EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM J. VANDEN HEUVEL

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Interviewer

James Sterling Young

Index: page 24

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TRANSCRIPT

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Young: This is an interview with Ambassador Vanden Heuvel, on December 7. We were just starting out to talk about Edward Kennedy as a Senator.

Vanden Heuvel: As I said in my first session of this interview, I don't think people understand the preeminence of Edward Kennedy as a legislator. He is a man of the Senate, and he has a strong, profound allegiance to that body. More than that, he has the talents of a great legislator, of being able to formulate propositions and legislative proposals, and to work with all of the forces that are necessary to make that legislation successful. I would be surprised if there's anybody in the Senate who has greater respect, from both sides of the aisle, than Edward Kennedy has. Today, he's the second-ranking man in the Senate in terms of overall tenure, and that brings its own sense of respect, but he's earned it. People who have worked with him over the years, from both sides of the aisle, willingly testify to that fact.

Young: We have been interviewing a number of those people, and as he told me at the very beginning of this project,"I work a lot with allies, and you should work through alliances." But he said he also wants us to talk to his adversaries, because he wants to get the big legislative balance of his time. So he says we should by all means talk with Jesse Helms. We couldn't. He was too infirm.

Vanden Heuvel: He's too infirm?

Young: Yes. He can't really do it. We tried. But we've talked with a number of the others. I looked over the transcript of your first interview, and let me identify a few things, one in particular, about which I think you might want to say a few more words. I have the transcript here. In the first, we ended up saying there's a lot you wanted to say about the [Jimmy] Carter years, and the relations between the two. Not only in the 1980 campaign, but what led up to it, his 1980 primary campaign, his relations as a Senator and as a person with Carter.

The years when Carter was in the White House are the subject of some interest. I've talked with him about that. I've talked with a few others about it, but you're, I think, in a good position to comment on that—the two different public figures. There are a few other things too.

Vanden Heuvel: I suppose of those who were close to Ted Kennedy and to the Kennedy family, I was the one who had the closest relationship to Jimmy Carter. Having learned that Ted was not going to be a candidate in 1976, I felt free to choose the candidate that I would support.

This was post-Watergate, this was anti-Washington, this was anti-beltway time. I remember having lunch with Dave Burke in 1975, and listing the qualities that we thought would be necessary in a candidate who could win the national election in'76. The candidate that emerged at that time for us was John Glenn, because he was the perfect Boy Scout, in a sense. He stood for all of the national values. He was a hero of Space, the new age. He came from an important state—Ohio. I've forgotten why Glenn wasn't a candidate. Maybe he hadn't been elected to the Senate yet. I'm not sure. But he did try for the Presidential nomination later, in 1984, and was not successful.

Another person that I thought might be considered for the Presidency was Bill Moyers. I had lunch with Bill Moyers in 1975 and suggested to him that someone outside of elective office could, in my judgment, make a major impression in the Democratic Party and perhaps win the nomination and the Presidency. He was very much involved in his newspaper career then, and for his own personal reasons chose not to do it.

Carter was identified as a liberal southern Governor. He was a man who knew how to use the symbols of politics probably better than anyone I've ever seen. For example, he put the portrait of Martin Luther King in the State House in Atlanta. He developed a relationship with Martin Luther King's father. He understood the restrictions and limitations obliged by Georgia politics, but he managed to become the poster child of *Time* Magazine.

I think Reubin Askew, who was then the Governor of Florida, was the alternative to Carter in many ways, as people thought of liberal southern Governor. Carter made his initial mark by winning over the editors of *Time*. He was more southern perhaps; he came from Georgia, the Deep South. As he pursued the nomination, very few people, and I among them, expected him to win the Presidential nomination. I thought he had a very clear shot at the Vice Presidential nomination, but as time moved on, without Teddy in the race, there was no strong, obvious candidate for the Democratic Party. [Henry] Scoop Jackson, Mo[Morris] Udall, were the candidates of the liberal and of the centrist wings. So Jimmy Carter began the long march from Atlanta, on a roadmap drawn by HamiltonJordan, and it was remarkably successful.

What was interesting to me in my time with Carter was his attitude toward the Kennedys. There was something that he didn't like and appreciate. Were they too cosmopolitan? Did they come out of a too-sophisticated set? Did their lifestyle bother him deeply? Whatever the reasons, he did not go out of his way to accommodate the Kennedys, even after his election. In my judgment, with little effort he could have developed a relationship that could have avoided the 1980 confrontation.

In 1976, on several occasions he made clear that he wished that Ted Kennedy had been a candidate, because had Ted Kennedy been a candidate, he saw himself beating Ted and automatically establishing himself as the national candidate. He didn't have that opportunity, and obviously it's questionable whether anyone could have beaten him if Teddy had chosen to run. Carter established himself by beating Governor [George] Wallace in Florida. The liberals let him

have the field to himself against Wallace in Florida because they didn't want to be blamed if, in fact, Wallace won, and they had divided the vote. So Carter won that contest, and that gave him national stature and moved him forward.

After he was President, I believe the Congress had voted a medal to Robert Kennedy. When Ronald Reagan became President, almost the first thing he did was to bring the Kennedy family to the White House and award that medal. Carter never did that, and it made no sense for him not to do that. As I say, it always seemed to me that he had that personal antagonism, and that he was not going to make any kind of overtures to the Senator.

Young: There's one other person—he wasn't a candidate—who strikes me as having the same initial feeling, at least, about the Kennedys, and that was Robert Byrd. I mean, to Byrd, this was the epitome of privilege, people born with silver spoons in their mouths. The world was at their feet, whereas he was a self-made man. It's interesting that over time, of course, Byrd has come to be very close to—

Vanden Heuvel: To Ted.

Young: Oh, yes.

Vanden Heuvel: You know what that is? I've talked to Byrd in other circumstances. I think he admires greatly anybody who comes to the Senate and works hard and starts at the bottom of the ladder and just doesn't take advantage of privileges or contacts or connections but really shows that respect for the Senate, a legislative capacity or personality, and that's what Ted did. He came to the Senate as the brother of the President of the United States. He later was in the Senate with another brother who was an obvious candidate for the Presidency, but he never played that card. He worked hard. In the committee structures he did his job. He had excellent staff, and his commitment to the Senate is something that I'm sure Robert Byrd came to appreciate.

