taymor: Oh, my God.

Knott: We are interested in anything that gives us a sense of what the state politics looked like during this period when Edward Kennedy is slowly emerging on the scene.

Taymor: Well, he wasn't very—Edward wasn't—I didn't even meet him yet.

Knott: Not quite yet.

Taymor: But John F. Kennedy I would meet. And, of course, a lot of time before and after this, Kennedy was always having that back trouble.

Knott: Yes, right.

Taymor: Terrible. In and out of the hospital—but he was okay in 1956 when we organized the State Democratic Committee. What this meant was that he had to take on Speaker [John] McCormack's troops—not him personally, there was always courtesy, and I think they had respect for each other, but it was either going to be Speaker McCormack's people—that's the way things work around here, "my people"—his people or Kennedy's people, that would respond. So we didn't see McCormack personally, but Kennedy was very much involved and you could feel his presence in so many different ways. And so I won that race for the State Committee, very nicely, with the help of my ADA friends, women and men, and everybody helped me because we were just new in politics and it was fun.

Knott: Sure.

Taymor: And I would do all this stuff. You'd think it was some important office. It wasn't really so important, it was just—because it's a party functionary—but in the scheme of things, it had its place, and particularly at this time because Kennedy already knew that he was probably going to run to be on the ticket for Vice President, in 1956, with Stevenson.

Knott: Yes, right.

Taymor: So he was supporting Stevenson, but McCormack wasn't supporting Stevenson. So that separated those two.

Knott: Okay.

Taymor: So anyway, at that State Committee organizing meeting, it was something awful, what went on there, because there were these big, brutish guys and here I am, this little novice, in a hotel room downtown, I think it was the old Bradford Hotel. And the Kennedy people had guards

because they thought God knows what was going to happen. I mean, the Democrats were used to having elbow fights with each other at state conventions. *[laughing]*

Knott: Right, yes.

Taymor: So anyway, we were crowding into the room and I think these big bruisers wanted to sort of keep out, or frighten, some of the women. They were going like this *[gestures]*, and one elbow jutted right into my bosom here, and they thought, *You'll fall back*, you know, or just, *Goodbye*. But I didn't, I didn't at all.

So we got in there and we won. I have it in my book about how many—we won pretty overwhelmingly, the Kennedy forces. And from that day on, we knew that the Kennedy people were in control of the State Committee, so that when the convention came about, he would have control over his delegates.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: So his candidate for chairman of the committee won, and this other one—I forget his first name, but we called him [William] “Onions” Burke.

Knott: Onions Burke.

Taymor: He had a farm in Western Mass. and grew onions, and that's how he was known. So that's what happened with that.

Knott: Could I ask you a question about your attitude, and the attitude of your fellow ADA members, and perhaps—

Taymor: About that?

Knott: Well, particularly about the Kennedys, about Joseph P. Kennedy, the father, and John Kennedy—the accusation was that he had been kind of lukewarm on McCarthyism—

Taymor: Oh, he was worse than lukewarm.

Knott: —and Bobby [Kennedy] had worked briefly for McCarthy. Could you tell us about the attitude of people you knew towards the Kennedys?

Taymor: Not so good. I think I told you that in 1952, when Kennedy came before the state board of the Americans for Democratic Action to get an endorsement, we met in this downstairs restaurant, Stubbins Restaurant, on Boylston Street in Boston. Kennedy himself, Jack, was very impressive and the people in the ADA had a lot of respect for him—because this was in '52, so McCarthy wasn't as bad as he was going to be, at that point, but bad enough.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: And Kennedy had a bread-and-butter, good voting record for the things that we all cared about. But he made it very clear to the ADA that he was not going to denounce McCarthy. We didn't really think he would, but there was always this little hope that he'd say something. But he said no, he wasn't going to, he didn't think he could win, and we may as well just know that.

Knott: He thought it would alienate some Irish voters in Massachusetts?

Taymor: Oh, yes. And the *Boston Post*, that was a newspaper then, had endorsed him because, you see, Catholics in Massachusetts believed what McCarthy said, to some extent. They did.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: That there are Communists under every bed, and all of this kind of stuff. He frightened everybody—except us. [*laughing*]

Knott: Right, right.

Taymor: Okay, now let me see if I can build on that. So he said no, he wasn't going to, that it would cost him the election. Of course, [Henry Cabot] Lodge didn't say anything either, at the time, but nobody expected him to, and he was too conservative in his voting record for ADA to support. So I don't think he figured in it much. I can't recall, but I don't think so. They must have interviewed him. I can't remember the details of the Lodge part.

But anyway, now, about how people in the ADA felt about the Kennedys? No, they weren't trusting them exactly, because Joseph Kennedy had a bad reputation with liberals, and especially with Jewish suburban liberals, and those not so suburban, because they thought he was anti-Semitic. Well, they had good reasons not to trust him and they thought the son would probably share some of those attitudes. So they were really frightened about him, to some extent—or they didn't trust him, I think that's a fairer way to put it. And I didn't share that so much with them, I just didn't. I thought he was good, I thought he was—I was more practical minded, about how do you get things done? How can you accomplish anything? So that's what happened. And during those McCarthy years—oh, those were really hard times.

Oh, I have something here to show you, because when I was writing my book I was a fellow at University of Massachusetts, Boston, and this guy who was writing—now here, this is—

Knott: Oh, wow. That's pretty good.

Taymor: I know, I do cherish that.

Knott: I would hope so, yes. A signed copy of *Profiles in Courage* by President Kennedy.

Taymor: Nice, huh? "To my friend," I love having that. So here is this, given to me by an assistant—what's his name? Nigel Hamilton, who wrote *JFK: Reckless Youth*, and then couldn't continue with his next volume because the Kennedy family didn't like what he said.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: So his assistant said, “Betty, I know you’ll like to have this,” and he copied this for me because it was—it was what you see. So go ahead and read it. You can see how he changed it, and I don’t mind if you want to use that.

Knott: Okay. The question is, “Would you care to say anything about your position, at the time?”—on McCarthyism, I guess. And then this is John F. Kennedy responding?

Taymor: Yes.

Knott: “In regard to the censure, of course, I was in the hospital at the time. I’d just gone to the hospital a month before and was out of the Senate for a year. I think, like many others, that more should have been done. There were really only four or five Senators, as I recall, who vigorously attacked Senator McCarthy. Most opposed him when matters came up legislatively—Chip [Charles] Bohlen going to the Soviet Union, confirmation of the McCarthy appointment to the FCC [Federal Communications Commission], some of the citations for contempt that were sought. I opposed him, and other Senators did, but there’s been a long habit in the House and the Senate, to take care of our own business and not really attempt to carry it through on other members. When the matter came up before the Senate in the summer of ’54, I, of course, thought there were grounds for censure, and in fact had a resolution and a speech prepared for it. The Senate then determined to put it off until November, and I was away.”

Taymor: And then he has—

Knott: “I think, like many others, that we could have done better. Looking back, I feel, and I know many of my colleagues do, from conversations with them, that we all could have done better here, in that period, in the United States Senate.”

Taymor: But then the interesting thing is where he crossed out in red that he didn’t want—

Knott: Oh, he crossed that out?

Taymor: Yes, he did, he crossed that out.

Knott: Oh, I see, okay. So he deleted that from his—

Taymor: Yes, so it ends before the red.

Knott: Interesting, I see. That’s where I paused—

Taymor: Isn’t that interesting?

Knott: That’s very interesting. Yes, that’s great.

Taymor: Yes, I always think, *Oh, my God*, you know? *That's*—well, he was. We were baffled. We just couldn't get him to do anything about it, and you would have thought that by that time—

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: But, of course, he was always in the hospital.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: And he was well guarded by his—what's his name? [Frank] Morrissey. Morrissey kept a lock.

Knott: Yes, right.

Taymor: Have you talked to him?

