EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE CABOT LODGE

July 8, 2005
Boston, Massachusetts

Interviewer

Stephen F. Knott

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TRANSCRIPT

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Knott: I didn't realize you were a close friend of Robert Kennedy's.

Lodge: I'll tell you how I met Bobby because it was interesting. I was in the [Dwight] Eisenhower administration. I started life as a newspaper reporter for the *Boston Herald,* political reporter. I had a very bad stutter, so I really didn't think that I was going to be doing anything but journalism, which requires not much talking.

One day in 1954 I interviewed the Secretary of Labor when he came to Boston, James P. Mitchell. I asked him 96 questions. He later asked me to come and be a speechwriter in the Labor Department. The pay was about three times what I was making as a reporter, and I was involved in a tax-abatement-racket story that was offending some of our advertisers, so the publishers said that I'd better go back to my regular duties. My idealism was affronted. Anyway, I went to serve the public in Washington as a speechwriter for Mitchell. I wasn't there long before I went to the Conference of the International Labor Organization in Geneva and got involved in that and in 1956 was appointed Assistant Secretary of Labor for International Affairs at a very young age. I was only about 29.

At that time Bobby Kennedy was the Counsel for the [John] McClellan Committee investigating labor racketeering. I had never met him; didn't know him. I was concerned that the sins of a few in the labor movement were contaminating the whole American labor movement, so I asked for an appointment to go and see him. I went up to the Senate office building. There he was in this little windowless room, very hot in the summer. And he was sitting there, his tie down and his shoes off and two phones going and papers all over the place. He'd been getting a lot of TV attention because of Jimmy Hoffa and all the rest. So I was standing in the door, shifting from one foot to the other, and he said, "Well, who are you?" I said, "I'm George Lodge." He said, "Well, what do you want?" I said, "I'm concerned that all this publicity you're getting going after the crooks in the labor movement is contaminating the image of the whole American labor movement."

He said, "Look, can't you see I'm busy? I mean, what do I care about the whole American labor movement? I've got a job to do here; I'm trying to get the crooks." So I said, "Okay, if that's the way you feel." So I turned to go and he said, "Wait a minute. What are you doing Sunday?" I

said, "Nothing." He said, "You're the captain of the losing touch football team at Hickory Hill." So that began a friendship that I just treasured, and I grew to be so devoted to him.

I'll tell you a follow-up on it. When President [John F.] Kennedy came to office, he reappointed me to my job. I was flying from Los Angeles to Washington in '61, I guess it was, and on the plane sitting next to me was Rafer Johnson, who had just won the Olympic decathlon—you know, this incredible man. I said, "Well, what takes you to Washington?" He said, "Physical Fitness Weekend at the White House." So I said, "What are you doing Sunday?" He said, "Nothing." I said, "How'd you like to play touch football at Bobby Kennedy's house on my team?" He said, "Fine." So I get home Friday night and call up Bobby, and I say, "Bobby, I've got a friend of mine named Johnson. He's going to play on my team Sunday, okay?" He says, "Oh sure, George."

So we drive out to Hickory Hill—and Rafer is this incredible Adonis of a man—and Bobby is out front in shorts with no shirt, tossing the ball up and down—you know, very cocky—and he sees who I have in the car with me, and his face turns to granite. He comes around and he says, "George Lodge, you son of a bitch." I said, "Bobby, I want to introduce Rafer—"

"I know who the hell he is!" [*laughs*]

Knott: They became friends, I think.

Lodge: Yes. I think Rafer was with him when he died in Los Angeles. Bobby and I were very good friends. When I left Washington to come to the business school—and by that time I had conquered my stutter—I decided to run for the Senate in 1962. They begged me not to, both the President and Bobby. They wanted me to stay, but I wanted to run for the Senate. So Bobby gave a lovely party for me on the *Honey Fitz*, the Presidential yacht. I remember we sang *Sweet Adeline* together over the P.A. system together.

Knott: That's great.

Lodge: Yes, I loved Bobby.