Young: Sure. And that would not necessarily have been an item of great respect on the part of Carter.

Vanden Heuvel: Well, Carter, to my observation, was not a political person. He did not like the political process. He did not like the political chieftains who were in positions of power in Washington. He took glee after his election, imagining the confrontations that various people of his staff, like Frank Moore, would be having with [Thomas] Tip O'Neill, for example, when he first went to meet them.

In Georgia, as Governor, he wasn't thought of as a good political leader in his relations with the legislature. He was very much a loner. He had come, both to the Governorship in Georgia and to the Presidency, out of a background that was very singular, very individual. He didn't owe much to anybody in either circumstance, and he did not intend to play the game of Capitol Hill politics. That may be part of it, in his relationship with Ted.

Ultimately, he obviously had to do that, and he got some very important things accomplished. But his main accomplishments, as you look back at the Carter years, were individual accomplishments. The Camp David accord, for example, was something that was made possible through Carter's personal knowledge of the Bible.Cy Vance once said this to me. Carter's

tenacity, his patience, his endurance, his absolute determinationinspired his purpose to get an agreement out of [Menachem] Begin and [Anwar] Sadat. I heard Begin say once that Camp David was a success because of Carter's tenacity but also because he knew the topography of biblical Palestine better than anyone.

I think, in a strange way, for all his humility, he was an arrogant man. He had supreme self-confidence. He was a religious man who got significant strength out of prayer and reaching out to his God for reassurance and instruction. He literally prayed on these major decisions that he had to make in the Presidency. He was much more concerned about the religious direction and illumination for his decisions than he was about whether or not Ted Kennedy or somebody else was going to support him.

Young: Was there what today would be called an ideological divide between him and Carter?

Vanden Heuvel: No. There shouldn't have been, and to my knowledge there wasn't. Carter was a person who shared with Ted a very real respect for human rights. Remember when he sent a personal letter to [Andrei] Sakharov in 1977. The State Department was aghast that the President of the United States would directly communicate with a dissident in the Soviet Union, but that was Carter. He wanted to say to the world and to the Soviets, "We'll deal with you as governments, but my heart is with the dissidents in terms of their human rights." Ted, of course, throughout all the years of his career, identified with those same people. In the basic issues of government I don't think there would have been much separation on the issues between Carter and Kennedy.

Young: Carter was the first American President to state a position on Ireland, on North Ireland, supportive of the peace movement. Of course Kennedy was very much behind the scenes on the whole thing.

Vanden Heuvel: Right, right.

Young: I think Ted Kennedy and Tip O'Neill got the ball rolling through the State Department. I should say through Cy Vance, because the State Department was pro-British on this issue, I think. But the human rights side of it that brought Vance aboard was very much on Kennedy's mind. There's a letter in the library that Kennedy wrote to Carter.

Vanden Heuvel: To Carter?

Young: To Carter. Just a very warm letter expressing admiration for his courage in doing thisand the importance this would have for history and for Ireland, for the cause of peace in Ireland. It's a wonderful letter. One of the things that's puzzled me—I haven't succeeded yet in getting him to say very much about this—

Vanden Heuvel: About Carter, you mean personally or in general?

Young: Well, I have to push it a little bit—not necessarily personally. I guess I'll discover what—there was a big issue over healthcare. I'm not sure that it was a fundamental one, but it came to be thought of, I think by both people, as a fundamental difference.

Vanden Heuvel: I was out of the country for the first two years of Carter's government because I was his Ambassador to the European Office of the United Nations in Geneva. Then I was back as Deputy Permanent Representative in New York U.S./UN. So I wasn't really privy to a lot of what was going on between Ted and Ted's office and the White House. I'm just giving you my sense of the situation.

I always thought it was a big mistake for Carter not to reach out to Teddy, because he would have found, I think, a most gracious and willing ally on any number of these issues. The point you make on Northern Ireland is an indication of it. Whatever Teddy's personal feelings were about Carter, he wouldn't have allowed it to interfere with something that he regarded as terribly important, such as beginning the peace process in Northern Ireland. And that, of course, is one of his great accomplishments.

There are a lot of people who played their roles, but basically, Teddy was in it from the beginning, from '77right straight forward, then bringing George Mitchell in, and then Ted's sister, Jean Kennedy Smith, as the Ambassador in Ireland played a crucial role, and Bill Clinton's very personal commitment to the whole process and to the objective. Then having finally a Prime Minister in Great Britain who was responsive to it in Tony Blair.

Young: And it's looking good still now. President Carter expressed great admiration for John Kennedy. Maybe that was part of the problem, I do not know.

Vanden Heuvel: I doubt that he felt it.

Young: Really?

Vanden Heuvel: Yes. Carter might have admired [Lyndon] Johnson as a southern President.

Young: No. John Kennedy.

Vanden Heuvel: Oh, John Kennedy, I'm sorry.

Young: John Kennedy, not Johnson.

Vanden Heuvel: No, I'm sure he meant that. In any event, John Kennedy wasn't there to contend with personally, and it was a free ride to praise him.

Young: But that was one of the—his talk up at the dedication of the Kennedy Library, Carter's talk. One of the things he actually wrote—I've seen the drafts—himself. That was his own personal statement, and of course, that was just on the eve of—

Vanden Heuvel: That was as dramatic an event as you could imagine.

Young: Do you have a story to tell about that?

Vanden Heuvel: I was there. I think it was October 19, 1979.

Young: I'm not sure of the date.

Vanden Heuvel: Of course the press was rife with the notion that Ted had made up his mind, and that he was going to seek the Democratic nomination. Carter was at an all-time low in many ways. The Iranian hostage crisis had not yet begun, but the feeling of a failed Presidency was already being reflected significantly in the polls. So Carter looked weak and vulnerable, and so those who were advising Teddy politically those days I guess convinced him that this was his duty to the party and that this was certainly going to be winnable for him.

