



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH ANGELA WILLIAMS

March 7, 2008
Chicago, Illinois

Interviewer

University of Virginia
Janet Heininger

© 2022 The Miller Center Foundation and the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate

Publicly released transcripts of the Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project are freely available for noncommercial use according to the Fair Use provisions of the United States Copyright Code and International Copyright Law. Advance written permission is required for reproduction, redistribution, and extensive quotation or excerpting. Permission requests should be made to the Miller Center, P.O. Box 400406, Charlottesville, VA 22904-4406.

To cite an interview, please use the following general format: [name of interviewee] Interview, [date of interview], Edward M. Kennedy Oral History Project, Miller Center, University of Virginia.



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH ANGELA WILLIAMS

March 7, 2008

Janet Heininger: This is an interview with Angela Williams, on March 7, 2008, in Chicago. Well, why don't we start at the beginning? How did you first meet Kennedy?

Angela Williams: I started with the Senator in the summer of 1998. Prior to coming to his staff, I was an Assistant United States Attorney from the middle district of Florida, the Orlando Division, and I was on loan to main Justice, Civil Rights Division, to serve as one of the seven or eight federal prosecutors and several FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and ATF [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms] agents that formed the National Church Arson Task Force.

In the summer of 1996, there was a rash of church burnings around the country. The Senator was involved in passing the National Church Arson Prevention Act, and as a result, that task force that I eventually served on was formed in Washington, D.C. My term on that task force was coming to an end. I started serving in October of 1996 and it was time for me to return to the middle district of Florida. As part of my duties at the task force, I wrote a publication for training FBI agents on how to investigate and prosecute church arsons. As a result, for that DOJ [Department of Justice] publication—You can find it online still, I think—I wanted to take a picture with Janet Reno, who was the Attorney General at the time, Secretary of Treasury Robert Rubin, and the task force members.

As we were waiting for Janet Reno and Secretary Rubin to show up in the Treasury Building, I was talking to one of Rubin's assistants and said, "My work here in D.C. is coming to an end. It's time to go back to Florida, but I really like being in Washington, D.C. I wish I could stay here." And she said, "Funny you should say that. I received an odd phone call today about a job on Capitol Hill, but I don't know anything else. Let me listen to the voicemail and call you back." She later called me back and said, "I can't tell you who it's working for, but a friend of mine in New York is the go-between with the person on the Hill." I can't remember who it was in New York that I eventually spoke with and indicated an interest and talked to about my background. I eventually talked to my predecessor in that position, Tom Perez, who was also on loan from main Justice. Long story short, I interviewed with Michael Myers, who was at that point, the head of "Judish" [Judiciary Committee], as we called it, and Melody Barnes, who later took Michael Myers's place, and I was hired.

So I went from being with the National Church Arson Task Force to being on the Senate Judiciary Committee staff. My title was Special Counsel on Criminal Law. I plopped, or landed, in Dirksen [Building] and immediately there was a flurry of activity because there was the heinous hate crime and murder of James Byrd, on June 7, 1998. Immediately there was a hue and

cry about doing something, so I immediately set about doing my first Senate Judiciary Committee full hearing.

Heininger: Wow.

Williams: That was my baptism by fire into working for Senator Kennedy. I put together the hearing, and invited family members of James Byrd to come testify. It was funny, I had to make cold calls and say, “Hi, my name is Angela Williams. You don’t know me but I work for Senator Ted Kennedy in Washington, D.C. There is a huge outrage. We’d like to introduce a hate crimes bill, and we want you to come testify.”

I had to work to gain the trust of the family and to build a relationship and a rapport over the phone, because they didn’t know me. They were being besieged by the media and a lot of attention, but they agreed to come. Renee Mullins was the family member who testified, and then we had Eric Holder from the Justice Department, who testified, and Chai Feldblum from Georgetown University, a law professor. She testified. We had a great panel of people to come talk about hate crimes and the Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

That was also the first time that I had the special privilege, as all Kennedy staffers do, of having the Senator, as you’re seated behind him in a hearing room, lean back in his chair, turn his head and whisper to you, “Go call So-and-So. He used to work for Bobby [Kennedy].” I would always sort of frown and think, *Bobby Kennedy?* Then I’d think, *I don’t recognize this name*, and *Oh, my God, how do I find this person?* Then I’d say, “How do you spell the name?” [laughs] Eventually I would get used to the names, like Robert Morgenthau, who was the district attorney of New York, and there are other names. “You need to go call Ken Feinberg,” who used to be on the Senator’s staff, and just those tried-and-true, diehard Kennedy staffers. I would always ask Melody or Michael, “Who’s the Senator talking about? How do I find him?” The Senator’s office has this massive Rolodex of anybody and everybody they know how to get hold of, and they keep up with this. Even now, they know how to find me, and I still assist with writing the Senator’s speeches.