I met Ted—it must have been about '60 or '61—in Lagos, Nigeria, of all places. I was presiding over the African Regional Conference of the International Labor Organization. He was obviously getting himself ready to run for the Senate; although, as you know, at the time it wasn't clear who was going to run, Ben Smith or who, but he was getting international experience. Ted came through Lagos, so I met him there, and he gave me one of those PT 109 tie clips. So that was how I met him.

Knott: Could I take you back a bit and ask what role you may have played in your father's 1952 Senate campaign against John F. Kennedy? Were you involved in that?

Lodge: No, I was a newspaper reporter. I was completely uninvolved. By the time the '60 campaign came around, when he was a Vice-Presidential candidate with [Richard] Nixon against President Kennedy, I helped write some speeches and things like that. But to tell you the truth,

by the end of that campaign, Nixon was behaving so strangely that I was not at all sad to see President Kennedy elected.

But no, I was not involved in '52. But I met President Kennedy first—he was a Congressman—it must have been in '51. I had a weekly book column on the op-ed page of the *Herald.* He was in seeing the publisher or something, and he came down to the city room to look for me because he'd read this book review—it was on some religious book. He wanted to talk about it. So I met him then, and of course liked him very much. Then we had a very good mutual friend, Charlie Bartlett, who was one of his ushers and, I guess, introduced him to Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis].

So I used to see President Kennedy when he was running for President. Then I saw him a couple of times when he was President at various people's houses. Rowley Evans—

Knott: It wouldn't be quite accurate, as some historians have alleged, that there was a kind of rivalry between the Lodge family and the Kennedys and the Fitzgeralds going all the way back to 1916.

Lodge: Absolutely not. As you know, my father served as Ambassador in Vietnam for President Kennedy. No, I don't suppose that there had ever been public servants whom I have admired more than President Kennedy and Bobby. We still miss them.

Knott: As 1962 approached, and you started to weigh the pros and cons, can you take us back to that time when you were thinking about running for the Senate?

Lodge: Yes, I started running for the Republican nomination—by the way, I'm a registered Democrat now; I've never been a very good Republican. But I started running for the Republican nomination in September of '61, fourteen months before the election. I had an opponent, Laurence Curtis, who was a sitting Congressman. So I had, as Teddy did, an uphill battle to get the nomination.

I was running for the Senate almost for pedagogical reasons. I had three things I cared about: one was civil rights—this was before the great civil rights acts of the mid '60s. The second was foreign aid; I thought we were propping up dictators, the wrong people, especially in Latin America and other countries. We were not on the side of change where we ought to have been. And third was unemployment. In the Labor Department, I'd had an idea that we ought to have some kind of national manpower policy to deal with the unemployment question so we would know where the labor shortages were and where the surpluses were and could do something about it.

So I was running for those reasons. I didn't know at the beginning whether Ted was going to be a candidate. I didn't really think about it. So I wasn't running, in any sense, against Ted. He didn't become a candidate—indeed, I forget when.

Knott: You're right, it was late; was it March?

Lodge: See, so I had no idea. I was certainly not running against him. I was running for the Republican nomination for those reasons. All of our efforts were devoted to trying to get the nomination—first, the convention, the delegates, and then, since Curtis didn't accept the decision of the convention, on into the primaries, which I suppose were in September or something like that.

Knott: Yes.

Lodge: Of course, by that time, Ted was running. But once you get started doing this, you collect a group of supporters and people who are working with you and helping you and the thing takes on a momentum. I don't think I really thought very much about who was winning and losing. We didn't have any money to take polls. So I was just trying to run as hard as I could.

Now, when Ted was nominated in September, he and I—both of us, I think—had much the most difficult time with our primaries. When we confronted one another, I can't remember anything on which we disagreed. Of course, I was trying to get him to debate. I remember we had a kind of a debate in October at a Temple Brotherhood in Worcester. At least we were both going to answer questions—kind of a debate; not really a debate.