It was in that environment and atmosphere that Carter came to the Kennedy Library on that October afternoon. It was really quite a stunning speech that he gave. It was one of the best speeches I've heard Carter give. He spoke it with passion and feeling, and then he got the lash from everyone else. Joe Kennedy [II] gave a speech that was remarkably hostile to Carter. That was an occasion—and I think Teddy was, as always, very polite and gracious and all of that, and Jackie [Kennedy Onassis] was there too. Jackie, of course, sensing that Teddy was going to run, was certainly not going to go out of her way to build up Carter, nor did she. I don't know who Ted's principal advisors were in making that decision, but the timing of course was upset by what happened in Iran.

Young: Well, you were in the circle of people, weren't you?

Vanden Heuvel: No. I was in the government as Ambassador to the United Nations, and very much involved. I was traveling a lot, et cetera. So I was not particularly involved in advising him. I certainly recall my own feelings; whether he sought them out, I don't remember. It just seemed to me clearly, in the history of politics, that if a party splits and a candidate ran against an incumbent President, you almost assured a Republican victory.

I would have cautioned him that he could win the nomination, but in the process it would destroy any possibility of his winning the election. I guess I had fresh in my own mind, having studied the [Theodore] Roosevelt era considerably, Theodore Roosevelt's break with [William H.] Taft in 1912, which allowed Woodrow Wilson to become a minority President of the United States and changed the history of the nation dramatically. So I certainly would not have been one to encourage him to do it, but I think out of respect, probably, for the fact that I was in the government, Teddy did not particularly seek my opinion.

Later, I expressed my opinion strongly when things began going badly against him. I remember a long call with John Tunney, not directly with Teddy, I think in maybe December 1979 or January 1980, saying that this was something that was going to be very destructive to the Democratic Party and not only to Carter, but also to Teddy. It would probably destroy Carter's chances to win the election, but it would certainly be destructive to Teddy as well, in the context of his future as a candidate.

Then of coursethere was the Roger Mudd interview. When you saw that, you wondered—I personally wondered—had he really thought through what he wanted to do here? And I do remember talking to him about the Roger Mudd interview. As I recall it, Ted said that he had done the interview several weeks before his declaration of his candidacy.

Young: Yes, considerably before.

Vanden Heuvel: And that he thought it was really related to the Kennedy home in HyannisPort.The story is that it wasn't to be a political interview, and that Roger Mudd sort of hijacked it by suddenly moving it into politics. Teddy looked unprepared to speak to the point of why was he running for President. It looked as though he hadn't thought that fundamental question through.

Young: And he was not ready to announce it, either.

Vanden Heuvel: He wasn't ready to announce it.

Young: So it was really strange that he would answer the question.

Vanden Heuvel: Yes. He wasn't going to let Roger Mudd's interview preempt that decision, but then, when the Mudd interview was played, after it was clear he was a candidate, it looked as though he had absolutely come into this thing unprepared.

Young: It was aired considerably later, that part of it, at a crucial time.

Vanden Heuvel: It was very destructive to him. And of course, the enemies of Ted Kennedy—there's always obviously, in any political race, enemies who are waiting for you to come out, and then the battering begins. It seemed to me what Carter did at the time—the Rose Garden strategy—was politically astute, but ultimately it was destructive in terms of handling the Iranian hostage situation. He played the Rose Garden strategy, and I think by doing that he made the Iran hostage issue the continuing focus of national and international attention.

It should have been resolved in a week, and instead of that, by the way he played it, [Ruhollah] Khomeini decided that this was really a very useful thing in terms of having the world pay attention to Iran and what they were trying to do, and that ultimately it might be a means of protecting Iran from attack by the United States. So they just carried on. The Iranian Ambassador several years later told me thatKhomeini knew that holding the hostages was destructive in many ways, certainly to Iran's relationship to us, but also in the world. But it so galvanized world attention and what was happening in Iran that he wasn't about to let go of it. And in the process, it destroyed Carter.

Young: It destroyed Carter, but in the beginning—

Vanden Heuvel: It made Carter.

Young: In the beginning—

Vanden Heuvel: It made him a crisis leader.

Young: That's right.

Vanden Heuvel: It made him the spokesman for America.

Young: And there was Ted trying to talk about domestic—

Vanden Heuvel: It was almost unpatriotic to attack Carter, and that's what Carter accomplished by the White House garden strategy—the beleaguered President strongly representing the American interest. Now, I respected Carter. I think his determination was to resolve the crisis without injury to the hostages—he saw his first obligation as bringing the hostages home safely. There are many people who might have been President of the United States where that would not have been the case.

I remember later, when Reagan was President, talking to a key person in the Reagan entourage, saying, "How differently would Reagan have handled this?" "Well," he said, "He would not have regarded the personal safety of the hostages as equal to the national interest of the United States. He would not have allowed U.S. sovereignty to be disparaged this way by the Iranians. He probably would have given them an ultimatum. 'Either these people are released within a matter of 72 hours, or some of your vital centers are no longer going to exist.'" Of course, this was easy to say after the hostages were safely back in our country.

Young: There were people in Carter's own administration who were advising that.

Vanden Heuvel: In the Carter administration, sure.

Young: He overruled them.

Vanden Heuvel: Who was the primary adviser?

Young: I think it was Zbig [Zbigniew Brzezinski].

Vanden Heuvel: Oh, it was Zbig.

Young: I think. There were other people, but I think it was Zbig. I may be overstating that, but after the failure of the rescue mission, I believe Zbig wanted him to then strike strongly.

Vanden Heuvel: I think Carter had an ambition to be the first President since [Herbert] Hoover not to have any American men or women die as military casualties during his Administration. That was shattered by the failed effort to rescue the hostages. That was a calamitous event. I'm sure Cy Vance never advocated a military response to the hostage crisis. I think a lot of people felt that it was the attention that was being focused on the hostage crisis that kept the issue alive.

I remember Margaret Mead's daughter, who was a professor at the University of Tehran at one point, wrote an op-ed piece for the *Times* that expressed the point of view that I thought had great merit. She said, "If you bargain with the Iranians, it's like a bazaar, and when you're buying the rug at the market, you've got to walk away from it and not allow them to think that you are going to pay any price in order to acquire this." So she advised just letting it cool down and letting other people talk behind the scenes, but the President should be silent. But you couldn't do that after a while. The Presidential campaign was on.