Heininger: You do?

Williams: I do, as of last month. What he uses me for now is when there are funerals, like I helped to write the speech for Rosa Parks’s funeral. I helped to write the eulogy that he delivered for Coretta Scott King. And then a few weeks ago, I helped to write the speech when he spoke at a church on behalf of Barack Obama. The way the Senator’s mind thinks is that there’s something about different people that he just latches on to, and you are the go-to person for this particular issue. Since I’ve been gone from the Senate, and I left in October of 2000, I have been the go-to person for Scriptures, I have been the go-to person for religious appearances, or speaking at events where it involves some sort of spiritual component. That’s where he still relies on me.

Heininger: Once on staff, never off staff.

Williams: You never leave. That was the other thing I was told, that once you work for the Senator it’s a lifetime commitment; it’s not just that you’re working on staff now. And I better understood that as the months and the years rolled by, to see how, when things happened, such as

the JFK Junior [John F. Kennedy Jr.] plane crash, in putting together the funeral it was Kennedy staffers, people who worked on Wall Street and were partners, like in Goldman Sachs and major firms, who dropped everything to go do advance work for the funeral. That to me was the incident that showed that when you come and you work for the Senator, you assume your prior role. It doesn't matter how much success you've achieved since you've left his employ, or what job title you have. At the end of the day, once a Kennedy staffer, always a Kennedy staffer. For myself, it's always a pleasure to do anything for him and to work for him, because I just think he's such a joy to be around and a wonderful person.

Let me digress a minute, before I get back to some of the major issues that I helped work with the Senator on. He is truly a people person. He has these blue eyes that are very piercing, because he looks at people and he's very good at reading people. He's a very compassionate person. He has a mind that is phenomenal. He would get up in the mornings and read several newspapers before 7:00 A.M.; the joke of staff was to try to read all the papers that the Senator would read, so that when we saw him first thing in the morning, when he said, "Did you see the article in the *Boston Globe*—or in the *Wall Street Journal*, or in the *New York Times*—on page such-and-such?" "Yes, I did." More often than not, he saw more than we did. He has this phenomenal memory and ability to retain information.

Going back to him being a really good people person, the one thing that used to frustrate me was that I would have a limited amount of time to talk to the Senator, to review his speech with him as he was going to the floor of the Senate. I would meet him in his office, we would go down to the elevator to the train, get on the train and ride over to the Capitol, and in those brief few moments, that was the time I had to say, "OK, Senator, this is what I've outlined in your speech. Here are some key points to hone in on. Here are some wonderful examples. Here's the demonstrative evidence that we're going to have, the boards to show, that you can display while you're talking. This is what they're saying."

But if he saw a family or any other tourist who said, "Oh, that's Senator Kennedy. Can I get a picture?" he would stop me in midsentence and say, "Angela, go over there and get that camera and take the picture." Then, if I'm looking at the tourist's camera and trying to figure out how to operate it, he's fussing at me, trying to explain to me how to operate this stranger's camera, and then he's telling them, "Angela doesn't know what she's doing. She just doesn't understand how to take pictures." So it was always this back-and-forth, and any time anybody wanted to stop him to greet him, he would do it. He would not walk away from somebody. He has a truly compassionate heart and cares for people, and that's why he's such a joy to be around and to work with.

Heininger: And when you'd get interrupted as you were going over on the train, would you then have enough time to get everything back together, to still fill him in on the speech?

Williams: You have to do what you have to do in the amount of time. There are times when he's so busy rushing that he just walks off, and it's like, "I didn't finish." And then he'll point a finger if he sees somebody on the Senate floor, and he's gone across to the Republican side to talk to a colleague. As a staffer, you're just stuck, so you go to the back where staffers were allowed to sit on the Senate floor, and you wait for him to come back and then you try to get his attention and keep talking and making sure that he has everything.