Knott: No. We're going to try. I don't know if we'll have any success.

Taymor: He's quite elderly now.

Knott: That's what I've heard, yes.

Taymor: Well, anyway, that was one of his father's folks.

Knott: Sure.

Taymor: Now, you're asking me about how other people felt about Jack Kennedy. Well, these liberal types that I'm describing to you, they had a reserve about him. Of course, they all voted for him, for everything, but not with as much conviction as—but he won well, so he didn't have to worry so much about them.

Knott: Yes, yes.

Taymor: And he had a lot of good friends within the academic community who were very liberal and who didn't feel that way. Now, one guy—I'll have to tell you this. He won't mind. Professor Carl Kaysen, have you talked to him? Do you know who he is?

Knott: I know who he is, but we haven't talked to him.

Taymor: Well anyway, Carl Kaysen, one time—he was on the ADA board, you know. He had a big position in the Kennedy Administration and in a think tank in Princeton, I'm forgetting what it's called now. But he's a big gun.

Knott: Sure, yes.

Taymor: And so, I had my car that day. We had a board meeting downtown and I was driving home through Cambridge—this must have been maybe '58 or '59—and in the car he said to me, “Betty, you’re not going to be for John Kennedy, are you? You’re not going to, you just can’t. His father is so terrible,” and on and on. And I was smiling to myself, and I thought, *Too late, I’m not listening to you.* [laughing] He said, “No, it’s bad, you are not.” And I laughed and I said, “Yes, I am.”

So after Kennedy got elected, my friend, Dan Fenn, in one of my visits to the White House, took me around to meet my buddies and friends. And when I came in the doorway, there was Carl Kaysen, sitting in the Executive Office Building.

Knott: He cowered in embarrassment. [laughing]

Taymor: And when I run into him every now and then, he refers to that, “Oh, Betty! Wasn’t that—” Well, that’s about what it was!

Knott: Yes, sure.

Taymor: So these liberal types—

Knott: But it wasn’t that way for you? Can you tell us, why do you think you were able to make the—

Taymor: Well, I had friends like Sam—

Knott: Sam Beer?

Taymor: Yes, and Bob Wood, and other Kennedy people. They had helped me to get on the State Committee. I became cemented with them and I was loyal to them. And I thought, *What are the alternatives?* What the heck, you can criticize and criticize.

I would have some concerns, but I didn’t—I still don’t—I mean, for example, right now a lot of people I know won’t even look at George Bush. They can’t stand it. As if that’s going to erase him, but it isn’t. Well, I like to look and see, because I want to know how he’s carrying on. So maybe I just have a different attitude about political machinations, and I’m more practical and more realistic, and they’re more idealistic. I’m idealistic, too, but I think, you know, you can’t be foolish.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: Or it’s self-defeating. I could always sense that kind of thing.

Knott: Well, it sounds like you have a pragmatic streak in you.

Taymor: Very much so, and commonsensical maybe. That’s my way. And so, when I hear people going overboard about stuff, I think, *Wait a minute, you can’t*—I must say, I don’t have

any confidence whatsoever in George Bush, but it doesn't prevent me from looking at him on the TV! *[laughing]*

Knott: Did you go out during 1960 and campaign for John F. Kennedy in his Presidential race?

Taymor: Oh, sure. Oh, yes!

Knott: Did you go up to New Hampshire or anything like that?

Taymor: Well, we didn't do that.

Knott: Okay. Mostly in-state?

Taymor: Yes. And actually, we didn't have to worry about this thing. Oh, my God, it was just—it was terrific. Everybody was for Kennedy. He had so much charm. He had a way about him. And he hadn't really done anything except for the McCarthy thing. When you think about it, he really didn't accomplish much while he was Senator. Except for the St. Lawrence Seaway, I can't remember any big piece of legislation, nothing that his name was on. And he was there six years? No, eight years—

Knott: Eight, yes.

Taymor: —before he ran for President. I don't know. I mean, there wasn't anything to—he was too sick most of the time.

Knott: Yes. Did you go to the convention in Los Angeles in 1960 that nominated JFK?

Taymor: I sure did. That was my first one. I wasn't there in '56, which was in Chicago I think.

Knott: Chicago, right.

Taymor: When he ran for Vice President. But it was probably just as well that he didn't get on that ticket.

Knott: Yes, right.

Taymor: I guess his father was one who didn't want him to do that.

Knott: That's right, yes.

Taymor: Well, he'd laugh about it. He knew that people would say these things about his father. It's an interesting thing, he did find ways to love his father, but at the same time have his own mind about things.

Knott: Right, right.

Taymor: You can maybe say that's what George Bush—George W.—does, too. He doesn't seem to listen to his father. It doesn't sound like it, who knows? We don't know.

So with that, yes, I separated myself in some ways, in a lot of ways, especially for being for Ted. Oh, that was terribly hard for me.

Knott: I'm sure. Do you recall the first time you ever met Edward Kennedy? Does that stand out at all?

Taymor: Yes. I did not know him until he called me up and invited me to come into his office on Bowdoin Street, when he decided he was going to run in '62. I lived in West Newton at the time when Kennedy became the President, and then—I'm trying to remember what the details were, how he got Ben Smith to take his seat, because he had to get Foster Furcolo, the Governor, to do it.

Knott: That's right, yes.

Taymor: They didn't get along, but because he was the President, I guess, Furcolo had to—couldn't battle him about that. Because Furcolo wanted it.

Knott: Wanted the seat, the Senate seat.

Taymor: Yes, and then that would have meant that it wouldn't be the Kennedy seat any more.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: So they weren't about to do that. Anyway, I gave this party for Ben Smith. I'm trying to remember why—because he was appointed, I guess.

Knott: Yes, okay.

Taymor: Not a special election, but Ted ran in '62. He had to be elected Senator.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: That was when JFK's term would have been up.

Knott: Correct, right.

Taymor: So maybe Furcolo appointed Ben Smith to fill the seat right after Kennedy became President. Teddy ran in '62.

Knott: Teddy ran in '62, right.

Taymor: So what was—?

Knott: The seat was technically up in '64, so—

Taymor: Right, but Teddy ran in '62.

Knott: Teddy ran in '62, yes.

Taymor: And then he had to run again in '64.

Knott: Correct, right.

Taymor: I can't remember why I gave that thing for Ben Smith, but I did. It was maybe to introduce him to people.

Knott: Could well be.

Taymor: I guess so.

Knott: Did you get to know Smith at all?

Taymor: Oh, a little bit, but just casually.

Knott: Was it understood that he was a seat-warmer?

Taymor: Oh, absolutely. Positively. That was it. Everybody knew that, so it wasn't terrible. That's how it was. And then, of course, everything happened. And early in '62, I guess, that was when I got the call from Ted Kennedy to come into the office and meet him. He was talking to me—and he wasn't even 30 yet, he wasn't!

Knott: Yes, that's right. He turned 30 in February of '62.

Taymor: His birthday, isn't it around the time of Washington's birthday?

Knott: I think it's Washington's birthday, yes.

Taymor: About his birthday, he likes to say, "There's only 300 years between us." [*laughing*] Well anyway, that's what happened. And I didn't say yes or no when he called me in.

Knott: You didn't commit.

Taymor: No. He didn't actually put it to me.

Knott: I see.

Taymor: He just said, "This is what I'm going to do, and I'm glad to meet you, and I hope you'll help me." And then he showed me this big map and all these little pins, blue, red and

black, I guess, and all the places he'd been, and all the places he hadn't been. And I thought, *He's still got a lot to learn about how it is to run, himself.*

Knott: Did he seem young to you?

Taymor: Yes, he did. He just seemed like he needed—young in a good way, though. Full of energy, he'd talk about skiing, had a lot more boasting about him, like a younger guy would have. Not so seasoned, you know, and certainly nothing like his brother, in terms of that kind of thing, at all. And then it wasn't until I went on one of my visits to the White House that I—the President found me there. When I came to the White House, there would be—these people are gone now—Kenny O'Donnell and Larry O'Brien.

