



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**INTERVIEW WITH EUGENE A. DELLEA**

August 9, 2005  
Pittsfield, Massachusetts

**Interviewer**

Stephen F. Knott

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TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH EUGENE A. DELLEA

August 9, 2005

**Knott:** Thank you for taking the time. I'm grateful.

**Dellea:** I've made some notes.

**Knott:** Good. Gene, if you could just tell us a little bit about yourself: how you first became involved with Edward Kennedy or any sort of political life, that would be the best place to start.

**Dellea:** It was in early 1961 when I was elected selectman in West Stockbridge. I was the youngest selectman to be elected in the state of Massachusetts. At the same time, with a very young and enthusiastic President [John F.] Kennedy, I saw the country moving in a new direction, especially for the younger people—I considered myself among them and I was very interested in the Kennedy movement.

In January of '61, a local newspaper article announced that Senator [Edward M.] Kennedy would appear at the Sons of Italy in Lee, Massachusetts. I suggested to one of my colleagues that we take a ride to the nearby community to meet Senator Kennedy. When we arrived, there was no Senator Kennedy. There was a Mr. Don Dowd who was showing a film of Senator Kennedy as he visited the "three I's"—Italy, Ireland, and Israel. At the time, for political reasons, this was the thing to do if you were going to seek national election. That was my first attempt to meet Senator Kennedy.

After showing the film—Don was seeking volunteers as the Senator was eyeing an opportunity for the United States Senate—I signed on with that campaign and began working with Don. Along with Ed King, a local person who was involved with President Kennedy, we began organizing communities and delegates for the famous convention of 1962 in Springfield. It was the Kennedy—[Edward J.] McCormack battle for the nomination of the Democratic Party. That was my initial involvement with the Kennedys, and I was with them all the way.

I was a member of the Young Democrats here in Berkshire County. It was a very active group, and we were pretty much all *Kennedyites* at that point in time. Some of the older people in the community remained loyal to the McCormacks. The Berkshire delegation is always the first to report, and there was a feeling because the President was in the position to appoint postmasters, among other federal opportunities, that this could be used as leverage. This was not, in fact, what was happening. As they polled the Berkshire delegation, by request, I recall one of our members getting up to loudly pronounce, "I'm too old for a postmastership. I'm voting for Edward J. McCormack." McCormack held the office of Attorney General, and his uncle was Speaker of the House at the time.

**Knott:** And he had a progressive record on civil rights, I've been told.

**Dellea:** He did. McCormack was a well-liked Attorney General here in Massachusetts, with a progressive record on civil rights. Fortunately, Senator Kennedy was better liked, and we went on to work together.

In the '60s I remember a young, very adventurous Senator Kennedy coming to the Berkshires to ski at Mt. Greylock's Thunderbolt Trail. Almost impossible to ski, the deep dive on this stark trail is not open to the public. A couple of professional skiers were on hand, but he did it on his own. On a recent visit to the Berkshires, the Senator pointed out the trail to Vicki [Victoria Reggie Kennedy], and recalled, "I skied down that slope there." At just a little over 3,400 feet above sea level, Mt. Greylock is the highest point in Massachusetts. I was there, in 1964 at the convention, when the plane crash happened.

**Knott:** Can you tell me a little bit about that, what you remember from that?

**Dellea:** Don Dowd and I have worked very closely together with the Kennedy organization since 1961. In 1964, I was at the convention, and Don was at the airport awaiting the Senator's arrival. Not knowing exactly what was happening, we were very anxious when we received news of the plane crash. The Senator was taken to Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton. He was transferred to New England Baptist to recover, where he remained throughout the 1964 campaign. He spent most of his time on a Stryker bed—industry standard at the time—which was capable of infinite repositioning. There wasn't much happening without him, but we mobilized. Joan [Kennedy] filled in by visiting the Berkshires, and appearing at several events. She did very well, and was an asset to the campaign. Her presence was important, and people sought her out for comments and reassurance on the Senator's recovery.

Things were quiet for awhile, because of the Senator's extended recovery, until Robert [Kennedy] got involved in New York. West Stockbridge is just two miles from the New York State border, and we were called on to assist his campaign.

On March 31, 1968, President [Lyndon B.] Johnson announced to the national media that he would not be seeking the Presidency for a second term. One day later we were on the plane to Indiana to begin the Robert F. Kennedy for President Campaign. President Johnson, though he wasn't running, was working to keep the election open for Hubert Humphrey. Governor [Roger D.] Branigan, who was running for the seat in Indiana, was another supporter.

Our Evansville base was in southern Indiana. Since Indiana had no civil service, everything was controlled by the party and the Governor at the time. It was interesting to learn if you worked in the government and it was a political appointment, five percent of your salary was a contribution to the party. If you were a favorite of the local county party you could hold the election in your house, garage, or what-have-you, so it was very tightly controlled. It was an uphill battle, but Robert Kennedy was successful in Indiana.

The Senator—Ted—came out and we worked with him. The people in southern Indiana showed real interest and love for him. Interestingly, many of them said, "Why isn't *he* the candidate? We would like to have him instead of the brother." They saw Robert as being a little bit conservative, and there was a feeling back then that he wasn't quite as progressive as Ted.