A lot of the press, I think in an effort to hurt Kennedy, praised Carter. This was a very tough position Teddy found himself in, to campaign against a beleaguered President who was trying—presumably desperately—to save American hostages. So that was a difficult thing. Then on the

other hand, once Carter's nomination was assured, it was a very strange election season. I don't think Carter won another primary.

There was a vote at the UN[United Nations] on Israel, and Don McHenry, on instruction, voted—

Young: Was it Andy Young?

Vanden Heuvel: No. Andy Young was out.

Young: He was already out.

Vanden Heuvel: Don McHenry was the perm rep and I was his deputy. It was in the beginning of March, I believe, and there was a resolution, not a typical resolution, calling upon—something had happened in the settlements in the Occupied Territories and it was condemning the Israeli action regarding the settlements. Don McHenry got the instruction not to veto, but to abstain. The American Jewish community immediately turned on this vote, much more than the Israeli government did. That was the first time we had voted that way in the UN for a very long time, and there was a tremendous reaction in New YorkState. Teddy won the primary here, which came within two weeks after the UN vote.

Young: But he was losing, and Carter had the nomination sewed up by then, but Kennedy wouldn't stop, and that's another interesting part of the story.

Vanden Heuvel: And that hostility, by not stopping or conceding the nomination to him, was reflected in the convention and Teddy's extraordinary speech, which certainly did Carter no good. The whole body language of the candidates on the platform of the convention bespoke the antagonism between Kennedy and Carter. But that's the result of a civil war in a political party. The anger is much more intense. Some of the Kennedy people, like Pat Lucey, who had been Governor of Wisconsin and whom Carter appointed Ambassador to Mexico, resigned to support Ted. He later became a candidate, on a third-party ticket. I did not resign. I felt that it was a mistake to challenge the President that way, and I stayed as Ambassador to the end of my term.

Young: It's kind of a puzzle. Maybe this oral history will shed some light on it. We've got a lot more, including very useful recollections by you, on Robert's [Robert Kennedy] decision to run against LBJ [Lyndon Baines Johnson], and Ted's part in that, and your part in the pulling and hauling. We don't have yet that much about his decision to run against Carter. We don't have that degree of detail. We'll have to get down to it.

Vanden Heuvel: As I say, I was not a close party to that.

Young: I think the family was trying to weigh in on that.

Vanden Heuvel: Really?

Young: Yes. Pro and con.

Vanden Heuvel: Dick Goodwin was probably one who was a strong advocate. Fred Dutton must have been, because he would have been a very important advisor. It's hard for me to imagine [Theodore] Ted Sorensen advocating Ted's running, although he had a very deserved hostility to Carter.

Young: Why was it deserved?

Vanden Heuvel: Well, Carter appointed Ted as head of the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency].

Young: Yes—and then pulled the rug out.

Vanden Heuvel: Just pulled the rug out in a very unpleasant and ungracious way, and left him hanging there. It actually was an unusual appointment. Ted would have been excellent in anything he did.

Young: How did that come about, do you suppose? Was that a Kennedy gesture by Carter?

Vanden Heuvel: No. Ted Sorensen was one of the early people for Carter. In the beginning, the first meetings with Carter in 1975 in New York, Ted was frequently there, and Gillian [Sorensen]. We were together in that, and when I was made chairman of the campaign, it was at Ted's apartment that that discussion was held, and I agreed to do that. No, he had a good relationship to Carter. And Carter, if he owed anybody anything, Ted was in line for whatever. Of course, his remarkable experience in the Kennedy years should have recommended him for a high post. If you were a new President, you would have loved to have had someone like Ted Sorensen available to you. So that was a big mistake by Carter, but it was not Kennedy-related, in my judgment.

Young: I had forgotten the key point about his nomination, which was withdrawn. There are a few other things that you mentioned that I'd like to see if you would maybe expand or have anything further to say on. I made just a few notes of them in the pages. At the top of my list was Carter and Kennedy.

I've been doing a series of very private interviews with the Senator on not political subjects, subjects about his own life experience. He has talked a lot about the tragedies and the hard times in his life, and I wanted him to put himself into it. I can't say very much about it. At this point they're very private. But there are some things about things that were going on in his life that I think I'd like to know more about. Not so much about him, but about what he was going through, the externals of it. He talked about Chappaquiddick, and I'm not going to repeat that about his own emotional—that was a very hard thing for him, obviously.

I'm thinking about two things. From the time Bobby was killed and Chappaquiddick happened, it was just a little bit longer than one year. One of the things I've looked at, just from the record and from books and everything, is what he was doing when he came back, after he reentered the Senate, so to speak, after Bobby's death. I'm looking at all the things he was doing, and it was a lot. He was really driving himself. He was taking up Bobby's causes, and he was just doing a lot.

Vanden Heuvel: It was a terribly difficult time for him.

Young: And then I'm thinking about the week, what was going on up there in his home area, at HyannisPort, between the 19th, when it happened, and the 26th, when he made his speech. [Adam] Clymer and others have written something about that. I didn't ask him about it and I didn't talk about it, but who was there or how was the speech done, what was going on at the house? He was in a bad state. As you said, he was probably in a state of shock for the early part of that period. Funeral—

Vanden Heuvel: I believe that profoundly, that he was in a state of shock. Let's just go back a little bit to the period of Bobby's death. That was a trauma of enormous consequence to Teddy. The President's death was of course a terrible thing, but he at least had Bobby, and the two of them became very close. Bobby had the mantle of being head of the family at that point. The father was still alive—Joseph P. Kennedy was still alive. Wasn't he alive after Chappaquiddick?

Young: Yes. He died in November.

Vanden Heuvel: November of 1969.

Young: And Chappaquiddick was July of '69.

Vanden Heuvel: Yes, and people don't make reference to that, but in the context of Hyannis Port, the helpless father who the children recognized and had this very strong relationship to each one of them, and certainly the Senator did, had to deal with the very slow and difficult process of death that the father was going through, while the two sons were murdered.