This was the evening that President Kennedy went on national television to disclose the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba, and the whole hall was lined with television sets so that everybody could hear President Kennedy talking about what might have been World War III. That was over the fruit cup. Over the dessert, Ted and I were supposed to be debating. So, needless to say, I was at a slight disadvantage.

Knott: What were the differences between you and Laurence Curtis? Were there policy differences? Was age an issue in that primary race?

Lodge: He was very old and I was very young. But I would say that he was, from my point of view, very conservative. That is to say, I didn't hear him talk about the things that I cared about. Chuck Colson was his campaign manager. This was before Chuck got religion. So that was a fairly nasty campaign.

Knott: It was? What was the nastiness? What did they go after you on? Your name? Your age?

Lodge: There were all sorts of shenanigans in the convention where they were pressuring delegates to go with them. Yes, he went after me on my age and lack of experience and stuff like that. He didn't really go after me on issues. Of course, in those days, while there was kind of a right-wing group—it was incipient in Massachusetts—it didn't amount to much, so you didn't have the kind of ideological splits you've got now. There still was a place for right-thinking people in the Republican Party.

Loomis: Curtis had the strength of the state party organization behind him, right?

Lodge: I had some of them and he had some of them. He certainly had people like Brad [F. Bradford] Morse, who was then a Congressman. So he had fellow Congressmen. The state

Republican organization didn't amount to much, and some of the good Republicans—Win [Winfield A.] Schuster of Worcester comes to mind—a number of them were with me. But yes, he had pretty strong support. I forget what the outcome of the convention was, but we won handily. Of course, the delegates were the organization. So the fact that I won the convention meant that I had a fair number of people in the organization with me.

Loomis: How do you think that the primary fight with Curtis influenced the general election?

Lodge: How it influenced it?

Loomis: Did it impact it at all, do you think?

Lodge: No. Of course, after the convention I stopped worrying about Republicans and started trying to get Independents and Democrats, which I would have to have to win. So I never gave it much thought. As I say, in those days you could do that. Today it wouldn't be so easy, but in those days— That's what I did, in any case. I went after Independents and Democrats after the convention. I just assumed I was going to get the primary.

Knott: Did Curtis end up endorsing you at some point, I assume, or did that not happen?

Lodge: I don't remember it happening. It may have. I suppose he did.

Knott: Can I ask you a hypothetical? You mentioned that Kennedy got into the race late, so that really wasn't a factor in your thinking. Had you known earlier that he was going to be in the hunt, do you think that would have dissuaded you from running?

Lodge: Probably. Certainly, it should have. It's very hard for me to explain to myself or anybody else what moved me to do that other than these things I cared about coming from six years in Washington. Also, the fact that I didn't have a career; I didn't want to go back to being a reporter. At last I could speak. My stutter had gone, or it was manageable. From a timing point of view, it was a very good time for me to do something like that if that's what I wanted to do. It was a terribly exciting fourteen months. I'm not sorry I did it, to tell you the truth. I learned a lot. It was a wonderful experience.

Knott: You must have gotten to know the state pretty well as a result of fourteen months of—

Lodge: Boy, what you learn about the state and the people. You get a profound respect for the people, for voters. You really do. You get respect for the process and for what people care about and for their depth of understanding. I think many people underestimate—I certainly did—how much voters know. I used to go to shopping malls and have these kind of open-air question-and-answer sessions. We had three buses with huge megaphones on them, and we'd call people around, and they'd come. You'd have 70 or 80 people asking you questions on anything.

I remember a lot of questions about Yugoslavia, questions about foreign policy that you wouldn't think people cared about so much. Of course, then questions about birth control and abortion. So it was very exciting.

Then I had fifteen young men and women who worked for me the whole fourteen months with no pay. And the kind of devotion that that represented is inspiring, stimulating.

Knott: Sure.

Lodge: At the end of the campaign, we had five thousand people working in that campaign, only one of whom was paid—the guy who drove me around. So this kind of thing—organizing, managing this kind of an undertaking—I found fascinating. Of course, very quickly, the candidate is out of the managerial loop because he's too busy doing other things. But putting this apparatus together, you get an appreciation of why there are so many titles in campaigns, because you get one guy who comes in September who is campaign manager and then you get a guy in December who's better than the guy you got in September, so he becomes de facto manager, but with a title like campaign chairman or something. Nobody is paid and you don't want to lose anybody, so you have this very flat organization.