Knott: Sure, yes.

Taymor: I had gotten to know those men from the campaigns.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: I'd go into the downtown office, and we were doing all this campaigning in 1960, all those newspapers that his father—oh God, that we had to get out, that they put on everybody's doorstep—well, they got them out with the newsboys, I guess. They delivered those things, the PT-109 and all that stuff.

Knott: Right, right, yes.

Taymor: Well, there I was talking to Kenny O'Donnell in that little room off the Oval Office and the President came out, and—it was always remarkable to me that he could remember your name [*claps*] like that.

Knott: He knew your name, yes.

Taymor: You know, a lot of people can't.

Knott: Right, right.

Taymor: I mean, good night! They meet so many people you wouldn't think they'd remember anybody's name. But he did, as if we were old pals forever. And then he said, "I want to talk to you about Ted. How's he doing?" And I said, "Well, I guess he's got a way to go, and he's certainly not doing well with the liberal cohorts." He said, "No? Well, you've got to work on them," or words like that. And I thought, *Oh, that's not—*

Knott: He told you that you have to work on the liberals?

Taymor: "You have to work on them, Betty, you really do." Yes. And I thought, *Yes, I know that won't be easy.*

Knott: Right.

Taymor: Because even my friend here, Al Kahn—he calls me his “Companion of the heart”—I didn’t know him then, but he said recently, “We knew Ted cheated in school, that’s what we knew, and he didn’t have any experience, and why were people going to be supportive?” There were good reasons for them not to be, if they weren’t part of the Kennedy mystique and the things that went on around here, as I was—

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: I was so involved with that. When was it that I stood there with Rose [Fitzgerald] Kennedy at—? They had these teas. In 1958, when he ran for the Senate for the second time, they wanted to rack up a huge vote, which they did. Most people could never even remember who ran against Kennedy. Vincent Celeste.

Knott: Celeste. Oh, yes, that’s right.

Taymor: “Who?!” [*laughs*]

Knott: You have a good memory.

Taymor: Well, for some things. There I was at this tea with Mrs. Kennedy, and she was a short woman but she had on these high-heel shoes, and I don’t know what age she was then, must have been in her 70s. God, she could stand there for hours shaking hands, they were such a political family. And I was part of that whole thing. And it was, a lot of it was just great. The sisters and everybody running around. They had these teas. The candidate wouldn’t even be there. It was the Kennedy mystique. Now, friends of mine, particularly women friends, they weren’t going to be—they considered themselves intellectually oriented, and they weren’t going to be tied up with anything like that. They didn’t go for that kind of stuff at all. So they kind of supported Kennedy, but they didn’t love him like they loved him after he was assassinated.

Knott: Interesting.

Taymor: Very. And they certainly didn’t love Ted Kennedy like they love him now. Oh! You’d never think they were ever against him. [*laughing*] I mean, they really were against him.

Knott: So the opposition would have been based on a feeling of inexperience, too young—

Taymor: Callow youth, doesn’t have a good track record in college.

Knott: I see, right.

Taymor: That kind of thing. People put a great store by that.

Knott: Did you know some Harvard professors who were in either camp?

Taymor: Oh, yes, they were terrible. There weren't any—you mean for Ted?

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: [*takes deep breath*] Oh, they were dreadful. Bob Wood, if he were alive, he'd tell you this story. Mark [DeWolfe] Howe, he sort of led the troops anti-Teddy, and was absolutely vehement about it. Oh, he thought it was just dreadful that the President should be pushing his inexperienced, wet-behind-the-ears brother. Who was he anyway? And Bob Wood said—Bob would love to tell this story, that he'd say to Mark Howe, "Come on, Mark, he's just running for the Senate, he's not running for tenure!"

Knott: That's good. [*laughing*]

Taymor: Oh, yes. Actually, Bob Wood and Sam Beer were the only two.

Knott: That came out for EMK?

Taymor: That's right. And by that time Carl Kaysen wasn't even at Harvard any more—or MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], I guess that's where he was.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: Right, MIT.

Knott: Did they like Eddie McCormack? Was that part of it?

Taymor: They liked—

Knott: Did they think he had a better record?

Taymor: Well, Eddie McCormack was a sweet, lovely man, really. He's gone, too. Yes, he's dead.

Knott: Is he?

Taymor: He was the star in his family, the shining star. He wanted to be the United States Senator. And then I—oh, there was a lot of corruption in Massachusetts, locally in the state, at the time. My friends and the Harvard people weren't cognizant of it, didn't pay much attention to it, but if you were interested in state politics you would know about it.

Knott: Okay.

Taymor: It was like a petty kind of thievery that would go on. They'd do the damndest things for such a little bit of money, you'd wonder why. But they were things to do with the Boston Common and construction contracts, and things like that. The Governor was [John A.] Volpe, and Volpe knew that he needed to appoint a crime commission. Now, Eddie McCormack was

against that. He gave some kind of excuse that had to do with civil rights and liberties, that people have a right to confront their accusers, which sounded good, and maybe he was sincere about it. But he didn't support this blue ribbon commission, and to me, that sent a signal. You have to understand that Sam Beer, Bob Wood, and I were very much believing, idealistically, that we could reform the Democratic Party in the state and make it better, and get United States Senator Kennedy to help with that effort. And Senator Kennedy agreed to it. He did. He had nothing to lose and he's that kind of guy. And I knew Ed McCormack wasn't going to get involved in that kind of thing. He'd be Washington-based and—but he probably would have been okay, he would have been liberal.

Knott: He had a good civil rights record, we've heard.

Taymor: Oh, a wonderful civil rights record. And a lot of his buddies in Brookline and places like that, who had known him growing up—I'm thinking of one who became a judge, Sumner Kaplan—they'd known him as boys and they thought a lot of him, they had a lot of respect for him. And so did I. He had a genial personality, and—but you had to make a choice. I was already with Kennedy. I wasn't going to be for McCormack and drop the Kennedy thing, no. It didn't seem to me the way to go. I didn't want to go that way. And I didn't like—I had been so exposed to the McCormack influence at conventions, the kind of things that they would condone to get votes, I was witness. The pressure they would put on people.

Knott: Heavy-handed.

Taymor: Heavy-handed, bad. And Eddie's father, [Edward] Knocko [McCormack], he'd pick up the chairs at the convention as if he would hit someone with them, "Fight for my son, you've got to vote," and all that kind of stuff. And I thought, *I don't like this and this isn't the way you need to go*. And for all those reasons, just, my judgment was that even though Ted was inexperienced and so forth, his brother was the President, and I liked him. I just liked him, himself, enough to feel that I was confident, that I'd take a chance with him for the future. Boy, was I ever right.

Knott: Well, yes.

Taymor: It turned out right. I could have been wrong, but it worked out for the best, didn't it though?

Knott: It did.

Taymor: Poor Ted, though, he's gone through a lot of hell in his life.

Knott: Yes. Oh, yes.

Taymor: A lot.

Knott: So you took some grief, though, from your liberal friends, for your support for Edward Kennedy?

Taymor: Oh! Terrible, ridiculous. Sam could tell you, every time he sees me he reminds me of how terrible they were. He says, “I don’t know, Betty, I’d never talk to those people again.” They were bad. They were virulent about it. And I just didn’t get over it very easily, and now I don’t think—I don’t remind them anyway. What’s the point?

Knott: Right.

Taymor: But they don’t want to remember it, either.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: You know how people don’t—

Knott: No, they don’t, that’s right.

Taymor: And they don’t want you to tell them they were so foolish, because now they think—oh, my God, they can’t praise him enough.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: Well, he’s earned their respect and devotion. It’s a wonderful thing. It really is, when you think about it.