What I also enjoyed was the mechanism that we had to get information to him; it was called “the bag.” We would prepare bag memos, and that was the best way to try to get in front of the Senator. You’d ask, if you wanted him to approve, or disapprove, and then sometimes he would write a note to you, and a lot of times I had to get that deciphered because I couldn’t read his handwriting. Eventually, as I kept working with him, I got better and better.

Another thing that was also very interesting in terms of working with him was writing the speeches. The other competition that staff would have was to improve on our speechwriting abilities so that we wouldn’t get inked up, red-penned by Carey Parker, who is the Senator’s right hand. We would jump for joy and celebrate if Carey didn’t terribly edit our remarks. That was always the goal. I could see myself getting better and better and better, in terms of “Kennedy-speak,” as we called it.

Going back to the chronology, in terms of the workload, the Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1998, and having the hearing on July 8th—putting that together was an incredible, phenomenal experience. Then in October of 1998, Matthew Shepard, a gay student in Wyoming, was murdered, and that again fueled the fire for putting forth this legislation and really pushing to get it passed. The unfortunate part is that we didn’t get far with the bill in 1998, and we went on to have other hearings. We had the hearing in 1999 on hate crimes and the internet. Then, April of ’99 is when we had the Columbine shooting, and of course guns were a major issue, and child safety locks. That was significant legislation and the Senator was very interested in that. It prompted the Senate and the Judiciary Committee to look at, *What can we do? What is the appropriate response to school shootings, and school safety?*

There was a Mother’s Day—I think it was 1999, after the impeachment. We had the impeachment process that I worked on with the Senator. That was a very intense process for me. At that time I was maybe the only one, or one of just a handful of lawyers who were working in the Senate who were litigators and had trial experience. I just found my notes, where I was trying to lay out the sequence of events: What would happen in terms of bringing live witnesses to testify in the well of the Senate? What is the process to be used for direct examination or cross-examination? Who would conduct it? What if the Senators wanted to ask questions; what would that look like? How does Chief Justice [William] Rehnquist maintain control over that process—the deposition process, the videotape depositions that were done?

Just going back and forth. I’ll give you some more details from my notes, but that particular season was incredibly intense because the House impeached President [William] Clinton on December 19, 1998, and then the trial proceedings we pretty much started just before Christmas. Just figuring all of this out, and by January, really getting going on that whole process—thank God it ended in February of ’99. That was a really intense time.

The two other significant events that stick out in my mind was Mother’s Day of ’99, because of the Senator’s interest in child safety locks, ammunition clips, juvenile *Brady* [*Brady v. Maryland*, 373 U.S. 83 (1963)], background checks, closing loopholes in the federal gun laws. There was a group of moms from all of the states that decided to descend on the Mall in Washington, D.C., to hold a rally against gun violence. Mother’s Day was that Sunday.

Maybe a week before that, the Senator said to me, “I want to sponsor, and I want to greet, the mothers that are coming from Boston.” The thought in my head that didn’t come out of my mouth was, *How in the world do you expect me to identify all the moms that are coming down from Boston? How’s that supposed to happen?* Well, with the Senator, nothing is impossible, so I started making phone calls to advocacy groups to find out who was organizing the busloads of moms from Boston.

Then, two things: One, I had to try to get hold of them before the women got on the buses, to say, “Hey, look, the Senator wants to have a breakfast and meet and greet on the Mall.” Secondly, I had to get permission from the Park Service to use the Mall, to set up a booth for Senator Kennedy, and you don’t do that within a matter of hours. That’s something that’s done months in advance. In addition there was: How do you cater an event? How do you create the sign and the banner for the event? Within about 72 hours, if that, I was able to convince the Park Service to give me the permit. I then was able to design a banner and look in the yellow pages for a company that makes huge banners, and the poles to hold them up. One of our little college interns managed that for us. Then I was able to contact enough advocates and get cell phones to say, “As soon as you guys arrive, this is where we’re going to be. The Senator and his wife, Vicki [Victoria Reggie Kennedy], are going to be there and they want to greet you.” And I was able to get the moms to where we were on the Mall.