I remember talking to Igor Stravinsky about that once, in 1964 I think it was, and talking about the meaning of the President's death. Coming into Dallas at high noon with the sun ablaze, with these cheering, extraordinary crowds, and with this magical, princely quality of a new force in the world, and being suddenly destroyed as if the Greek gods had sent the lightning bolt to end that. Stravinsky wrote some music about it, he told me afterwards, that related to that. For Teddy, Bobby's death was, I think, a cataclysmic event. Not only the emotion of it, and the very real feeling of closeness, but the new responsibilities of his position. He was now head of the family.

Young: Something that was not even remotely within his—

Vanden Heuvel: Not even remotely within his framework of thought, say five years or ten years before, right? And those responsibilities were difficult. There was Jackie. There was Jackie's marriage that he had to deal with, with [Aristotle] Onassis. I always felt that Jackie's marriage was very much related to Bobby's death, like she just wanted to get out, that what Onassis offered her was almost a sovereign shield that would protect her children and protect her and would take her away from that situation. So he had to go through that, and whatever his own personal thoughts were, that was what he was prepared to do. Then there was an incident, wasn't there, in early '69, on a trip to Alaska?

Young: Yes.

Vanden Heuvel: An airplane?

Young: Yes.

Vanden Heuvel: With the reporters.

Young: He went up there on Indian matters. He took Bobby's place on the Indian Subcommittee, and he just drank too much, and he made a spectacle of himself on the plane coming back. That's a man in great—I don't think he did that as a normal thing.

Vanden Heuvel: He was under tremendous emotional stress. I had lunch with him—I think I may have told you this—just the two of us here in New York. I think perhaps in June of '69 or maybe May.

One of the things we talked about was what was ahead politically. I said to him that [Edmund] Muskie had made a very real impact in '68 and was most likely to be a candidate in '72. If Ted was to be a candidate, he had to begin thinking like that and making people aware that he was at least thinking about being available, just to hold off the kind of commitments that people would otherwise make. He said to me, "Well, you know, when they killed Jack, I thought that was an accident of history. But when they killed Bobby, I didn't feel that way anymore, and I have no doubt that if I were to get out there, they would kill me too." That's the way I remember that.

It struck me that he had no great ambition to run for President at that point. He knew there was going to be tremendous pressure on him to do it, and in his own mind he saw this cruel attack on his family as being unrelenting and continuing if he were to take the spot of his brothers in the context of seeking the Presidency at that point.

Young: The "they" is not a conspiracy, is it?

Vanden Heuvel: No, I don't think so.

Young: The "they" is just something.

Vanden Heuvel: The force out there, the destructive force, the fateful force, except what the established wisdom is, that Lee Harvey Oswald and Sirhan Sirhan acted alone and singularly in the assassination of John and Robert Kennedy. I mean, that's an extraordinarily fateful thing, that Sirhan would be in the kitchen where Robert Kennedy, 30 seconds before, had not planned to be. So I'm sure all of that—

Young: Do you think there was this feeling that this was a part of America they didn't know?

Vanden Heuvel: That there was a violence out there, a madness, a lunatic streak that was aimed at the Kennedys. And that if he was out in front, that that would exercise itself again. That it wasn't a conspiracy, but the lunacy that the Kennedys excited in this world of possible assassins would mark him too.

Young: And yet he went ahead, eventually.

Vanden Heuvel: Well no, then Chappaquiddick came, and Chappaquiddick is an event that plays into the larger picture of the stress of that period for him. First of all, you begin with the understanding it had to be an accident, so that's it. So you start with that, it was a terrible accident.

Secondly, he said to me at one point, "I thought I was dead. I had one last opportunity to struggle to that open window. I reached around and I couldn't find Mary Jo Kopechne. I went through that window and got to the surface." And then began his walk back to where Joey Gargan and Paul [Markham] were.

I remember once he said to me, "On that walk I passed three or four houses and the lights were on." I'm sure anybody who was making that walk would have seen them. He said, "I didn't see them. I didn't see anything." That's why I was always convinced that he was in a profound state of shock, and he did not act rationally. Had he acted rationally, there were a lot of things he could have done to protect himself, namely just reporting the accident, or secondly, having had that airplane accident and injury to his back, to lie on the shore until he was discovered.

I think I may have mentioned to you that I did some subsequent studies of the impact of shock in those events, and how there had been a train engineer who had been in a wreck right around that time, and who they thought had been killed in the crash but had in fact walked home. And I think that was true of Augustus Busch, who is now the head of that company, who had gone through a similar experience and walked home—you go back to something that you identify with.

The difficulty was there was nobody there who could deal with him in Chappaquiddick. I'm sure he acted with probably absolute total authority at that point, spoke with authority, and by the time they got back to the pond, with no visible signs of anything, they could have concluded that maybe she got out as he got out. He was an immensely powerful swimmer, Teddy, so I never doubted that he had made that swim across in the situation. But when you put all the circumstances together, his enemies had the feast, and they would never let him again forget it.

Young: Can you cast any light on—so this had already happened, and in fact he was diagnosed with a mild concussion by the doctors. Let us say he was in a state of shock. I can easily imagine that, but I'm not so much interested in reconstructing the particular events of the accident, but the involvement of others afterwards, during that week. I have names. Goodwin came there. Burke Marshall was there. I think Charlie Tretter, Joe Gargan, Paul.

Vanden Heuvel: Burke Marshall was an important advisor.

Young: [Robert] McNamara came, Sorensen came, Steve Smith came, and I don't know who else came.

Vanden Heuvel: Dave Burke was a very important part. Dave Burke would probably be the best witness to most of this.

Young: I am going to talk to Dave.

Vanden Heuvel: As I recall it, I was asked to go to the Kopechne family.

Young: In New Jersey.

Vanden Heuvel: I think Pennsylvania. Maybe it was New Jersey.

Young: The burial was in Pennsylvania. They have a place in New Jersey.

Vanden Heuvel: But in any event, I went to be with them after they learned that their daughter was dead.

Young: Who asked you to do that? Did Ted call you?