Knott: Yes. Well, the campaign with McCormack got a little ugly at points. McCormack said to him at one point, “If your name was Edward Moore, your candidacy would be a joke.”

Taymor: That’s right.

Knott: But I don’t think—do you recall if it was ever in doubt as to the outcome? Was it a real race or was it pretty clear that Edward Kennedy would probably win the—?

Taymor: Well, first we had the state convention.

Knott: Right, right.

Taymor: And then Ted called me and asked me—which I thought was wonderful, my God—he asked me if I would second his nomination and make a little talk, stand up there before everybody—and that’s in 1962, women weren’t asked to do those things, or participate in any way. The men ran the whole show. And my head, I was so flattered and thrilled. Of course, my friends couldn’t share that. They thought, *Well, the heck with that*. And then Ted did very well at that convention. I probably have it in my book someplace, what the votes were, but he won handily.

Knott: Yes, yes.

Taymor: If you know those facts, I think he won handily.

Knott: We've got those, yes.

Taymor: So once you do that, you know—oh, something else that helped. [Endicott] Chub Peabody was running for Governor at the same time. And [Thomas] Tip O'Neill said he'd run—the name, I guess—Chub's campaign for Governor. That helped Chub to get elected Governor.

Knott: Sure.

Taymor: And so they pulled all the forces together after the primary. But Ted, by that time, after he won the—he was so happy when he won the convention—handily.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: That there really wasn't much doubt.

Knott: Okay, even though McCormack stayed in the race until the—

Taymor: Oh, he stayed in the race until the end, but I think Ted won, like, hundreds of thousands more votes in that election, in that primary. He worked hard.

Knott: This is what we've heard, he's a hard campaigner.

Taymor: He's a hard campaigner and he has that wonderful voice. It's so good and he gets people, he really does.

Knott: John F. Kennedy was quoted once as saying that Edward Kennedy was the best politician in the family. You've seen the three brothers. What would your assessment be, in terms of raw political skills?

Taymor: Raw political skills? Well, you see, Teddy has this wonderful personality. He's so jovial. He chuckles and laughs, and he doesn't get angry, and he's so kind. I think that comes through. So I think people just take a liking to him right away. You can't help it. He's got a tremendous charm, and maybe he's more like what that Honey Fitz [John F. Fitzgerald] was like. It could be, you know, that kind of jovial, Irish good humor, would stand up on a table and sing, performing kind of guy. He liked the acting aspect, I think, of politics, that "ham" stuff. And it's infectious.

Now, John F. Kennedy was a much more dignified and cool kind of person. Also had a wonderful sense of humor, but more intellectual. Of course, everybody says those things but it's really kind of true. He was good at making fun of stuff, but not quite with the buoyancy that Ted has. So I think he's right about that, about Ted. And I never thought—well, Robert Kennedy changed from—I mean, into somebody else.

Knott: What did he change from?

Taymor: I didn't really know him very well, but he was so dogged and not fun, not humorous. He thought in terms of blacks and whites, you're either with us or against us. He didn't do what Ted would do, and make friends with what you might have thought were not going to be friends. He wasn't that open kind of person, and so it was a surprise to see how he changed after his brother was killed. He changed completely, because the one contact that I had with him, he was really like a tough guy, the cop, you know, "I'm going to get the stuff from you," or whatever. It was scary—

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: —which the others were not.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: I'm sure he had his loveable characteristics, because God knows how some people really just were so completely devoted to him. And I was, too, when he ran for the Senate. I went to New York and I did help. But my personal experience with him was not so nice because—I guess it was in the campaign for the Presidency. I'm trying to remember who, in New York State, whoever the Kennedys were supporting for, was it for attorney general, or for some statewide office—Fred Dutton or somebody?

Knott: It's possible, Dutton, yes.

Taymor: I don't know if that's right. At any rate, Eleanor Roosevelt was for somebody else, I'm trying to remember who that was, and Bobby was upset. He said, "Well, she's not with us." That's what he said to me. And I'm supposed to be with Mrs. Roosevelt because of ADA. He says to me, "Why isn't she with us?" And I thought, *Oh, God, I mean, How do I know?* [laughing] I said, "I really couldn't tell you." But that's what his affect would be. And that wasn't the way to deal with me. He didn't say, "Hey, Betty, can you go, can you think of some way. . . ." Or, "Can you da-da-da. . . ." No. He was, "You're with us, or you're not with us. And we're going to get you if you're not."

And, of course, Mrs. Roosevelt wasn't for Kennedy for President. When she would come into the convention, in 1960, she'd disrupt the whole convention.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: She'd come up there in the balcony, and everything would stop until she sat down. She was really, really for Adlai Stevenson. And it was pathetic, I thought, the whole thing for Stevenson, who looked like he didn't want to be a candidate.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: But they hoisted him up and marched him down—oh, I'll never forget that. That was hard, really. It was terrible. Poor Adlai Stevenson, I remember he looked like some frightened

rabbit, like, *Why am I being carried on somebody's shoulders into this convention*, when he didn't really—but I suppose he didn't do something right. He should have just said, "No, don't, under no circumstances. . . ."

Knott: Yes, he could have issued a statement that would have pulled his name out.

Taymor: Maybe it was Mrs. Roosevelt, who knows? I haven't looked into that history part of it. She might have just made him or pushed him to be a candidate because she really wasn't for Kennedy until later. But finally she did support him.

Knott: Yes, right.

Taymor: And then she went to him, Mrs. Roosevelt, with some other—Ellie [Esther] Peterson and other people, and said, "You've got to appoint the first national commission on the status of women," and that's when that started.

Knott: Yes, that's right.

Taymor: And he did. And that was a good thing. So they patched up their differences like real giants, which they both were. So I remember that, but that was my little bit of experience with Robert Kennedy.

Knott: With Bobby, yes.

Taymor: It's hard to really figure out exactly how he came around. He did these remarkable things, though, Robert Kennedy, with Martin Luther King, and with all those riots, and—oh, it was awful that they killed him. I don't know whether you know, it's a good question, would he ever have been elected? He so polarized people.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: Now we know what that really means, polarized. But boy, he did. I think all the people who supported him, though, thought he'd make it.

Knott: Sure.

Taymor: It's hard to know. He certainly was riding high at that point, though—

Knott: Right.

Taymor: —when he was overtaken. Horrible thing. Horrible thing in that family.

Knott: Oh, I know it.

Taymor: Awful.

Knott: A series of tragedies.

Taymor: All the time.

Knott: Plus Senator Kennedy had the plane crash. Edward Kennedy's plane crashed in 1964 when he was on his way to the Democratic Convention in Springfield.

Taymor: And he was with Birch Bayh.

Knott: Right, yes.

Taymor: Oh, that was awful.

Knott: Were you at that convention?

Taymor: Yes. I was at all these conventions. I must have gone to nine national conventions, and finally I gave it up, the last time—not the last time, the one before that. I just felt, how long can you take it, sitting there and sitting there, when there didn't seem to be any really good reason. Everything was done before we got there, so people went to have fun more than anything. I mean, there weren't any big platform issues that you had to fight about, which in my day you did.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: And, I don't know, conventions, they're outmoded, they really are. And even in the 1960 convention—which I always say was the last convention where there was ever any tension regarding the outcome, there was never any after that—and even in that, people said Kennedy was a foregone conclusion, that he'd win. But there were other candidates and you couldn't be exactly sure. God, there was [Hubert] Humphrey and [Stuart] Symington and—

Knott: And [Lyndon] Johnson was even—

Taymor: And Johnson was a big one.

Knott: Sure, sure.

Taymor: Oh, I'll never forget [*laughing*], after Kennedy was nominated, I was with my whole family out there in Los Angeles, and my daughter, Julie [Taymor], was seven, I think, at the time. And we were all in the swimming pool having fun, and then my husband came out and he said, "Jack Kennedy picked Lyndon Johnson for Vice President." I said, "Oh, no. Oh, no." You know, because to us ADA-ers, it was Lyndon Johnson—

Knott: Sure, sure.