**Knott:** How different was it for you? You knew Berkshire; you knew western Massachusetts; you knew Massachusetts politics really well. How different was Indiana in that regard? What were the differences that you noticed coming from here and going there?

**Dellea:** Well, in Massachusetts we didn't experience that anti-Kennedy sentiment that was present in Indiana. We had our style, through the training and experience we had with the Kennedy organization, we visited practically every community in southern Indiana. In the Eighth Congressional District, working with Don Dowd, we visited the local newspapers. Each community had a Democrat and Republican newspaper, and we made the rounds. We went to all of the radio stations. There wasn't all that much television, but we did visit the one major television station in Evansville, and we organized all these communities.

Despite the Governor's hold on the on the local elected officials, we managed to develop a positive feeling toward the Kennedys. It was my first experience being involved with elections outside Massachusetts, and we actually saw pay for votes. They had a very interesting and sophisticated method of setting up these election homes or garages for whatever or whoever was in favor, and they would give you a chit. After the election voters would return to the house or garage for a buffet, and be paid \$2.00 for their vote.

I remember our first morning in headquarters—the election was May 4 or May 8, of '68—a woman called to say she had seen Robert Kennedy the night before when he visited with a group in Evansville, and she wanted to go in and vote for him. But, Buddy Maston, a local black person and janitor in a local school where he had an after-hours joint, also worked for the Governor. Buddy Matson was friendly with then Senator [R. Vance] Hartke. He got the word that Kennedy had been seen, and they put the heat on him to deliver his area. The woman was complaining that when she got in the booth to vote, Buddy Matson jumped in the booth and pulled the lever for Governor Branigan. We lost that precinct, I think eight to one, *[laughs]* and no one would go near there. Everyone was frightened. We tried to get people to kind of intercede through the League of Women Voters, but it was hands-off. It was their way of life. We were still successful in Evansville.

We returned home for a bit and then went out to California and worked the campaign again. We were in southern California, the Los Angeles area. Senator Kennedy—Ted Kennedy—was working in northern California, the San Francisco area.

**Knott:** Don was telling us this morning—Generally we don't say what somebody else said in an interview but this directly concerned you—if I remember correctly, that the two of you, or perhaps you or somebody spotted this guy in the back of the room at a couple of RFK [Robert F. Kennedy] rallies. Do you feel comfortable talking about that?

**Dellea:** Yes. It was the last night of the California rally. We were at the Coconut Grove Ambassador Hotel. There wasn't any security at all, and all of the entertainers were in the back room. Don was on the right side of the stage, and I was on the left facing the crowd. To my left there was a dark, empty room. I recall the people from the back who were lining up the entertainers had come out to mention that there was a person in the back who was interfering, and he shouldn't be there. I approached the gentleman, a very big and very Middle-Eastern-looking person. I told him he was in a restricted area, and that he had to go back out into the audience. He left and I saw him in the front of the crowd mingling with a group of nuns. The

next thing I know, he's back inside. I approached him again in this dark setting, and I said again, "Sir, this is a restricted area. We've asked you not to come back in here." He reached for his side as though he had a weapon or something. He asked, "Do you want to see my identification?" I backed off, found Don, and we finally got the police who were able to get him out front.

The night of the election when the Senator came there to speak to the group, that person was in the room again. It was an amazing situation because we knew pretty much who all the workers were. We all had credentials to be there, and we were very curious about what was happening.

**Knott:** You were interviewed by the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]?

**Dellea:** Yes, by the FBI. One evening, at midnight, I was home reading *Time* magazine that had the picture and the story about the police chief of Los Angeles. The phone rang. It was the FBI. They wanted to talk to us, and so I made arrangements for them to meet us at the police station in Pittsfield for a debriefing on the whole situation around the assassination. Don and I were in that room, talking with Larry O'Brien when we thought we heard balloons going off, and suddenly all of the commotion—

**Knott:** You heard the shots?

**Dellea:** Oh, yes. We were no more than 10 to 12 feet away when we heard what were the actual shots. We went out into the lobby to find pandemonium. Everybody was running and screaming, and toppling over the furniture. We went to the hospital where we spent most of the night. Senator Ted Kennedy came down from San Francisco, and the next morning at seven o'clock we boarded the plane to come home. I guess we were in the air—we stopped in Chicago to refuel—when they told us he had passed away. We were home for a day or so before we went to New York to help with the arrangements for the funeral and the train ride to New York.

**Swerdlow:** So this Middle Eastern man was Sirhan Sirhan?

**Dellea:** No, he wasn't. But we did see Sirhan when they removed him because we were in the reception room where the Senator was giving his speech. Alan Cranston—later elected Senator of California—was running for Insurance Commissioner in the state of California. His reception was in the next room, and that is where Sirhan was holding out. After his capture, while we were out in the lobby, we saw them with their guns in the air as they brought him out of the reception area.

**Knott:** Did they ever identify this person, do you know? The one that you—

**Dellea:** We never did learn anything about the suspicious man who entered our restricted area twice on the previous evening, or if he had any connection to Sirhan.

**Knott:** So after '68 did you get a sense of—and this is kind of a ridiculous question—the impact of Bobby's death on Ted Kennedy—any signs of any change that you saw in terms of his attitude towards life?