Knott: To what extent were ethnicity and religion a factor in that race in '62? Was there still a kind of Irish versus the old Yankee families? Was that sort of under the surface, or is that overstated by journalists and historians?

Lodge: I think it's overstated. I didn't detect any of that. I think it's journalists looking for a peg, looking for a story, trying to develop tension. When you think of the Irish community in Boston, it includes extremely wealthy and successful lawyers, doctors, and everything else. In fact, probably more wealthy and successful than the poor old Yankees. So it didn't make any sense. The religious thing—Catholics and Protestants—I don't think that had been an issue for a long time. I didn't detect that as an issue at all. And the fact that the President was his brother, that's pretty good credentials.

Knott: Did you know Edward McCormack at all, Senator Kennedy's primary opponent?

Lodge: Yes, I knew Eddie McCormack when I was covering the State House. He was Attorney General there for a while, so I knew him. Yes, I liked him.

Knott: He had that famous line about if your name was Edward Moore, your candidacy would be a joke, or whatever.

Lodge: That was a pretty bitter campaign. I didn't know Eddie well, but I knew him.

Knott: There was another contender in your general election race, and that was [H.] Stuart Hughes.

Lodge: Stuart Hughes, yes.

Knott: Another Harvard professor, right?

Lodge: Right. I wasn't a Harvard professor then, but he was a professor. He was for unilateral nuclear disarmament; that was his big pitch. Of course, he and I debated a lot because he wanted to debate. We'd have an empty stool there for Ted. So I got to know him very well and his whole nuclear disarmament routine.

Knott: Where did you differ with him on that question?

Lodge: I was not for unilateral disarmament. It didn't seem to me to be realistic, given the nature of the Soviet Union as we thought it was then. It didn't seem to me to be a responsible position, even if it had been feasible, so I thought it was just pie in the sky. But I think he was running for pedagogical reasons. I'm sure he didn't think he was going to win. But I liked him; he was a very engaging guy.

Knott: He was the son, or the grandson, of Charles Evans Hughes?

Lodge: I think so, yes.

Knott: So there was an interesting pedigree in that race that year.

Lodge: It was fascinating.

Knott: Were there any prominent Republicans who came in to campaign for you during that fall, the general election?

Lodge: Well, I had the problem of getting, in the primaries, Eisenhower to support me against Curtis. It was a major effort that we made. Ike, of course, didn't want to. I had written a speech for Ike. He had asked me to write the draft of the last speech he made, which was to the American automobile people in Detroit. He didn't use my draft, but I had about an hour with him when he went over this draft. So I knew him. Of course, my father knew him very well.

I went to Gettysburg to see him. He didn't want to actually endorse me because he didn't want to get involved in primary battles. But Curtis wasn't invited to Gettysburg, and we had pictures taken. So that was probably the most significant. I think [William] Scranton, who was Governor of Pennsylvania, I don't know whether he helped. I know afterwards he helped me raise money to defray my debt. I ended up being Scranton's floor leader at the '64 convention where he got slaughtered by [Barry] Goldwater.

Knott: I mean, here you are up against the President's brother, and I'm wondering if you tried to sort of balance that somehow. To what extent did your father campaign, if at all?

Lodge: None. I don't think he thought it was a very good idea, the whole thing. In fact, I think he advised me not to run. He certainly didn't encourage me. No, he did not campaign. Let's see, what was he doing?

Knott: We were talking about that on the way down. We don't think he had gone to Vietnam just yet.

Lodge: No, I think that's right. He was director of the Atlantic Council, that's what he was doing. He wasn't around much. But I got a lot of money from outside the state. I think I raised, in all, $380,000, which is pretty miserable for a statewide campaign.

Knott: But some Republicans outside the state probably saw this as an opportunity to embarrass the incumbent President.