There were other groups that had already set up tents and everything, long before we had even thought of it, but we were able to get a sizable crowd of Massachusetts moms to greet the Senator, Vicki, and their dog, and he was just pleased as punch to see all those moms show up. I have pictures where he was just walking around saying, “Angela, this is so good, this is so good.” And in my mind I’m looking at him and saying, *Yeah, but do you know what I had to go through to do this?* He sees the end result and likes it. Meanwhile, I’m like, *Oh my God, I hope this works out.* That was just a fascinating time.

Another event that sticks out for me was July of ’99, when JFK Junior’s plane had disappeared. I think that was a Saturday. I was driving back from Richmond, Virginia, where I had been in seminary classes, and I heard and I thought, *Oh, my God.* That was a period of an intense sense of loss and grieving for the family, and all of our hearts went out to the family for that loss, and for the Senator, because we knew that he really took it hard, as all the family did. That was a tough time.

Those were some of the significant events. In between all of that, I would say that I really was able to foster a unique relationship with the Senator when I decided that I wanted to go to seminary. I knew that working for him was very time-consuming and that it required a lot of focus and attention, understanding also that I had decided to go to school 90 miles away, full time, and I wanted to get permission to get off work early on Fridays, around 1:00 or 2:00, so I could beat rush-hour traffic and go to classes Friday nights and all day Saturday. I talked it over with my boss at that time, Melody Barnes. She talked it over with the Senator and he said fine.

That started my journey, in October of ’98 I started seminary. But that quickly caused problems, because December of ’98 is when the House impeached President Clinton, and all my time and attention were diverted toward that. My professors, through my dean, asked me to drop out of seminary because I was never coming to classes anymore. We were all working at the time—It

was me, Melody Barnes, David Sutphen—essentially 18-hour days, seven days a week, to get prepared for the impeachment trial. I begged my dean not to force me out of school, but to let me take a hiatus, that I would still study and read on my own. I was told then, “As long as you come back, and when you come back you have to take all the exams.” I agreed to do that and I did get all As, but that was extremely intense.

There were times during the impeachment trial when I would be upstairs in the Senator’s hideaway in the Capitol and I’d have one eye on the TV in his office, watching the trial, taking notes, and I had Old Testament books lying around his office, trying to study at the same time. But he was very supportive. In fact, when I preached my trial sermon in the fall of ’99, he came to my trial sermon. What was really cute was, he was on the program and spoke. This was at Shiloh Baptist Church at 9th and P Streets, Northwest.

As we were preparing for my trial sermon he asked me, “I’d love to come, but is there going to be any gospel music?” And I said, “Yes, we’re going to have a choir.” He said, “OK, good, because I like gospel music.” What was really funny is that the Senator sat in the front pew and as the choir was singing he was standing up clapping, and he’s totally offbeat, with no rhythm at all, but he loved the gospel music. That launched the whole special relationship we had about spirituality, and our discussions about spirituality and the Bible. We would have personal talks about different Scriptures. I was able to ask some personal questions at times and refer him to scripture references.

So when the crash happened with JFK Junior, he came back to the Senate, and I could really sense the grief. I put on my pastoral care and counseling hat, and I gave him this little book about grief and walking through it. I encouraged him to read it and we’d talk about it. One day, I followed up with him. I said, “Senator, did you read the book I gave you?” He said, “Yes, I read it in Mass.” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “I read the book during Mass.” I said, “Why did you read the book I gave you during Mass?” He said, “Because Mass is boring.” I said, “You know what? If you came to a Black Baptist church, you wouldn’t be saying that, and you wouldn’t have time to read a book in church.” It was just funny. We always had great times together.

Then, if he ever found out that I had preached on Sunday, on Monday he would ask me what did I preach? I would give him the scriptural text, then I would give him my sermon title, and I’d say, “And these are the points I made.” Then he would act like he was an African American preacher. He’d grab my arm and we’d walk, arm-in-arm, down Dirksen Building, and he would be screaming and talking like he was a Black preacher in the pulpit preaching. I would just be laughing and howling, and people would look at us like, *Are they crazy or what?* That’s what I think formed that unique relationship with us. It was just great fun to do that.

Heininger: “I read it during Mass. Mass was boring.” [*laughs*] That’s a great story.