**Dellea:** I didn't really experience anything. One of the first outings following the assassination was at Holy Cross University where there was a lot of pressure, and hope that he would be the candidate for the Presidency. There was a lull before things started to move on, and other

members of the family began to get involved in his campaigns. I remember young Joe [Kennedy] during one campaign. He became like a campaign manager as we spent time with him moving around the state. We did a lot of that.

**Knott:** You've been involved in every campaign.

**Dellea:** I am involved pretty much with all of the Berkshires and Western Massachusetts along with Don. The two of us work together very closely. I did work on campaigns in the Worcester and Boston area, and of course, in '94 we all took leave when he was really challenged by now-Governor Mitt Romney. We spent time throughout the Commonwealth.

**Knott:** As far as Massachusetts goes, historically the Berkshires—wasn't it a fairly Republican area at one point?

**Dellea:** Yes, if we go back 35 or 40 years, many of the small communities in Berkshire County were Republican, but that has changed. Traditionally, Senator Kennedy receives the majority of the vote across the board. When you look at some of his challenges, you will find that he received a minimum 70 percent of the vote. The last time he ran, five years ago, he received 85 percent of the vote in Massachusetts. Northern Berkshire County was very strong for him, and he has always received about 80 percent of their vote. Pittsfield became stronger in the mid-'70s because of his commitment to the area. General Electric was the main employer, at one point employing 11,000 people here. Their big product were the transformers they made here before they began to diversify and get into the defense and chemical business, and on into plastics. There were some tough times when they started to wind down. In the middle-to-late '80s they began to cut back on employment, and things really started to change.

In 1976, as the Senator was campaigning around the state, he brought all of his family, nieces and nephews on a first-time camping trip to the Berkshires that included Beartown Mountain and Umpachene Falls—a little community in Mill River that is part of the township of New Marlborough in the southwestern corner of Massachusetts bordering the state of Connecticut. While scouting around for camping sites, Don and I found this interesting area where the water fell down over very steep rock so you could get behind the cascading water, and swim in the pools beneath. Senator Kennedy wanted the kids to have a good time here in the Berkshires—we camped, canoed and walked the trails—but he also wanted to expose them to the natural beauty and the arts this area has to offer. So in addition to the amusement parks, we visited Chesterwood, the home of Daniel Chester French, who built the models for the Lincoln Memorial Monument, and we visited the Hancock Shaker Village to learn about the lives of the Shakers. We toured the *Berkshire Eagle* to learn how a newspaper was put together, and we saw artifacts—including an Egyptian mummy—at the Berkshire Museum.

**Swerdlow:** It must have been a caravan with that many kids.

**Dellea:** There were about 18 of us. We had a big camper and a small van. Pictures on the wall documented the Kennedy family camping experience here in the Berkshires, and included visits to the Pleasant Valley Bird Sanctuary in Lenox, an evening at Tanglewood, also in Lenox, to see Linda Ronstadt perform. It was a good time.

**Knott:** Was that photo used in a campaign brochure?

**Dellea:** This photo from a 1974 visit was used in the 1980 campaign brochure. There's Patrick [Kennedy] at about eight years old, Eunice [Kennedy] Shriver, Jean Kennedy Smith is there, and Willie [William Kennedy] Smith was here. And that's Jean with her adopted child from Vietnam, Teddy [Kennedy], Jr., and Chris [Christopher George Kennedy], and these are the Shriver kids, Anthony and Mark. Some were friends. That's Rory [Kennedy] there. That's Dougie [Douglas Harriman Kennedy]. That's Kara [Kennedy]. That's Patrick—look at him—he is a United States Congressman today.

**Knott:** One shortcoming of an audio oral history is that you can't get these photographs into the record.

**Dellea:** Talking about the photographs—that print of the Roses of Hyannis Port was for Mrs. [Rose] Kennedy's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. We were told that it was painted by a 17-year-old retarded boy. All the guests at that birthday party received the picture. That painting over there of the Breakers is by the Senator. He sent that along as a Christmas gift one year.

**Knott:** He's a pretty talented artist.

**Dellea:** Oh, he's really—

**Swerdlow:** Wow, that's a nice Christmas card.

**Knott:** Well, what about the 1980 Presidential run, Gene? Did you participate in that? Can you tell us a little bit about that?

**Dellea:** Right after the dedication of the Library, of course, you remember—

**Knott:** Actually, let's back up to that. Would you like to talk a little bit about that, because you were heavily involved in that?

**Dellea:** I took three weeks leave to prepare for the dedication of the John F. Kennedy Library. Don was one of the main organizers, and I worked to organize that whole platform—seating people, contacting their office, making arrangements for them to get in. It was a challenge.

**Knott:** Was it a touchy thing in terms of where people were seated? Does that get to be a contentious issue?

**Dellea:** People were rather cooperative. It was just trying to gather everyone, and working with the Secret Service to accommodate President [Jimmy] Carter's attendance. We had part of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in the back, and we had union issues around their playing or not playing. There wasn't any traffic because we had all the people bused out there from the center of Boston. Booths were set up to feed the people. Part of my responsibility was to lead that whole platform over to the main door where President Carter and the Kennedys cut the ribbon to open the Library to the world.

**Knott:** And the other was Jackie [Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis] when President Carter kissed her on stage and that famous photograph.