Lodge: I think so.

Knott: This is a somewhat awkward question, but in that fall campaign, did you think you could win it?

Lodge: Yes, sure, I thought I could win it.

Knott: Why? Because you had a young, inexperienced opponent who was even younger than you were?

Lodge: You get supra-rational. You get so emotionally committed to doing the very best you can do, making every effort. You get so obsessed with campaigning that victory or defeat isn't the name of the game. The name of the game is doing your damnedest. As I say, I don't think we had any polls—at least if we did, I don't remember them. I knew I was behind. I knew that. But you become totally directed. I said to the man in charge of my scheduling, David Goldberg, I said, "Listen, if I don't drop at one o'clock in the morning of Election Day, you haven't done your job." They did tests on me to see how many hours sleep I needed before I started doing crazy things. They found if I didn't have five or six hours, I couldn't walk a straight line. So I was programmed for all but five or six hours. I don't know about other people, but I didn't think about it.

Knott: So it was exhilarating more than it was exhausting.

Lodge: It was totally exhilarating. I ended up in very good physical shape. I lost twenty pounds. I was getting a lot of fresh air, exercise. I found it totally exhilarating.

Knott: What were your impressions of Ted Kennedy throughout that campaign? You did have a few so-called debates.

Lodge: I remember he had a back problem. He was in the hospital. I remember visiting him in the hospital.

Knott: He was in the hospital in '64 for his plane accident where he broke his back. That would have been two years after your race. He had to run again in '64. He was flying to the convention in Springfield, and the plane crashed, and he was pulled from the plane.

Lodge: I guess that's when I visited him.

Knott: He was at New England Baptist, I think, for quite some time.

Lodge: I guess that was it.

I liked him. As I say, his positions on things, I didn't have any argument with his positions. He said he could "do more for Massachusetts," which was probably true. I couldn't argue with that, really. We had a very cordial relationship, I think.

Loomis: What about the conflict of interest issue? During the campaign you emphasized several times that if your father was Vice President, you wouldn't have run for the Senate.

Lodge: Me? I did?

Loomis: So the newspapers say.

Lodge: That if my father was Vice President, I wouldn't?

Loomis: Right.

Lodge: I said that in the campaign?

Knott: According to some of the newspaper accounts, yes.

Lodge: I probably did. I was scratching for something to say, something to attack him with. I might well have said that.

Loomis: I guess that went along with the idea of who could do more for Massachusetts, and that you felt in order to get the state's fair share of federal largesse that you needed an independent Senator, so to speak, someone without a direct line to the White House.

Lodge: That's a thin reed. It was not easy campaigning against the brother of the President in Massachusetts, especially where the President was so popular, understandably. I liked him. So it was hard to get an edge. I remember Ted, after the campaign, I think I remember now—all these things I'm saying, I may be dead wrong—but to the best of my memory, I remember meeting him in Washington after the campaign somewhere, at somebody's house, maybe it was at Bobby's. But anyway, he invited me to come home with him. So I went to his house, which, as I remember, was in Georgetown, and he spread out his polls on the floor. He made a poll every week or something. He pointed out that the gap between us was closing. He was ahead but it was closing until the Cuban missile crisis, and then it widened.

Knott: I was going to ask you about the significance of the missile crisis, if that took some of the steam out of your campaign.

Lodge: Oh, yes, it sure did.

Knott: In those so-called debates, or exchanges that you had with the Senator, did you find that he was good at that kind of an exchange, or was he still kind of learning at that point?

Lodge: The only exchange we had was at a Temple Brotherhood in Worcester, and he, as I remember it, he did perfectly all right. But it wasn't an exchange; it was both of us answering questions against the backdrop of the Cuban missile crisis. But he did fine.

Knott: There were a number of academics in Massachusetts, especially at Harvard, including Mark Howe, who were very strong critics of Edward Kennedy's candidacy, describing it in harsh terms.

Lodge: Wasn't he—I thought he—

Knott: He came around, I think eventually, but not in '62.

Lodge: Oh, really? I thought he was with him.