Vanden Heuvel: I think it was either Burke Marshall or Dave Burke who asked me to go. I may have talked to Teddy on that Saturday. In any event, the Kopechnes had already known of the death of their daughter. They were terribly concerned about whether Senator Kennedy was safe, and whether he was well. There was no thought at all that anything but an accident had happened. I went to the funeral with Ted after that. The whole retinue of the Kennedy groups, those who had been close to the brothers, came to Hyannis. Bob McNamara, I think. Do you have his name on there?

Young: Yes. Steve Smith had been in Spain and came back.

Vanden Heuvel: Now Steve obviouslywould have been a major advisor in all of this situation. Ted Sorensen.

Young: Sorensen was there?

Vanden Heuvel: Yes.

Young: I have a question mark about Dun Gifford. I don't know. I'm not sure. Arthur Schlesinger—was Arthur there?

Vanden Heuvel: I doubt it. I'll ask him.

Young: I want to talk to you about Arthur a little later.

Vanden Heuvel: I think Ted Sorensen was the principal drafter of the speech.

Young: I'm wondering how that speech was arrived at and what hand, if any, Ted himself had in the speech or how it came about. Of course Eunice [Kennedy Shriver] came, I guess Jean must have come too, perhaps also Pat [Kennedy Lawford], and of course his mother was there, his mother and father. That house and that place is such a symbol for him. He wants me to do some of these interviews up there. And then this terrible thing happens. His father dying, then all of these people coming, and where is he, and where are they, and what's going on in this week before he delivers the speech.

Vanden Heuvel: This happened on July 19, wasn't it, Chappaquiddick?

Young: July 19 was the accident, and the speech was on the 26th, that is, the address. The funeral was on the 22nd, and on the 25th was the hearing in which he pled guilty to leaving the scene of an accident or something like that. I'm trying to figure out what was it like back there at the house, and how this public response was constructed.People who have written about it—I don't know how knowledgeable they are—said different things about it. Adam Clymer said that Ted wanted to say in the speech that he'd never run for President again, and Eunice said, "You

can't say that." There are reports of intense differences over what he should say, and I'm just trying to—

Vanden Heuvel: It was not a good speech, in my judgment.

Young: I know. You've mentioned that. There was that "irrational force" mentioned, though he called it something else.

Vanden Heuvel: Yes. Whether there was some dark shadow of fatefulness, which I have no doubt he might have felt. Because in the light of the conversation I'd had with him several months before, he was thinking in terms of this fatefulness that was directed toward his family.

Young: Then should one assume that he wanted that in the speech, or did he really not know about it, and it was just something he read?

Vanden Heuvel: I really don't know. I'll ask Arthur.

Young: As you know, Arthur agrees. I talked with Arthur about this some time ago.

Vanden Heuvel: You did talk to Arthur?

Young: Yes, but not long. I had an interview with him and he is, of course, of your mind about that speech. He thought that was a bad thing to say.

Vanden Heuvel: My recollection of it was, though, that Ted Sorensen had a major role in it.

Young: Yes. I don't know. I will ask him.

Vanden Heuvel: That was my impression. But it did not look goodto have this enormous array of the Kennedy advisors coming to a scene where—

Young: It looked like—it was referred to as the army gathering.

Vanden Heuvel: The legal questions involved were very significant, right?

Young: Yes.

Vanden Heuvel: And had they been able to prove DUI [driving under intoxication], the consequences would have been much more severe. I don't know whether, in 1980, he was surprised, but the Chappaquiddick thing just didn't go away.

Young: It surely didn't.

Vanden Heuvel: And any time that there was an opportunity to oppose him on it—in Massachusetts, it didn't matter. His political base there was so solid. He ran in 1970, right, again, so this was still very fresh in everybody's mind, and he won a significant reelection.

Young: Yes, he did.

Vanden Heuvel: But on the national scene, it would never disappear, and undoubtedly ended his Presidential possibilities.

Young: But not speculation about it.

Vanden Heuvel: Not speculation. Had this not happened, almost certainly he would have been nominated in ’72 or ’76 if he had wanted it. It’s all of the irony of history. You think of ’68, and Hubert Humphrey asking him to run for Vice President and all of that. Had he had that sanctuary while all of these things—he undoubtedly would have caused Humphrey to be elected by being his Vice Presidential candidate. If Humphrey then had lived up to his promise, served only one term, and then had Teddy been nominated and elected—those are the ifs. But that was a year of just profound traumatic calamity, beginning with Bobby’s death and then going through Chappaquiddick.

Young: If you look at the decade, the ’60s, how it began and how it ended, it’s very extraordinary and moving. You just put him in this picture as the survivor of it all, and maybe the casualty. You didn’t know in ’69.

Vanden Heuvel: The President’s death, and then the airplane accident that could have claimed his life so easily too, right? And then Bobby’s death, and all of this.

Young: His son’s cancer.

Vanden Heuvel: That was ’74 though.

Young: That was later, that’s right.

Vanden Heuvel: It’s unrelenting, what he’s had to endure.

Young: So one of the big questions is, what keeps him going?

Vanden Heuvel: I think in his mother’s case, it was faith. You could almost visibly see that, as she dealt with the death of her sons and other calamities in her life. She just accepted it as God’s work, and it wasn’t for her to rationalize it, it was for her to accept it. Teddy’s not religious in that sense, so it’s more of character. I think in part it’s Irish, accepting fate. It’s not religion, but it’s fate, and accepting what you can’t change and moving forward. And understanding, too, that he had so many continuing responsibilities that his strength could never be in doubt. He had Bobby’s children, his own children. He had a difficult situation with his wife, and then his father’s death. It was the most extraordinary series of human difficulties that one can imagine.

Young: If one puts himself in his shoes, and after all of this, and looks ahead, what is there for him in life, except carrying on these responsibilities and continuing? You had some conversations at one point, didn’t you, about what would he do if he left political elective life.

Vanden Heuvel: Yes.

Young: Were those serious? Was he seriously considering?