**Dellea:** It was a great event in October of '79. There was a tremendous demand for invitations, and there were more people wanting to get in than the capacity of 10,000 would allow. Keeping the media in tow was also a challenge. I had the responsibility of Jackie that day—getting her there and seated. You'll see [John] Kenneth Galbraith in that picture. There I am. There's Jackie.

**Knott:** There's Jackie. There's Galbraith, a very tall man. That's Gene, Jackie. So, any recollections, specific recollections of being with Jackie that day?

**Dellea:** She was very easy to work with. She came to the Ritz and we organized it from there. There was a lot of fanfare, and she was very pleasant to the people as we walked across the street. As we tried to manage the crowd pushing in to meet her, one of the horses almost stepped on her.

That December we started the campaign, and I started out to organize things in Connecticut. I didn't go out to Iowa because they already had a group out there. The Senator wasn't successful in Iowa, so we regrouped, and I was asked to go up to New Hampshire. I worked there from mid-January of '80 to the election time there in early February. I worked the seacoast, Portsmouth and other communities around there. We were successful at winning that part of the state. I recall election night when the first returns came in and we were winning, so they were calling from Manchester very excited that we were on our way to victory. However, when we got up north in gun country, things became a little different.

**Knott:** Was the gun issue a big problem?

**Dellea:** It was a very big issue. We had our central phone bank just outside of Portsmouth, in Exeter near the University of New Hampshire in Durham. While monitoring the statewide phone bank, I learned that gun control was a big issue, especially north of Manchester. We returned to Massachusetts to regroup. We were concerned how this was going to go here. Of course, we did very well. We also worked in the southern part of Maine to get candidates to attend caucuses for Senator Kennedy. He came by to visit up there several times, so we spent quite a bit of time with him before going on to New Hampshire. From there we went on to Connecticut where we did quite well.

**Knott:** You won Connecticut.

**Dellea:** We won Connecticut. Ella Grasso was Governor there at that point, and it was interesting to see the influence of the media. The news seemed to affect how the people would swing. I recall visiting one mayor's office, and he told me, "Look, I have to be with Carter because of what's coming down from the government and from his office in terms of help, but I'm with Ted Kennedy."

On one of the last visits just before the election, the Senator came up to New Haven where we did some events. I rode with him to Waterbury for an event at the Waterbury School. I remember him asking me, "What do you think we're going to do?" I said, "Senator, we're going to win Connecticut." He said, "Well, you know, the poll doesn't really show us that." I said, "But the feeling I have from the way people come up to me and whisper, 'I'm going to vote for Ted Kennedy,' there's just that feeling there. Despite the pressure from the Governor, who wasn't with us. She was with Carter. And, the pressure from the White House, I just had that feeling. And we did win. We did win. Then we were successful in New York. Our next stop was Indiana.



**Knott:** So you went back to Indiana where you'd been years ago.

**Dellea:** Right. But we saw more of the state than when we were based in Indianapolis with Robert. This was a tough state—Ku Klux territory. We experienced some of that in the Robert Kennedy era. Lucky we weren't in jail. We took the usual campaign approach by visiting a factory to hand out leaflets. At a Whirlpool factory in Evansville they came after us. "You don't have a permit. Get out of here." We had all kinds of threats.

Getting back to the '68 campaign with Robert, there was a mayor who was part of the [Roger D.] Branigan organization. He had been a big supporter of President Kennedy. He called, and in a subversive manner, requested that Don and I meet with him around midnight in a restaurant. I related our earlier encounter with Buddy Matson (the black fellow who worked for the city). Buddy said, "You know, the mayor called me and said, 'Buddy, I saw you with those Kennedy guys. You want to remember one thing. They'll be gone tomorrow. I'll be here and you've got that after hours joint.'" [laughs]

**Knott:** How much were you picking up, if at all, any references to Chappaquiddick, any criticism? Was that sort of simmering beneath the surface?

**Dellea:** Indiana is a conservative state, and we did get some of that. We did receive some labor support out there—the machinists were a help to us in Indiana.

From there we went on to California, and we met the Senator in San Francisco. He was going on to San Diego after a breakfast in the St. Francis Hotel, and he wanted either Don or me to come to San Diego to organize the young campaigners. They also needed someone in Sacramento, so I said to Don, "I'll go to San Diego; you take the capital."

The Senator came on very strong at the end, beating President Carter, and carrying the state of California. During that time, the Shah of Iran [Mohammad Reza Pahlavi] became a big issue.

**Knott:** It's hard to beat an incumbent. That's the bottom line.

**Dellea:** Yes, it is hard to beat an incumbent. They had the machinery, the momentum, and the media. Do you remember Ron Brown, who later became the Secretary of Commerce in the Clinton administration? He was the charge person for the campaign in California—a very fine gentleman—and we enjoyed working with him.

Returning to the Shah issue, and the hostage seizure, we had a family in San Diego that was very supportive of Senator Kennedy. Maureen O'Connor, whose husband was a very wealthy older man, and Bob Peterson, who owned the Jack-in-the-Box chain in the '70s and sold it for some \$73 million, were very generous to the campaign. I lived in one of the Petersons' homes on the compound during the campaign, and they were very helpful to us.