Taymor: And I can remember Joe Rauh making a big to-do about that on the floor and all. But anyway, this little girl, seven years old, who had gone to the convention, she said, “I don’t see why you’re so upset. He got second-the-most votes.” [*laughing*]

Knott: He deserves the second spot, yes.

Taymor: But I think it was very practical. “He got second-the-most votes.” It’s true, he did. Oh, but those delegates for him! In those days they’d march all around, you know. We had fights in the delegation.

Knott: Yes?

Taymor: Oh! The Kennedy-supporters in the delegation, which, of course, all of us were—when the Lyndon Johnson people came by—everybody had his standard, you’d hold yours, say, “Massachusetts,” that’s your standard.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: And so one Johnson guy came around, when they were marching around in this parade, and he purposely knocked over our standard. Well, then—what was his name, the district attorney of a western county, Matt-somebody, I can’t think who. He must have been in World War II because he had some fingers missing—he punched out the Lyndon Johnson supporter, and somebody, these guys had to stop this kind of thing, which would go on with these Irish guys. They would get into big fights.

Knott: Right, right.

Taymor: That’s what happened there. Typical, right?

Knott: Yes, sure. Senator Kennedy ran for President himself, in 1980, against an incumbent Democrat, Jimmy Carter. I was wondering if you could tell us any recollections from that event.

Taymor: Oh, boy. Well, you know what I was trying to remember is, in one of those conventions that we had, which wasn’t a nominating convention—we did have a couple in there, do you—

Knott: The mid-term conventions?

Taymor: Those mid-term things, one in Philadelphia, I think.

Knott: There was a very prominent one during the Carter years where Kennedy stole the show. I don’t know if this is what you’re thinking of?

Taymor: No. In what year was that?

Knott: In 1978.

Taymor: How did he steal the show?

Knott: Well, he gave a ringing speech where he warmly embraced the notion of national health insurance and failed to criticize President Carter.

Taymor: Oh, yes, that was good, but now I'm going back before that.

Knott: Okay.

Taymor: I don't know what was going on in Ted's life, but he wasn't in good shape. I wish I could remember better, but there were tents or something out, or like little Quonset huts, and he was doing something, and I was there, and I can remember Father [Robert] Drinan. And Ted was quite inarticulate. And I thought, *I wonder what's the matter?* He was having difficulties.

Knott: Yes, yes.

Taymor: Probably, maybe private ones. But I went through a whole thing with him about Chappaquiddick. Did I tell you about that?

Knott: No. Tell us about that, if you don't mind.

Taymor: No, I don't mind. I even wrote about it. So, when was this now? It was before 1976, when people were thinking that he was going to run for President. I had served on these reform commissions to change things in the party. I was so involved with all that kind of thing, ever since [George] McGovern had promoted the McGovern guidelines.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: All that stuff in '72. And so I'd be on these reform commissions, the Hunt Commission—they always bore the name of the Chair—and you'd have to meet all around the country. And so, as 1976 was drawing near, people would come to me because they'd say, "She's the Kennedy person—" which I was "—from Massachusetts. She knows na-na-na-na-na." And then people would be very funny with me. They'd say, "Do you think he's going to run? Do you think he *can* really—" I mean, some of it was really quite ugly.

Knott: The comments they made?

Taymor: The comments they made.

Knott: About Chappaquiddick?

Taymor: Yes, about Chappaquiddick. They were hoping that he wouldn't run because they thought he was a drag, and they weren't going to support him. And some of these were people who had always been for Kennedys—been for Jack, been for Bobby, and been for Ted. But the

Chappaquiddick thing had them all scared to death, and even ugly in some cases. It was very upsetting.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: And I thought about it a while when I came home, and finally I decided, I've got to let him know.

Knott: What you were picking up.

Taymor: Yes. And so I wrote him. I said, "I've been on the—" he knew I was on these commissions—and I said, "I'm hearing things I think you ought to know. So if you're interested, let me know and I'll come down and talk to you." So he did.

Knott: He asked you to come see him?

Taymor: Yes. He said, "Well, come and see me in Boston." So I did. I went down to his office and he had a room full of missing in action mothers waiting to talk to him, and it was getting to be rush hour, and I thought, *Oh, my God, I'll never get out of here.* But then, finally, he said to me, "I'm sure you don't want to wait any more." And I said, "You're right, I really don't, it just won't take too long." And he said, "Come with me." We went into what I think was a utility closet, very little space. "Well, what's up, Betty?" And then I told him, straight out.

I said, "It's very disturbing and I think you should know it. This is what people are saying, and these people should be your friends, and they're not being friendly about it at all. And I just think if you're going to run, you're going to have to meet it head on and you're going to have to think of something to say, because they're not going to let you not say something. They're not going to let you make believe it's over." And he looked at me, and he said, "Well, I'll tell you, Betty, I've got worse problems than that." Well, I didn't say, "What are they?" I wouldn't do such a thing. But I had to think about it. I figured afterwards he must be having domestic problems of great magnitude, which he was.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: But the point was, it was interesting that he said, "I have worse problems than that."

Knott: Yes. That is interesting.

Taymor: It made me—

Knott: So he was not at all offended that you told him—

Taymor: Oh, no. He said, "Keep your ear to the ground and keep letting me know whatever you hear, whenever." He welcomed it. And then everybody in his office said, "Bless you, you told him things none of us had the guts to say." [*laughing*] I thought, *Well, who likes to be the bearer of bad tidings?* But if you're a friend, you should do it. And so I did, because I just thought he

was going to have to handle this. But I felt bad for him. And I'll tell you something else, Steve. I thought to myself—I really, I've always had doubts that he was ever at Chappaquiddick in that car. You know why? Because if somebody could say, "I have worse problems than that," it means a certain amount of it is like—you follow what I'm trying to say? If you really thought you were responsible for somebody's death, really, you wouldn't say anything was a worse problem than that.

Knott: Yes, yes.

Taymor: But I may be wrong. It was just my—

Knott: Sure.

Taymor: —just my kind of judgment. That was a snap reaction, I mean, a gut reaction, on his part, *Yes, Chappaquiddick is bad, but boy, I've got bad now*. And he's not the kind of person that if he had done something terrible, which he did anyway, wouldn't acknowledge, wouldn't take responsibility.

Knott: You were sort of a trailblazer as a woman in Massachusetts politics, and you're aware of all the stories that surround him, not just Chappaquiddick. Did his alleged womanizing—how did you deal with that, as somebody who wants to see women more actively involved in politics? And at the same time, you've remained a loyal supporter of his. I'm trying to get at the thinking of yours.

Taymor: Yes. Well, his brother was probably worse—or better, whatever way you want to look at it. [*laughing*] Terrible! And we knew it. We knew it about JFK, but nobody talked about it in public. The father had a terrible reputation, terrible. I don't really know the truth to some of those stories, like Robert Kennedy with Marilyn Monroe, and all that kind of stuff. I think we just sort of took it and thought, *That's the way they are*, you know, and are you going to condemn people? I mean, look what happened with Bill Clinton. That's the way these guys are, is what I think. What is the matter with them? Well, it never seemed to get Ted into big trouble.

Knott: Even with his women supporters?

Taymor: I don't think so.

Knott: Even with some of the women that you might have known, some of the activists that you might have known? It did not bother them?

Taymor: I thought Ted was very careful. I don't think Jack was so careful. I thought Ted was very careful not to embrace women. For a long time after his brother—when he was a Senator he wouldn't kiss women supporters. He never wanted to appear, it seemed to me, too friendly that way.

Knott: Sure.