Vanden Heuvel: At one point I think he wanted us to think that he was seriously considering it,whether it was publishing a newspaper or whether it was going to be a university, but that wasn't Ted Kennedy. What he did have and nobody could take from him was the secure political base of Massachusetts. He had the personality and the character and the very real liking of a legislator's life.

I remember in 1980, people who watched him in the course of the campaign often had the feeling that he didn't want to be successful, that this was something that he got into, but this wasn't the determination that one would have expressed if the Presidency was your consuming objective. You had a feeling that he truly was not unhappy that he was not going to get into that situation. I've had several people who liked and loved Teddy and who watched him in the course of that campaign say that.

Young: So maybe that was something he had to do then.

Vanden Heuvel: He felt he had to do it somewhere along the line.

Young: So it wasn't all about Carter. Well, it was, in a sense, about Carter, because Carter was not in that—

Vanden Heuvel: Yes.

Young: Just speaking on a more abstract level, Carter could not, but was not, picking up the fallen standard and carrying the momentum of the Kennedy—

Vanden Heuvel: He certainly wasn't doing it in the name of the Kennedys.

Young: That's right.

Vanden Heuvel: There were a lot of pockets of antagonism to Carter that were natural allies of Kennedy. The Jewish community, for example. And I have no doubt that he had many substantial donors who didn't like Carter. Carter had given that "malaise speech," and he had called American business leaders to the summit. It was very strange for people. They didn't identify with Carter and the way he operated on those things. You'd need someone much more versed in psychiatry than I amto put it all together, but it was a period of immense stress, immense emotional trauma, and perhaps a sense of obligation that he too—I remember the speech he gave after Robert Kennedy's death, carrying the banner.

Young: Picking up the fallen standard.

Vanden Heuvel: Picking up the fallen flag. So he undoubtedly felt that was his responsibility, and he knew that the Presidency was what had been taken away from his brother Jack, had been denied to his brother Bobby, and that that was his destiny, to claim that and to fulfill it, in the name of the three of them.

Young: That was the first time any of them had lost, really lost, and been defeated in an election. There were local losses, like Oregon for Bobby and so forth, but it was not clear that that would

be the final result. But from Iowa on it was perfectly clear to him, or it should have been, that he was not going to get the votes, that Carter had them and had the nomination.

Vanden Heuvel: And those people, like Larry O'Brien and the others, certainly knew that. But as I say, although he never accepted defeat and kept right on going, and turned what others had expected, defeat, into victory, like the New York primary, and he came out of the convention as a hero. Ultimately, Carter's loss—there certainly was part responsibility, having so weakened the Carter candidacy that he couldn't sustain himself. But politicians have a way of rationalizing everything that happens. I know people who were with Carter in the last days of the election. He was absolutely convinced he was going to win, yet anybody who had had any experience in politics and looked at it from afar saw that he was heading for a serious defeat. But it wasn't until 24 hours before the election itself, when Pat Caddell or whoever it was told him that he was going to lose it.

Young: The prospect that this was going to elect Reagan, that Reagan was very much in the picture—that's not a thought that appears frequently in these talks with people about the Kennedy primary campaigns and Carter.

Vanden Heuvel: They're not measuring it to say, "Oh my goodness, we're making Reagan possible here."

Young: That's to an outsider.

Vanden Heuvel: I think in some ways, it's altogether possible that those who were advising Teddy rationalized their advice to him to run on the assumption that Reagan would be the candidate, and that Reagan would be an easy person to defeat. That's the way the Carter people thought about it. They thought Reagan, right-wing, the country wasn't going to go in that direction. And so the fight that any rational observer would have said was going to be so destructive between Kennedy and Carter, both sides may have rationalized by saying, "Well, if we win it, we can beat Reagan."

Young: They were a bit out of touch, I think.

Vanden Heuvel: That was the talk, though. Reagan was sort of dismissed, in the early days, as someone—people from California, even though Reagan had been successful as Governor and political figure, were quite prepared to say that about him. I hadn't thought of it recently, but that had to play an important role for everybody to go forward with the fight as they did. Otherwise, it would have made no sense to fight a sitting President for the nomination. It was Theodore Roosevelt againstTaft, Teddy being Theodore Roosevelt, with all the personality and all of the things. It was just the nature of the game. You beat an incumbent President for the nomination. Theodore Roosevelt didn't do it and Teddy didn't do it, but they both managed to make it impossible for the incumbent to go forward.

Young: It will be interesting for historians to ponder this, because he was, as you say, the person who had become, in every sense of the word, a Senator. That was his métier, that was his work. But then going after the Presidency in ways that didn't seem possible for him to win. Anyway, there was one other thing you mentioned. We haven't gotten into this yet and probably won't

until next year, but you said you talked with him a lot—this was midway in the interview—about Iraq and the resolution. You said you had a lot of conversations with him about that.

Vanden Heuvel: Yes, I did. Daily conversations.

Young: Would you like to talk about that?

Vanden Heuvel: Ted, from the very beginning, understood that we were heading for a disaster. The whole idea of a preemptive war, that the United States would even think in those terms, against a country of 23 million people that had been decimated by the Gulf War ten years before. He very clearly understood the hysteria that was going on in Washington, the weapons of mass destruction, et cetera. He very much wanted the issue to be put in the context of the United Nations.

[George W.] Bush and the Republicans engineered it in such a way so that I think Bush gave that speech on September 12, 2002, about the United Nations, which was an excellent speech, and made it seem as though he was going to go through the United Nations in an effort to confront Saddam Hussein and Iraq, and their so-called weapons of mass destruction. And so when the UN resolution came, the Republicans encouraged Senators to vote for it, because it would enable the Administration to have a strong hand in the United Nations and the Security Council vote, which in fact happened. In November the Security Council resolution passed by a unanimous vote, even with Syria sitting on the Security Council.

Teddy, I think, understood as well as anyone that if you could keep it within an international context that the consequences could be controlled, that the inspectors who Saddam Hussein had now allowed back into Iraq could in fact indicate whether there were weapons of mass destruction and find a way to eliminate them or justify an international military effort against them. He had me talk to Tom Daschle, which I did at great length. I wrote a memorandum to Daschle at that point. I'd be glad to give you a copy of it, outlining what the disastrous consequences of this exercise would be if we did in fact move unilaterally. [*Memo attached*.]