Maureen O'Connor came from a very large family, and I recall they were working on some immigration issues with the Iranians who were having difficulty with the Shah. They called me and wanted to talk a little bit about it, but I didn't want to get involved. As a matter of courtesy, I had a meeting with the former Attorney General of Iran, together with a relative of Maureen O'Connor who was one of the area's largest contractors. The real issue at the time was the

captive hostages. There were very strong feelings in that very conservative part of the state with all the military bases there.

**Knott:** Do you have any sense of why Senator Ted Kennedy tried to challenge President Carter?

**Dellea:** It was a time of very high inflation and very high energy costs. There wasn't a strong feeling for President Carter at the time, and we felt we had a good chance.

**Knott:** Did you know Evan Dobbelle, by any chance?

**Dellea:** I knew Evan very well, and I knew his family as well. His father was an orthopedic surgeon that we worked with here. Evan was a Republican, and he worked for Ed Brooke. He returned here and ran for state senator as a Republican. After he was defeated in the primary by another well-known Republican, he ran under a non-partisan charter, and was elected mayor of the city of Pittsfield. He changed parties, and Governor [Michael] Dukakis appointed him Massachusetts Secretary of Environmental Affairs. The appointment was short-lived, and Evan jumped aboard the Carter campaign where he and his wife Kitt [Dobbelle] were very active. When Carter was elected, Evan was appointed Chief of Protocol. He and Kitt worked together in the Protocols Office, and Kitt later became Chief of Staff to Rosalynn [Carter]. After falling out of favor with the White House boys on some issues, Evan moved on to the DNC [Democratic National Committee] where he worked in the treasurer's office.

**Knott:** So in 1980 when your friend Senator Kennedy was taking on President Carter, did you have any interaction with Dobbelle?

**Dellea:** Oh, yes. I would bump into Evan occasionally along the campaign trail, and I didn't see him for a while until the convention in August of '80 in New York. I was still on leave from my position at the hospital. Although he was encouraged to drop out, the Senator stayed until the end of the convention where he gave that great speech—it was the rebirth of Senator Kennedy. Going back to the Miami convention in '72 where the Senator was going to give the nominating introduction for [George] McGovern, I remember being there in the trailer with the Senator. McGovern threw the Vice President nomination out to the convention from the platform, and we were there until three o'clock in the morning waiting to get out of there.

It was an interesting time. Larry O'Brien was national chairman, and Don and I were working like sergeants-at-arms at the convention. It was the year Jesse Jackson took over the Illinois delegation, and Mayor [Richard J.] Daley's group still thought they were the official delegates—but the credentials were all with Jesse Jackson. When they began seating the delegates that night, the guards called us and said the Daley delegation was out at the gate wanting to get in, and they needed us to go out there and check this out. Don and I took the golf cart—envisioning ourselves as General [George] Patton leading the tank—and there were hundreds of thousands of people just pushing and pushing. There was a big fence surrounding the convention hall, and when we got to the gates, we said, "Turn this thing around."

Governor [John Y.] Brown of Kentucky arrived at the convention with a Kentucky Fried Chicken box dinner for every delegate there. The California and New York delegations bagged it up, set it in front of the podium, to send out to all their people camped out in the field—all the protestors.

**Knott:** It was kind of a wild convention.

**Dellea:** Oh, it was wild, but it was in '68 out in Chicago where they had all the problems. I wasn't there.

**Knott:** What about '94 when Romney took on Senator Kennedy? I think you've already referred to this in passing, but that was probably the election that was the closest. Talk to us a little bit about that.

**Dellea:** As you recall, back in June and July of '94, the polls were showing a pretty tight race, and some indicated that Romney was ahead. Of course, Ted was back in Washington, D.C. and wasn't available until just after they recessed the Congress in August. We began to move around a bit, took leave from our jobs again, and went to Boston to help.

The Senator was a lead on an ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990] movement for legislation, and mayors throughout Massachusetts were concerned with the cost to their communities. We went over to Milton, where the state mayors were meeting. Mayor [John, III] Barrett was the chair of the Massachusetts Mayors Association at the time. After we got them juiced up and ready, they came out and endorsed the Senator and had a big event over at the library in Milton. Things really started to move ahead when he was able to get out in the community.

**Knott:** Do you think, Gene, that he was really in trouble, or was it kind of a media hype?

**Dellea:** No, there was a sense that he was in trouble—the Palm Beach issues and what-have-you. There was concern. There are people who love the Kennedys, and there are pockets that still hate them. This gave them the opportunity to express themselves, and they had us on the go. I think we ended up with 58 percent of the vote in that election, so he did pretty well.

We were part of the first debate at Faneuil Hall, and it was interesting. The panel was put together by the *Boston Herald* with citizens from around the state. Ted did an incredible job at that debate at Faneuil Hall, and that was the really big turning point in that convention, too.

Romney went after the Senator about some real estate issues, and tried to tie him to some of the money issues in Washington. The famous line Ted made there was—as I recall—that his family made too many sacrifices for this country to be involved in such matters. When Romney talked about moving around the state, he said, "I even got to the western part of Massachusetts out to Worcester," and I thought, *well, that is a great one for us.*

The second debate was in Holyoke at the Holyoke Community College, and we helped in the organization of that event. We got people from Adams involved, and we briefed the Senator on some of the questions that would be asked. When the issue of moving around the state came up again, the Senator said, "I've been to western Massachusetts and all around there," and the people from Adams responded by saying, "Yes, Senator, I remember. I remember you. You came out for the fall foliage parade in North Adams." We picked up momentum there, and that issue was put on hold.