Taymor: Whereas Jack Kennedy was absolutely a Don Juan with the women! And the women would, “Wooo-ooh,” love him. *[laughs]* They did! And he loved women.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: And so it was very obvious, he didn’t conceal that. But Ted, publicly, never demonstrated—and to this day, whatever he does is private, for the most part, until the press gets a hold of some of that stuff. But I don’t think that’s been a big thing. Look what happened with Jack Kennedy. I mean, God!

Knott: Yes, yes.

Taymor: That was much bigger, that we found out, that people have found out. I mean, we knew he had a girlfriend all the time. Everybody around Cambridge knew, and everybody in certain circles knew about that. But that never bothered me. No, it didn’t.

Knott: Do you have any recollections from 1980, from his Presidential race? Did you participate in fundraising or any type of activities for that?

Taymor: That was hard, really awful. He didn’t get—you know, Carter was re-nominated and then it was just over.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: So there wasn’t anything to do then. All the Massachusetts delegates, we were all for him in that convention, but we all knew it was hopeless. I mean, how are you going to unseat the—

Knott: A sitting President.

Taymor: I felt so bad for Paul Kirk. He worked so hard. I’m sure you’ve talked to him.

Knott: We haven’t formally interviewed him yet, but we will.

Taymor: Yes. Oh, my, he’s a prince of a guy.

Knott: Yes, he is.

Taymor: I think it was very hard on Paul, that loss, because he had done most of the work on that, headed it up. And I don’t know, but it seemed like, somehow, why did he get pushed into that?

Knott: You almost think he got pushed into running.

Taymor: I felt like he did.

Knott: Perhaps his heart wasn't in it? Or am I putting too many words in your mouth?

Taymor: No, I think his heart wasn't in it. It was like he had to do it for the Kennedys, you know, the whole bunch of them. *We've got to make one last stab at getting back the White House.* But it seemed so futile to me. And yet, you couldn't—I had friends, the Carter friends, in other states, and they'd look at me like—but what could we do? We were Kennedy folks and we were going to stay loyal to him if that's what he was going to do.

Knott: Sure.

Taymor: Knowing full well it was never going to work at all. But there were other things going on at that convention. That was the first time we had half women and half men delegates, and that's when they decided to put the plank in the platform supporting choice. That was a big—

Knott: That's the first time it goes into the platform?

Taymor: That was a big, big change, and never would have happened if there weren't half women delegates, I'm sure.

Knott: Sure, sure.

Taymor: So what we were pleased about was that those people—in our delegation there were a few people who were for Carter. They got elected delegates because they said they were for Carter for the President—but they supported this plank. They did.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: And that was really interesting.

Knott: Yes, sure.

Taymor: Important, too. I'm still troubled by what's going to happen with *Roe v. Wade*.

Knott: Senator Kennedy delivered a very powerful speech at that convention that almost stole the show.

Taymor: Oh, he did.

Knott: You were on the floor at that time?

Taymor: Oh, yes. He was remarkable, wonderful. But I think he was relieved. It was after he lost.

Knott: Right, right.

Taymor: And then, woo-hoo! He had a big load off him. Running against the President, you know. Oh, come on! Carter wasn't, most of it wasn't his fault that he was in such bad shape.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: But I remember that Tip O'Neill gave this big cocktail party, or whatever it was, and two big guys were standing up at a bar, and somehow or other I was with them. I can't remember who they were exactly, but I know they said, "You look worried." And I said, "Yes, I am worried, about [Ronald] Reagan." And they said, "Why are you so worried?" I said, "I really think it's going to be hard to beat him." And they said to me, "Carter's the President of the United States. If he doesn't know what to do to win, then he doesn't deserve to." That's what they said.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: The President has so many levers of power. He can give out so many of these contracts and do this, and do that, and do the other. That's what they were talking about. They were operators, and that's the way their minds worked.

Knott: I think a lot of people underestimated Reagan, too, as a candidate.

Taymor: I just thought, *Oh, boy*. Because Carter—let me see, where was the convention in '80 that renominated Carter?

Knott: Seventy-six, I believe, was New York City.

Taymor: Yes, in '80 in New York City again, that's right. And when Carter got up and talked, accepting the nomination or something, he talked about immigrants and, "I-talians," he said. One of our delegates was an Italian, and he slapped his newspaper and he went, "Goddammit, no! How can he do that?!"

Knott: There goes the Italian vote?

Taymor: Yes. "I-talians." Here was the guy who was going to be President of the United States, calling Italians, "I-talians." It was embarrassing.

Knott: Yes, yes.

Taymor: And that whole thing in 19—I'm trying to think when that was, when Ted didn't seem happy or content about anything, why he was so—I guess he was having big troubles, that's all I can think.

Knott: Yes. Mid-seventies, probably.

Taymor: Yes, mid-seventies. That figures, doesn't it, around then?

Knott: Yes, sounds about right, because also, I think around that time his oldest son had the leg cancer, the bone cancer.

Taymor: Oh, right, right, and lost his leg.

Knott: It might have been referring partly to that as well. I don't know, but—

Taymor: It might have been. Oh, there were lots of things. Would you like to take a break?

Knott: Sure, let's take a break. Absolutely.

[BREAK]

Taymor: God, were we ever worried about that! He wasn't doing well at all.

Knott: Nineteen ninety-four?

Taymor: Yes. I can't think why. What was it?

Knott: Well, Palm Beach, the whole Willy Smith thing had happened a year or two earlier.

Taymor: Oh, that wasn't good.

Knott: There were, again, the—

Taymor: All that other stuff with drinking.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: The drinking thing was big with Ted. The drinking thing came up with Chappaquiddick, and then the drinking thing with his weight, and then sometimes he would get a little bit inarticulate from time to time. We never could figure out exactly why, but it was like in the early—in the morning. I remember being in meetings and thinking, *Oh, my God, what's—* you know. He'd get like that, and then other times, he's just wonderful.

Knott: Yes, yes.

Taymor: But I don't remember what was making it so bad with Mitt Romney.

Knott: I think partly, at least back then, Romney was a fairly attractive candidate, which was rare for Kennedy, to run against somebody who had some—

Taymor: Who had something, pizzazz, yes.

Knott: —attributes, yes.

Taymor: But then we were worried—my God, and then he had to get, what was her name? Cooper—Ronnie?

Knott: Oh, Ranny Cooper.

Taymor: Ranny. She's very good.

Knott: We've heard this, yes.

Taymor: Yes, she's very good. I don't know where she lives now, maybe New York. You should talk to her.

Knott: Could be. We are going to talk to her, yes.

Taymor: She's very good, and she did a lot with Drinan.

Knott: Okay.

Taymor: She's disciplined and smart, and I guess she pulled things together around here.

Knott: That's what I've heard, yes.

Taymor: It was frightening. I mean, we thought, *Oh, my God. No, this can't be.* And then he got this stuff on Romney, about how he treated his employees. That did it. That was the end of Romney. [*laughing*]

Knott: Right.

Taymor: Well, I don't find any people around here who like Romney now, either.

Knott: Yes, even though he's thinking of running for the big house.

Taymor: Oh, I think he's more than thinking, he is.

Knott: Yes, okay.

Taymor: I guess he is. I don't think he has a prayer. I wouldn't think.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: All those people who want to run?

Knott: We heard that Vicki [Reggie] Kennedy was very helpful, very instrumental, in the '94 Romney campaign, which was tight for a while. Have you had any contact with her, or do you have any impression of the impact she's had?

Taymor: Oh, she's good. I think she's just been a big plus for him. First of all—see, now this is one of the things that he does that's so charming, and I'm trying to think when it was. Maybe it was right after, or just before, he and Vicki got married. I remember he came into some meeting, I can't remember where it was, a downtown hotel someplace, and he came in and he talks to everybody in—whatever we were, delegates or state committee persons or whatever, official Democrats—as if we're all part of his family. And this is the Kennedy success, that they are able to do this, like we all are together. There isn't any question about that, you know, *We know we're all related, so I take you into my bosom*, and then he goes on to tell people how Vicki's parents were. They came, and they were in some part of Massachusetts, and then, you know, he's telling everybody this information, which people loved.