The Administration tried to cover itself by Blair and Great Britain being the coalition of the willing. But I think Ted was very sympathetic—I certainly was—to Senator Byrd's argument that unless you went in through a United Nations resolution, you had an obligation to come back to the Congress and ask for a declaration of war. This was the United States invading and declaring war on another country. They didn't declare it; they just did it. Byrd was trying to use the constitutional argument that this was unacceptable.

Teddy was very interested in what was happening at the United Nations, followed it very closely, and we talked almost every day for a while about what the meaning was of certain possible resolutions. I had a lot of contacts at the UN and could get him very accurate indications of whether votes were possible. When Bush went for a second vote at the UN at the urgent request of Blair to give him political cover in the United Kingdom, I could clearly tell Ted that it wasn't going to happen. We couldn't get nine votes to put it on the agenda of the Security Council.

Although the debate went off on many tangents, Ted never faltered. He was, from the very beginning, aware that this had a possibility of disaster, that no intelligent President would take the risk. You could make all the arguments, but you couldn't possibly come to the conclusion

that Iraqwas a direct threat to the United States. Therefore, whatever they had as weaponry—we could, and we had time, to organize the coalitions that could contain it, at the very least, and destroy it, at the very best. I think he played a major role in influencing some Senators. Not John Kerry, who voted for the President's legislation.

Young: It strikes me as his message didn't resonate very much at that time.

Vanden Heuvel: I remember talking to Daschle. The Democrats were convinced that they could win the election if they kept the focus on domestic issues. They didn't want to give the Republicans the argument that they were undermining the President in the exercise of foreign affairs. You could understand that. I could understand that was an argument. They just thought the election could come and go, and that this would not be of consequence if they didn't openly oppose the President. Well, 23 did oppose Bush, and there was a lot of feeling in the country, but the Republican strategy was to make the war an issue, to make Iraq an issue, which overwhelmed the Democratic advantage on the domestic issues.

Daschle had polls, and they all were polls that showed how these issues—healthcare and all of the traditional domestic issues—were what America was really thinking about.

Young: That wasn't Ted's thinking, necessarily.

Vanden Heuvel: No. That was not Ted's thinking. Ted's thinking was, *I don't care what the polls show. Politically, this is going to be the overwhelming issue, and we've got to make it now.* [Daniel Robert] Graham of Florida made a very important speech that by doing this, you were diverting our attention from Afghanistan and diverting our attention from Al Qaeda, a real enemy. Saddam wasn't our enemy. (This was Ted's opinion as well.) Saddam had nothing to do with 9/11. That was another point Teddy made over and over again. The administration, having gotten this resolution in October, never went back for a second resolution at the Congress. Of course, the timing of it was measured by the political calendar. I remember Congressman [Thomas P.] Lantos from California, who was for action against Iraq, telling me that he had gone to see Condoleezza Rice and said to her, "If you can postpone this vote until after the election, you will have a unanimous, a very strong vote." And she laughed at him. So they knew what they were doing.

Young: They knew, yes.

Vanden Heuvel: It was a domestic political game as much as—it was a Roveian operation. Karl Rove was as much the strategist of it, more than the Pentagon. Lantos made it very clear that he had expressly asked them to delay it so that the Democrats could help them and support it.

Young: That was not the game.

Vanden Heuvel: That wasn't what it was about. And Teddy's political instincts understood that too. I think he understood the recklessness of the move in terms of the larger interests of the country, and couldn't believe that a President would do that. But Bush did it.

Young: Well, suddenly PresidentBush was a war President.

Vanden Heuvel: Yes.

Young: From the moment that speech was given.

Vanden Heuvel: That's right.

Young: That joint session with the Congress. You were for us or against us. It's war, it's not anything but war. It seems to me the die was cast at that time.

Vanden Heuvel: I'm sure history will record that the administration's recklessness prior to 9/11 should have made them very severely accountable for 9/11. But they managed to overcome that very quickly, and part of that is controlling the Congress as they did. But it was impossible to criticize Bush after 9/11. All of that will come around. There's now this very hostile feeling in the country about the war, and that will catch up with them too. As strong as Teddy was for Kerry, and in a sense made his nomination possible in 2004, he didn't get Kerry to vote on that resolution. Again, that I think shows the thinking of the Democrats, who anticipated political involvement at the national level. They did not want to be seen as undermining the President's authority in foreign affairs, so the easy way out was to vote for the resolution.

Young: Or being weak on security.

Vanden Heuvel: Being weak on security, absolutely. We're tough. We're just as tough as he is.

Young: And that didn't succeed, of course.

Vanden Heuvel: It didn't succeed.

Young: They still were tarred and feathered.

Vanden Heuvel: And then the deceitfulness of the war was another factor. The intelligence was engineered. People like [Ahmed] Chalabi, et cetera, were put into the chain of providing the intelligence that was deceitful and lying. People then pointed to this intelligence as legitimate sources. Look at Blair's White Paper. I remember discussing the White Paper with Teddy.

The fact that the British government would say that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction that could be put into use in 45 minutes—I remember that particularly, that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction that could be made readily usable in 45 minutes. That was a single-source piece of intelligence from a totally discredited source. So using that kind of intelligence, and the nuclear threat, they built up a hysteria that nobody could restrain. People generally want to support the President in foreign affairs. That's the tradition in our country, basically. Therefore, when Bush said this was what it was, people felt that they had to accept that. But people like Ted, who had no higher political ambition, who was not going to run for the Presidency, had a lot of experience with these various groups in the government, were tough enough to vote against it.

Young: And he is very outspoken since.

Vanden Heuvel: Oh, very.

Young: Though not recently.

Vanden Heuvel: He never faltered. He's been right on. I think he feels himself what a calamitous situation this resulted in, what the [James] Baker-[Lee] Hamilton Commission has now said, most graciously. If you were President Bush and you read that report, that's a devastating indictment. Teddy has been making all those points—

Young: All along.Are we at an end?

Vanden Heuvel: We're at an end.

Young: All right. We'll close this interview.

Index