**Knott:** So you think the debate really did change—

**Dellea:** That was a big turning point. After Faneuil Hall, things really started to change. We addressed some labor issues Romney had regarding money he had invested in Holyoke. Workers, brought in from Indiana, by Bain & Company were given a hard time, and laid off.

**Knott:** Did Vicki play an instrumental role in that campaign?

**Dellea:** She did. Vicki is an excellent campaigner. People like her. I can tell you—right up to this past weekend in 2005 at a reception for 150 people there were comments about how pleasant and beautiful she is. She's a great asset to him. Joan was a wonderful person, but she had her problems and a different lifestyle. When you meet the Reggies you see them as more of a family, and we have observed that Vicki had made a whole different life for the Kennedys. Vicki was very critical to the campaign. In '94 every woman in the United States Senate came to a rally in Boston that she had organized.

**Knott:** Was there a sense that there might be a problem with women voters because of the Palm Beach thing?

**Dellea:** There was some of that, and there was still some feeling about the divorce from some staunch Catholics. What's interesting is the whole ethnic make-up of Massachusetts—strong Irish, Italian, Polish, and French. Some of the Irish were a challenge to us in '80 over the busing issue in South Boston. There were issues around Chappaquiddick by some very religious people. Italians and Polish people were very strong for him here in western Massachusetts.

There were a couple of critical economic issues for Pittsfield as General Electric started falling apart, and other small businesses in the area—fabric mills, and the Arnold Print Works in Adams were facing problems. The Senator was able to help with contracts for the Arnold Print Works, and he became really engaged here. In the early '90s he was helpful in southern Berkshire County to obtain grants for a new children's health program.

Back again to the '80s—Congressman Silvio O. Conte was still alive and he was interested in bringing the National Archives here. Together, through the Congress, the Senator and the Congressman obtained \$3.7 million to build it here right out by the airport. The Senator came to Pittsfield in 1994 to be with Mrs. [Corinne] Conte for the dedication of the Conte National Archives Center.

In 1992, General Electric began to cut back on their employment here. They were involved with making the guidance instruments for the Poseidon missiles—with somewhere around 2,000 employees— and they decided to get out of the defense business. The loss of so many jobs generated a real concern in the community.

The community came together with then Mayor [Edward] Reilly, the Chamber, etc., to get the Senator involved. Martin Marietta Chairman Norm Augustine happened to be the Senator's neighbor out in McLean, but they never really had much contact. So we were able to have the Senator's office working with Martin Marietta. They bought the business, and we were able to retain those defense jobs here. Norm was a very nice man, a real gentleman. He was also the Chairman of the National Red Cross at that time.

We were actually able to grow some jobs, and the Senator worked very hard back in '92 and '93 to retain the business here. We gathered about 400 people from General Electric, our elected

officials, and brought Chairman Augustine here. He reassured the community that the defense business was going to stay here in Pittsfield, and it did. That was pretty cool for the Senator.

Martin Marietta merged with Lockheed and became Lockheed Martin Marietta. Again, they wanted to get out of the defense business—'round and 'round again—and they sold it to General Dynamics. And again, the community was very nervous and concerned about the loss of jobs—would they move? There were union issues, and the Senator got involved with the leadership of General Dynamics and the local union. We were able to work out those issues, and they're still here. They cut back to around 1,200 jobs, are back up to about 1,400 now, and they're looking to employ more people in specialty areas. So we were able to do that, but it has been a real challenge.

Around that same time, in 1993, we had a real tragedy at one of the local colleges. A student at Simon's Rock College was hiding a gun and ammunition. He went on a shooting spree one day at the college where he killed two people and wounded several others, including a guard at the school. The Senator is a big advocate for gun control, and he agreed to be the commencement speaker at Simon's Rock that year.

We were trying to bring another company here, Husky Systems, which made machinery for the paper industry. The people from that company were very environmentally sensitive, and they were prepared to move here. They took over one of the General Electric buildings here, but they wanted to build a whole new facility and campus, and bring their suppliers along with them. We were trying to get a big farmer to give up his land and he refused. All the other people in that area were willing to give up their land. The Senator was very helpful in getting employment training for them. I recall bringing a whole delegation from the local Chamber and the leadership of Husky Systems Corporation to Washington where he met with them.

Husky was a Canadian company, and they had to stop at Customs in Syracuse or Albany every time they came down. The Senator was able to get the Customs people to come over here from Albany. We did everything to make it business friendly here—the Senator did—but there was a shortfall because of the sensitivity of the company president who wouldn't disturb that farm. The city wanted to take that property by eminent domain, but he refused. They ended up in northeastern Vermont.

**Knott:** Are the voters of this area aware of the extent to which Senator Kennedy attempts to assist with these kinds of private enterprises?

**Dellea:** Exactly. Our next big challenge was environmental, and it was critical because we had all of these dormant General Electric buildings, and they were old and fading away. Nothing could be done with that area because of the pollution problem with PCBs affecting the land and the river. Back in 1992-'93 they wanted to make this a Superfund area. First, we got the legislators here, and Representative [Peter J.] Larkin put together the Brownfield legislation. We were able to get the former General Electric location declared a Brownfield site, and eligible for state aid.