Knott: Sure, yes.

Taymor: Oh, God, you can't beat it! And then he always talks about her, or introduces her, as "the love of my life." Now, I remember when he was first married to Joan [Bennett Kennedy]. Oh, what a beautiful girl! Beautiful girl. But she was so scared to death.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: The whole thing was just too much for her.

Knott: Political life.

Taymor: Yes, I think so. She was always trembling if she had to say something. But she was remarkable and marvelous, in 1964, after that accident. And she made herself a delegate, or we made her a delegate, or whatever. But anyway, she was there in Atlantic City, and it was hot, and—oh, I can remember how this was—she had on a dress that had no sleeves, and the guys would come by, and every damned one of them would paw her. It was like her flesh was there and they just had to touch it. It was terrible. I mean, it was just— She didn't flinch. But then Gerry Doherty had to kind of get things together so that she could take a swim at night in the pool or whatever it was, in the hotel, without being invaded by other male delegates.

Knott: Wow, yikes.

Taymor: But she was very good to carry on that way, at that time, when he was in the hospital.

Knott: Right. Campaigning for him and—

Taymor: Campaigning for him. She really gave it the best she had.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: She really did. It was just too much for her. I guess that alcoholism was in her family, her father? That's what I have read. Sad.

Knott: It's very sad, yes.

Taymor: Oh, it's terrible.

Knott: She was an accomplished pianist, too, I think.

Taymor: And she's just pathetic. They've got these three nice kids. Well, anyway, that's something you can't do anything about. That has nothing to do with Ted, I don't think. Really, those things are in a person, I think so. But he's crazy about Vicki, and that's been a big plus.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: I mean, I don't know what goes on in their lives, but it appears to be always good. And she's very good and she can just stand up there and talk, and do all the things that Joan couldn't do, because she was an accomplished lawyer before he married her. And so it's been a big plus for him.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: She's always there with him, whenever he needs her, and she does him proud. So that's good. And people like her a lot, she's very personable, nice.

Knott: She's been a tremendous help for this program. She's on the board of directors and very active, in terms of just offering advice, which has been great.

Taymor: Yes, I'm sure. She's a bright woman.

Knott: She is, yes.

Taymor: Yes, so that's good. But I don't know, it's just a sad thing about that other—but he seems happy enough for the most part, right?

Knott: Yes, yes, he does. He is. In fact, we're interviewing him this Friday, which will be the sixth or seventh interview we've had with him since January. So he's very active. He gives us at least four-hour interviews every time.

Taymor: Does he?

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: You know, I always think John Kerry would never have been the candidate without him.

Knott: Oh, really?

Taymor: That's what I think.

Knott: For the 2004 Presidential—you think Kennedy was sort of the driving force?

Taymor: I really do. I don't know, who else were we going to have then?

Knott: Howard Dean?

Taymor: No, we weren't going to have Howard Dean! *[laughing]* The other—[John] Edwards, Edwards!

Knott: Oh, John Edwards, yes.

Taymor: I guess, not that I wished it or anything. But it's a pity about Kerry.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: He doesn't get it, though. He doesn't connect.

Knott: Have you had the same sort of relationship with Kerry that you've had with Kennedy over the years?

Taymor: Yes, pretty close with Kerry. I like Kerry a lot. I think he's a good guy. I'm sorry he didn't get as good marks as Bush did at Yale. *[laughing]* I think that's amazing.

Knott: That's why he kept those records sealed up.

Taymor: That's right! How terrible. But anyway, he doesn't connect with people. It's just amazing. He got a lot of votes.

Knott: He did.

Taymor: He almost won.

Knott: He almost won.

Taymor: I know, and it's just a damn shame he didn't. It's not that he didn't have ideas and didn't say things, but he just—

Knott: Did you go to the convention at all, when it was in Boston last summer?

Taymor: Yes, I did. It's just—everything, it just didn't work. And that whole thing with the salute, "I'm reporting for—" Oh, God!

Knott: That didn't work with you? *[laughing]*

Taymor: That didn't work either, it didn't. He didn't know how to take on those Swift Boat guys.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: That was terrible, terrible. But when you think about it, they were going to do something with that, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, they were going to use that.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: That's a hard thing. They didn't know how to figure out how to overcome it, I guess.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: I don't know how you could, but there must have been a way. Believe me, Karl Rove would have found a way.

Knott: Right, right.

Taymor: As only he does. But Kerry says he's going to run again.

Knott: I know. I keep hearing this, yes.

Taymor: Oh, he is.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: I mean, who do we have?

Knott: Well, you have Hillary [Rodham] Clinton.

Taymor: I know. Hillary's terrific, but everybody always says she's so polarizing.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: Well, people said terrible things. People I know, people in New York, said, "I don't know if I'll vote for her." But they did. She won them over. And then she won in upstate New York. She gets people.

Knott: She does.

Taymor: You can't—I really don't know, Steve, but I wouldn't count her out.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: She's way out there ahead of everybody.

Knott: She's way ahead, yes.

Taymor: Way ahead.

Knott: It's hers if she wants it, it seems to me.

Taymor: The nomination.

Knott: The nomination. I'm not talking about the general, that's going to be a donnybrook.

Taymor: Who's going to run for them? Who's going to be their guy?

Knott: Believe it or not, our Senator from Virginia, George Allen, is running.

Taymor: Yes, that's what I hear.

Knott: He's a bit of a sleeper. He's not necessarily a recognizable name, but he's actually a pretty good candidate.

Taymor: In what ways?

Knott: A very personable guy. His father used to be the Washington Redskins football coach, and so he's got a little bit of that going for him in some places.

Taymor: Yes, people talk about that.

Knott: Right. But he's just a folksy kind of guy, so he could be the sleeper candidate in the Republican Party.

Taymor: How about Biden? No?

Knott: Joe Biden?

Taymor: Yes.

Knott: I'd be surprised if he gets it.

Taymor: He wouldn't get it, right?

Knott: I don't think so.

Taymor: Because of that other—

Knott: I just think his day has come and gone. I mean, my God, he ran back in '88, didn't he? Or '84 or something?

Taymor: He ran when [Michael] Dukakis—

Knott: Eighty-eight.

Taymor: Eighty-eight, yes, because that was the thing, that he had plagiarized or something.

Knott: Right. He got in trouble for—right, right.

Taymor: No, that probably wouldn't do him any good.

Knott: No, right.

Taymor: And [John] Sasso, he was the one.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: Oh, God, what a pity. It was a whole big—awful. That whole incident was so bad, bad for Dukakis, bad all the way.

Knott: You probably knew Mike Dukakis fairly well, I assume?

Taymor: Oh, yes, very.

Knott: Do you know, was there a good relationship there between Dukakis and Ted Kennedy?

Taymor: Mike Dukakis did not support Ted Kennedy. He was for McCormack!

Knott: Is that right?

Taymor: Yes!

Knott: Okay.

Taymor: You never would know it now. All those ADA—Dukakis was an active ADA member.

Knott: Brookline—

Taymor: All those ADA Brookline liberals, they were all, yes, for McCormack.

Knott: Interesting.

Taymor: Yes.

Knott: Do you know if they patched up that—was that relationship always kind of—

Taymor: Dukakis and Kennedy?

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: Well, for a while there was—because Teddy knew it. But they don't acknowledge it any more, they make like it never happened.

Knott: I see.

Taymor: Paper it over, or whatever. But it's more than that. I mean, they're pals, they're okay with each other. But Dukakis usually always admits things sooner or later. He did not support Ted Kennedy.

Knott: Interesting.

Taymor: Right along with all the rest of them, with McCormack. They were closer.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: In their reform efforts and things like that, they were always with—whatever this was, COD, Commonwealth Organization of Democrats, and Dukakis was involved with that. That whole bunch was close to Eddie McCormack.