Williams: Those are some of the close moments that we’ve had together. Or just joking around with him when we’d have to go to his house early in the morning, and then get in the van and ride with him to work because we had to brief him before an early morning meeting. I remember one time I was in his house and I said, “Senator, did you eat breakfast this morning?” He said, “Yes, yes. I cooked, I made breakfast.” I said, “I didn’t know you could cook.” He said, “I know

how to cook.” I said, “What did you make?” He said, “Oh, I made some eggs, I made some pancakes.” I said, “You’re lying, aren’t you?” *[laughter]*

There was one time during the impeachment process that my parents came up to visit from Augusta, Georgia, and my mom made homemade soup and all these dishes, and she brought it over for us to have. I set up our little lunch buffet for the staff in the Senator’s hideaway so we could have our own lunch, and then we had ordered his lunch from the Senate dining room. Well, he loves a good meal, and he loves home-cooked meals, so when he came up and said, sniffing, “What’s that?” I said, “My mom made us lunch.” He said, “What did she make you?” I had a Crock-pot and he opened the lid, and I told him what was in there and he said, “Well, I want that.” So he ate our lunch. It was just always great fun. And my mom would make cakes for him. He loved my mom’s cakes. We had a great time.

Heininger: It really sounds like you’ve had an unusually close relationship with him, particularly considering that you were there on his staff for only two years. You obviously struck a chord with him that a lot of other people haven’t, particularly in that short a period of time.

Williams: Yes, but you know what? He’s a spiritual man, and so there were some things that we could talk about, and he respected me for pursuing ministry. And you’re right, it was just a chord, and so much so that he invited my dad up to give the opening prayer for the Senate.

Heininger: Oh, how nice.

Williams: My dad was a retired Navy chaplain. And then, Senator Kennedy had me do the opening prayer for the Senate as a minister.

Heininger: How wonderful.

Williams: That was just a unique experience.

Heininger: Do you think there were some of his staff that—Clearly there are these Kennedy people—that network is just huge—but not everybody fell into quite that close a relationship. Did you see other people who really had much more of a professional relationship that just didn’t go beyond that?

Williams: Yes, I saw that, and there are some people that you could tell he had, over the years, built a trusting relationship with. But again, I saw it more along the lines of issues that he cared about, whether it was juvenile justice, whether it’s the United States Sentencing Commission, whether it was health, education—whatever he had those good, strong relationships with. I guess I don’t know of anybody else who has that other part of him, not the Senator-the-legislator, but the Senator-the-man, the spiritual being.

Heininger: Yes. I haven’t heard that about anybody else. You clearly have had, even for a Kennedy staffer, an unusual relationship with him.

Williams: Yes, it is special. I hadn’t seen him in a couple of years. They had lost my address, so I wasn’t getting the invitations to the Christmas parties. I took my new boss, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the YMCA [Young Men’s Christian Association] of the USA, to Capitol

Hill this time last year, and set up a meeting with Senator Kennedy. My boss was just laughing after the meeting. He said, “Clearly, you two just love each other.” My boss could see the warmth and the special relationship. The Senator’s like, “Angela, I miss you! Where have you been? You don’t come see me enough.” It was just that kind of relationship. Then, as I said, this past Christmas, he said, “I miss you. You have to come see me more often.” So I called Carey Parker this morning and said, “OK, I’m going to be in D.C. again for our national advocacy days next Tuesday or Wednesday. Are you all around? I’d love to come say hi.”

Heininger: And I’m sure Carey said yes.

Williams: Yes. He said, “Call him on Monday night and we’ll see.” But I said, “I know it’s crazy. They’re trying to get out of town, but before they go on recess.”

Heininger: Well, clearly it’s a very special relationship, and an unusual one, too.

Williams: Yes.

Heininger: Oh, that’s wonderful.

Williams: We just used to joke around. Like one St. Patrick’s Day, I recall him all excited and I said, “You know what, Senator? I’m Irish too.” And he said, “You are?” I said, “Yes, I’m Black Irish.” I had no idea what that means, but he was like, “Oh, OK.” So I’m part of the family too. I used to call him my godfather; that was the other thing. I’d say, “You know, Senator, you’re my godfather. I don’t have one, so you’re my godfather.”