Pollution was the problem. We couldn't do anything there because it was a condemned area. EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] had it marked and they were going to bring it into the Superfund. We were concerned along with the mayor and the council—if it became a Superfund

issue, it would never get resolved because General Electric would be suing them and it would go on and on for years. The Senator was instrumental in bringing the EPA to General Electric where he talked with then Chairman Jack Welch. It was right here in Pittsfield's GE plant that Jack Welch actually got his start, and moved on to eventually become Chairman of General Electric—a moving force and a real leader in industry in the United States.

The Senator was able to work this through, and get everybody to come together. His first concern was health issues associated with this environmental hazard. There was a big anti-General Electric movement, and the Housatonic River group was adamant about having it go to the Superfund. It reached a point where General Electric signed a consent agreement to pay millions of dollars. In fact, I heard today, \$109 million has been spent on the river project already. With about half to three quarters of the mile-and-a-half stretch of the river cleaned up, the EPA will take over and complete the project. The Senator played a big part in making that happen for this concerned western Massachusetts community.

The next challenge here was, again, related to jobs. We have the Crane Paper Company, operated by an old Republican family, here in Dalton. One of the early Cranes was a Massachusetts Governor who went on to the United States Senate. During his term in the Senate he was able to get the contract—which they've had for years—to manufacture the paper used by the U.S. Treasury to make currency. Around 1997, Bureau of Engraving and the Treasury Department—through the Republican administration—thought the Cranes had a monopoly. Newt Gingrich had a firm in Georgia that was part of a British operation that did some of the money over there, and they were interested in doing more. This was blocked by the Conte Amendment that Crane Paper would always have 90 percent of that business. They wanted to end the monopoly by opening it up to foreign bidders, and that became a big issue. There was concern as to why we should have someone in Great Britain making the paper for our money. This was a big battle, and the Senator organized a lot of people. New York State Senator [Alfonse] D'Amato was on the other side, until we were able to get some New York state-based vendors into Crane & Company. They were successful in retaining the contract.

Shortly after that, there was another concern with the dollar coin. Representative Jim Kolbe of Arizona was a big proponent of some mill out there that wanted to make the coins, and we fought the battle again. But, from the Susan B. Anthony dollar coin, introduced in the '70s, they've never been able to make it fly. She was a native of Adams.

**Knott:** Gene, if you had to explain to somebody who might be reading this interview years from now the loyalty that Senator Kennedy generates amongst the people of Massachusetts but also among people like yourselves—You've worked for all of his campaigns, which I think next year will be number nine, if I'm counting correctly. How would you try to explain to somebody years from now why he generates such fierce loyalty?

**Dellea:** It's hard to explain. There is a bond that has developed among the few of us left who have been involved since day one. Back in the early days when I became involved, it took awhile to become part of the inner group. You had to feel your way through being part of it, but once you were there...there is that fierce loyalty. We've done so many things with the family—funerals for Jacqueline Kennedy, Rose Kennedy, and Michael [Kennedy]. We were very much a part of organizing John's funeral in New York.

**Knott:** John F. Kennedy, Jr.?

**Dellea:** Yes. With that loyalty, there is a bond, and the ability to feel comfortable. We understand his position as such a well-recognized national figure, and his need to be surrounded by people he can trust. It isn't for the self-gratification or self-promotion. We do it because we love it—we love doing it and being a part of it. We've had our happy times, and we had our sad times.

**Knott:** I imagine those sad times contribute to the bonding as well, as sad as they are.

**Dellea:** I think for those of us who have been part of this, we feel good that he feels comfortable and knows that he can count on us to get it done when there's a need. Whether it is for good things, or for difficult things, we share that confidence with him.

**Knott:** We've heard that he's a very considerate, very compassionate person and that there are lots of acts of individual generosity that never get any media attention. Does that ring true?

**Dellea:** Very much so—and his memory is incredible. He calls frequently just to say hello.

I recall one of the camping tours with the children at Chesterwood. A local Stockbridge woman, who was quite a historian, was our guide. We were out on the porch looking over the valley from Chesterwood, and she mentioned that three members of the United States Supreme Court grew up or went to school in this area. Two of them attended the Williams Academy—Williams High School where I happened to go—and one came from South Lee. It had to be 10 years later when he called me and asked, "I'm here in New York and I'm having this discussion about three members of the Supreme Court, and I remember that they—what was it that tour guide told us about that?" I didn't remember the names, so I had to get back to him with the information.

He's fun—he's a lot of fun. He does have a serious side and at times he can be a little bit testy, but we've had a lot of fun over the years.

**Knott:** Do you have any particular fond memories or fondest memories by any chance? Were these trips—

**Dellea:** Oh, yes, they were great. Playing tricks on the kids, and the ski trips were fun. He was a great skier even with his back. He played some golf. I recall Patrick spent a summer at Hotchkiss, which is just down here in Lakeville, Connecticut. On one of his visits, he and Patrick played a little golf, and when we got back he said, "I lost my credit card on the golf course." Don and I were out on the course looking for his American Express card. Luckily when we walked into the clubhouse some guy said, "There's a card here that says Edward Kennedy. Is this what you're looking for?"