Knott: Did you have good academic support?

Lodge: I had Milt Katz, who was one of my dearest friends at the law school, and Henry Kissinger.

Knott: Really?

Lodge: But Harvard professors don't get you any votes when the chips are down.

Knott: When election night came and the results came in, do you have any vivid memories of that evening, of what that was like and whether you heard from Senator Kennedy that night or the next day? Did you contact him to concede?

Lodge: I just conceded.

Knott: Don't remember any exchange with him, perhaps by the phone?

Lodge: I have no memory. I may have called him, I suppose. But I just conceded. But since then he asked me to join the Senior Advisory Committee of the Kennedy School, the Institute of Politics. That was about thirty years ago. So I saw him two or three times a year at those meetings, regularly. I've had the good fortune of knowing him over the years in that way, and as I say, I like him very much.

Knott: You said you've left the Republican Party. When did that happen for you? Is it '64 with Goldwater, or did it take longer?

Lodge: Essentially. I didn't actually become a registered Democrat until two or three years ago, but I haven't voted Republican for an awfully long time. But Goldwater—the '64 convention was really the turning point.

Knott: It was.

Lodge: I remember there were one hundred card-carrying members of the John Birch Society who were delegates at that convention, full delegates. I mean, they'd forced all the black Republicans of the South out of the Party. The so-called Southern strategy was a ghastly performance, I thought.

Knott: Did you go to the '64 convention in San Francisco where Goldwater was nominated and Scranton—?

Lodge: I was Scranton's floor leader. I went there because in 1963 after I was defeated, four of the people who had worked the hardest in my campaign—Paul Grindle, David Goldberg, Sally Saltonstall, and Caroline Williams—were bored doing what they were doing. They wanted to do something more exciting, and the New Hampshire primaries were going with [Nelson] Rockefeller against Goldwater in New Hampshire. So they said, "Look, why don't we run the old man" —that's my father— "for President?" They launched this sticker campaign with no money, just post cards. Damned if he didn't get the nomination, even though he was far away in Viet Nam.

Knott: He won the New Hampshire primary.

Lodge: Yes. So we—I mean the Lodge forces—had the twelve New Hampshire delegates, or however many they were, to the '64 convention. I was out there in San Francisco for that. What do we do with our massive delegate support? Scranton was the obvious choice for us. I remember attending Scranton's staff meetings, and for some reason his floor leader either got sick or left, so I found myself Scranton's floor leader in the middle of this juggernaut.

It was one of the very few times I've actually gotten physical with another human being. In conventions in those days, we all had wires all over us—head sets, radio contact, wireless contacts—so you could talk to the base. I was checking on the New Jersey delegation, which was for Scranton but was slipping. So this horrible Goldwater man was hanging over me. It was very hot and we were both sweating. He was hanging on my back trying to hear what I was saying to these New Jersey delegates. I said, "Will you get off my back?" And he wouldn't. So I turned around and I shoved him and I charged him and he fell over backwards, all in wires and headsets. John Chancellor of NBC was there with his camera taking photographs of the scuffle. That was my last act in politics.

Knott: Were you in the hall when Goldwater made his famous "extremism [in] the defense of liberty is no vice"—

Lodge: Yes.

Knott: You must have cringed when you heard that.

Lodge: It was terrible. Yes.

Knott: So all through the Nixon and into the [Ronald] Reagan years, your Republican loyalties were repeatedly tested.

Lodge: Yes. Of course, by that time I was a professor, so I wasn't drawing that much attention.

Knott: So essentially no political involvement after 1964?

Lodge: No.

Knott: Any concluding comments to make about Senator Edward Kennedy? Anything we've ignored today?

Lodge: I just have admired so much what he's done, particularly in healthcare, education, minimum wage. There hasn't been a stand he's taken that I haven't admired. And standing up to Bush on Iraq—I wish there were more Democrats like him. They pussyfoot around too much. So I really admire him. I think we're very lucky to have him.

Knott: Thank you very much for giving us your time. It's been a delight.

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