Knott: Okay.

Taymor: So that's the story of that.

Knott: Right. Well, you've had a pretty illustrious career in Massachusetts politics, and you've seen a lot of change in your time.

Taymor: I sure have, a lot. Oh, yes. But now we're going to see what's going to happen here. Do you know Deval Patrick?

Knott: I've heard his name, yes.

Taymor: Black guy? He was the Assistant Attorney General in Clinton's—

Knott: Right, and he's thinking of running for—

Taymor: He *is* running, for Governor.

Knott: For Governor, okay.

Taymor: Against [Thomas] Reilly, who was the Attorney General.

Knott: Who do you think is the front runner there?

Taymor: Well, I'm sure Reilly is. Oh, yes, because people don't know Deval Patrick. But who knows? It's well over a year away.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: I don't know, though. He's a black guy. We just don't know how—

Knott: Do you think that's still a possible obstacle?

Taymor: Oh, I would think, somewhat. It has to be. Well, in the primary, that's the thing. I don't think it would be so bad in the general election. If he got the nomination, he probably—but he's like fresh air, and Reilly is like yesterday. The same old, same old. A nice guy. And when I talk to people who aren't so politically engaged, they say, "Well, what's wrong with Reilly? Why can't we be for Reilly?" They don't see any reason not to support Reilly. So it's going to be up to Patrick to win these people.

Knott: I see, yes.

Taymor: Even academics, they don't know Deval Patrick, they don't know who—

Knott: And Romney has not declared his intentions yet about whether or not he wants to seek reelection? Is that—?

Taymor: No, but everybody seems to think he's making all the moves and spending all the money as if he were going to run for President. These guys, they don't like being Governor after—what's his name?

Knott: [William] Weld? Or [Paul] Cellucci?

Taymor: Yes, Weld. He got tired of being Governor. I think if you're a Republican and you have a Democratic legislature, it's not much fun. You can't—

Knott: A completely lopsided Democratic legislature.

Taymor: Yes, and how. So that's hard.

Knott: Right, sure.

Taymor: So maybe that—I don't know. Reilly, though, is not very personable and Deval Patrick is much more so.

Knott: Oh, he is? Okay.

Loomis: Is any of the crew from the last time thinking about running? Shannon O'Brien or Tom Birmingham? Are they all out forever?

Taymor: Oh, Shannon O'Brien, I don't know what she's doing, something with Patriots' Trail Girl Scout—it's terrible. Really. Why couldn't she have found something better? I mean, not that that's not good but—I don't know. And who else did you mention?

Loomis: Tom Birmingham.

Taymor: No, I don't know what he's doing.

Loomis: He's sort of the old guard, too, though.

Taymor: Yes. But he was a good guy, right. But then we had other people running like [Robert] Reich and—

Knott: Oh, yes, Reich.

Taymor: We had all that. Steve Grossman. But now, Steve Grossman, did you talk to him? I don't think he knows Teddy that well.

Knott: No, I don't think he's on our list.

Taymor: No, I wouldn't think so. He knew Clinton.

Knott: Well, I was just going to say, we do a Clinton oral history project and I think he may be on that list.

Taymor: Yes. Do you interview Clinton for this Kennedy—?

Knott: This is completely separate. We have a Bill Clinton oral history project that's focused just entirely on his Presidency and a whole different set of interviews, and then we do EMK as well, as separate projects.

Taymor: But you don't interview Bill Clinton about Ted?

Knott: Well, that's an interesting question. Senator Kennedy put Clinton's name, both Clintons, on our list. So if they're willing to do it, we may try that some day. Yes, definitely.

Taymor: I would think so. I'm sure they would have something to say.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: They must have known each other and—

Knott: Very much.

Taymor: While he was President with Ted in the Senate.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: All kinds of things.

Knott: And Bill Clinton actually recommended to Senator Kennedy that he look to the University of Virginia to do this oral history project.

Taymor: Oh, really?

Knott: Because we were already working on the Clinton project.

Taymor: So what's Bill Clinton doing now, besides going around all over the place with [George H. W.] Bush, "father" Bush? [*laughing*]

Knott: I really don't know.

Loomis: He's the special envoy for the tsunami—

Knott: The tsunami relief, yes.

Loomis: Some kind of envoy to the tsunami stuff, I think, with former President Bush. But they're best buds.

Knott: I'm sure they're gearing up, because she has to run for reelection next year—

Taymor: That's right.

Knott: And then for '08, for the Presidential race, so I imagine he's doing what he can—

Taymor: Well, yes.

Knott: Fundraising.

Taymor: If she wins real, real big, who's going to run against her?

Knott: They can't even get—they haven't got anybody yet, the last I heard.

Taymor: If she wins big, big—see, that's what JFK did. In 1958 he ran around the country helping other candidates, which helped him immeasurably in getting all his lines in with all these various states, so they were all on board.

Knott: Sure, yes.

Taymor: And I think his father had a lot to do with helping them, or instigating people, to make dossiers on all the delegates in 1960.

Knott: Oh, really?

Taymor: As I recall, hearing about this—not anything firsthand, but they knew everything about each delegate that you might need to know, to put pressure. I mean, they were—

Knott: They were good at it.

Taymor: They were good at it. Boy! And the father would make damn sure that he didn't leave a thing undone. His influence was apparent to me. He would get his finger into stuff. And then, of course, if you ever talked to JFK about it he would smile and laugh. Like, *Who can do anything with that guy?*

Knott: That's good.

Taymor: I don't know. Now, do you talk to people like Doris Kearns Goodwin?

Knott: We actually met with Doris a couple months ago. We didn't tape her then, we just consulted with her, like what we did before with you. But we'll tape her at some point.

Taymor: Because she must have a fund of stuff.

Knott: Sure, sure.

Taymor: And her husband.

Knott: And her husband as well, right.

Taymor: Oh, yes, because he was so close with JFK, and with Ted, I'm sure. And they've been close with the family.

Knott: Right.

Taymor: I know Doris a little and I remember, when she wrote that book, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, she said, "The children, the daughters, said to me, 'How does Daddy come out in your book, Doris? Not good, I'll bet, right?'" She laughed when she said that.

Knott: Yes, yes.

Taymor: Oh, yes. Well—

Knott: No, she was very helpful.

Taymor: I wonder how she's doing with this book she's supposed to be writing—

Knott: On [Abraham] Lincoln?

Taymor: About Lincoln.

Knott: Yes, it's—what did she tell us? I think she was shooting for completing it in the fall, I'm pretty sure that's what she said. It's a little behind schedule but—

Taymor: It's a shame, what happened to Doris.

Knott: Yes, I know.

Taymor: It's not ruined her, but it hurt.

Knott: It hurt.

Taymor: And she, I mean, she's off of those programs. And people loved her.

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: She's got a wonderful way about her.

Knott: She does, yes.

Taymor: It's just a shame that that—

Knott: Yes.

Taymor: It didn't seem to hurt Joe Ellis.

Knott: No. Well, his was slightly different, right? He was basically telling his students, embellishing his war record, or whatever.

Loomis: Creating.

Taymor: Creating. *[laughs]*

Knott: Creating, right. Thank you.

Taymor: It wasn't like stealing somebody else's writing, though.

Knott: Right. That's a serious—in some ways, it's a more serious offense in academic circles.

Taymor: Yes.

Knott: Perhaps it shouldn't be. I think what he—well, I'll stop there.

Taymor: Yes, what he did was not so good either. How can you trust what anybody's saying, but anyway.

Knott: Well, Betty, I want to thank you.

Taymor: I hope I've given you enough.

Knott: Oh, you have.

Taymor: I can't remember anything special that I've forgotten.

Knott: No, it's been terrific and again, we're very grateful for your time and for your hospitality. Thank you very much.

Taymor: It's nice to be of help.

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