**Knott:** Lucky break.

**Dellea:** Yes. He can be quite a tease. He teases us a lot about funny things that happen along the way.

First Lady Hillary Clinton came here and visited two sites on her "Save America's Treasures" tour. One was the old Colonial Theater in Pittsfield, and the other was The Mount, Edith

Wharton's home in Lenox. The Senator is a great supporter of the arts, and he was able to get us \$400,000 for the Colonial Theater restoration process and \$3 million for the restorations at The Mount. He has helped to secure a \$100,000+ grant for a library at the local museum so they can catalogue all of the artifacts they have there. He is very fond of the Hancock Shaker Museum, and he was helpful in helping them to get a \$150,000 grant. He has also assisted Shakespeare and Company with obtaining several hundred thousand in grants over the years. He's very much into the local culture here.

Thursday evening we attended a play at the Williamstown Theater Festival. At the end of the performance the artistic director Roger Rees came out on stage to thank the people in the audience for their support, and he recognized their very special guests, and great supporters of the arts—Senator Kennedy and his wife Vicki. Everyone in the theater stood up and clapped as he was brought up on the stage and greeted by all of the performers.

There's Tanglewood. He comes out to Tanglewood all the time. This goes way back to when his mother brought him here when he was a young man. He's really a great supporter.

I think the first real recognition of Ted here was when his brother was running way back in the late '50s. There was a famous picture of his brother with a group over at the ski area—I think it was the campaign of '58 when Senator [John] Kennedy was running for reelection.

**Knott:** He looks like he's not going to have an opponent next year.

**Dellea:** We hope not. We need a rest. But there's still some chance that there will be a person looking for the name recognition to take another step like Joe Malone did at one time; and there was his last run with [Jack E., III] Robinson. So that's pretty much been our involvement with the Kennedys. I'm sure we'll keep on while we're able.

**Knott:** As far as your own life, this experience, this ongoing experience you've had with him ranks up near the top in terms of life experience?

**Dellea:** Yes. I'm just a kid from a little town in extreme western Massachusetts who happened to get involved, and one thing led to the next. As I said, I was a young selectman in the town where I still hold the elected position of town moderator. I do that to give back to the community that has been quite good to me.

**Knott:** This is West Stockbridge?

**Dellea:** West Stockbridge, yes. I am really involved in Pittsfield and Berkshire County with the Chamber of Commerce, United Way, and many others. I practically run what I call Ted's Berkshire County office. If you look at that file over there, that's all his information.

**Knott:** So you're Barbara Souliotis' western Mass coordinator? Do you have a lot of contact with Barbara?

**Dellea:** Oh, yes, a lot. I play golf with Barbara. She's very good. She's been the club champion up in Haverhill. She's a wonderful person. Her whole family has been out here. We have the Annual [Thomas] McGee Golf Tournament to benefit a substance abuse program at this hospital. The Senator has always been a great financial supporter of this tournament, so Barbara comes



out every year. Patrick's played in it, too. The tournament is held each June, so we get a lot of state legislator participation. We have a 30-bed unit, and it costs us about \$5 million a year to provide treatment. Most of our patients are without insurance, and the state pays nothing to help us in that area. But it is a need in the community, and it's part of our community commitment.

**Swerdlow:** Is it hard to get into the program?

**Dellea:** No. When we started it was a 21-day program. You could get people in here and work with them. If they have health insurance, or they're covered by the Medicaid program, they can only remain through the detoxification phase of the program. So they come and go. We do have some success, but we don't have adequate time to provide the necessary education, and the development of a link between them and the AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] community. Most providers will only allow three days for detoxification with follow up at an outpatient program. If you throw them back into the community, they get back into their habit. Back in the early '80s when we initiated the program we saw mostly people who were suffering from the disease of alcoholism. Now it's mostly all drugs or dual addiction. Originally our patient population was 45- to 75-year-old alcoholics experiencing health and social problems, and they wanted our help. Now, they're 15 to 30-something, and it's all drug-related. Methamphetamines and cocaine are big right now. That's not a part of this, is it? *[Laughs]*

**Knott:** Thank you, Gene. Thank you very much.

**Dellea:** Thank you, Steve. Nice meeting you. I hope I gave you some information. There's nothing there that needs to be locked up.

**Swerdlow:** Do you think that the Senator—do you think that history so far has been fair to him?

**Dellea:** Yes. Today, he is so sharp and on it. The last couple of years he has been so much on target, and people tell you that. And he looks good. He's lost a lot of weight. I think Vicki has been responsible—a new life and a good relationship. She's smart, and he is able to bounce things around her. She reads the briefing books and puts her knowledge to work there. She's very current and she knows everything that's going on.

One other thing about him is he's always attracted great staff. They're absolutely incredible. I recall working through the whole Crane thing with one of the staffers who was just superb—all the way around. They're people like Barbara, who has been with him since she was a volunteer in '61. Gerry Doherty's another one who's been part of that. You should get to Gerry. He's getting up there. In fact, he is going to Italy with us. We have a group who travel every year, and we usually go to Italy. He went to Sicily with us one year, and we're going to Sorrento in October. We're just a group of friends who go every year.

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