Heininger: It really sounds like a wonderful relationship. We have not heard other people talk about the spiritual side, which we know is there, but I haven’t run across anybody else who has been able to develop that relationship with him. That’s wonderful.

Williams: Sometimes he would ask me what the meaning of a scripture text was, or he would remember a scripture and ask me where it was in the Bible.

Heininger: Does he do the Senate morning prayer breakfast?

Williams: Yes, I he attended that. That was once a year, I believe.

Heininger: Yes. Not often but—

Williams: Yes, he attended that. Oh, I’m sorry, it was more often than once a year, you’re right. He did attend them sometimes.

Heininger: Well, as you were going to school full time, how did you manage to juggle all of the work that you were doing for him?

Williams: I didn’t sleep until I graduated in 2001. It was really, really hard. There were many canceled trips, many unused plane tickets. I would say, “I can’t wait for Congress to be in recess,” but when they were in recess, then it was time to work on the strategy and the plan for when they came back into session. There was really no time to rest. Working in the Senate,

especially for someone as powerful as Senator Kennedy, is extremely intense, but what I also found is that—People used to say that Senator Kennedy surrounds himself with the best and brightest in staff, and I really found that to be true. The quality and level of professionalism, intelligence, and quality of work were at a level way above the other Senate staffers.

Sometimes, the Senator would get jealous of me, because there would be other Senators, Republican and Democrat, who would call me into their offices to brief them on a particular matter, because they knew I knew, and they weren't relying on their staff people. Then I would always tell the Senator. One was the Senator from Wisconsin, and then even Senator [Orrin] Hatch. I'd say, "This other Senator asked me to brief him, so I just wanted to let you know that I did." He said, "Well, you don't work for them; you work for me." And I said, "I understand that, but this is your ally, and since we want to move this bill, I thought it was important that I share my expertise with them." So occasionally he'd be jealous, you know. It was just sort of funny, but he really did.

Now, there was a great program that I put together for him in Boston, and it was sponsored by Court TV. It was around youth and juvenile delinquency and great mentoring programs, and was a discussion about the issues around youth, and it was in Boston. It was taped at one of the law schools. Do you have a video of it?

Heininger: I don't know. We'll have to check and see.

Williams: I may have the video. I know I have Court TV's pictures of the session. That was really neat, and we brought in some great experts. We brought in some national experts and then brought in Boston community leaders to talk about the issues. It was really neat. It was like a town hall, sponsored by Court TV. Eric Holder flew up for it.

Heininger: How much assistance did you get from other people? It sounds like you arrived and all of a sudden you're thrown into the James Byrd issue and you had to just do it. Were there other people around who were able to help you? How did you figure out how to do all this stuff so quickly?

Williams: A trial by baptism, asking Melody, "How do you handle this?" And then, I found that what makes a Senator successful are the coalitions that his staff builds. There had already been a coalition put together for the National Church Arson Task Force, and then there was a coalition that was put together for the Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

The advocates were incredible. They had incredible resources, like the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, and Wade Henderson and his staff, or like the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] or NOW LDEF [National Organization for Women Legal Defense and Education Fund], or the Human Rights Campaign, or the Anti-Defamation League. They would do the research. We would meet and I'd say, "This is what I need. Give me ideas for witnesses, and give me the support. Can someone pay for the witness? Because they don't have money to come testify." All of those things. "Let me bounce this idea off of you."

They were really fantastic external support systems, they really were, and it was the best and brightest. I'll give you a copy of my list of people who were really engaged with us. We even had staff people. We would have not only the advocates, but we would have other staff folks

who would come to the coalition meeting, too, so that we could create unity within the Senate ranks.

Heininger: So why did you leave?

Williams: I was burned out, that's it. I loved it. I was burned out.

Heininger: That's understandable if you were going to school full time at the same time.

Williams: Yes, I was burned out and wanted an opportunity to try to recapture my life and have a more balanced life. That's been a pipe dream my whole career, but I'm ever striving, and hope one day I'll achieve it. I'm not sure if that's retirement, or what. It was just so incredibly intense. I loved the work. It was great. There was always something new on the horizon. I felt like I was doing God's work. I felt like I was doing good things, and I felt like if I hadn't been here, that bad piece of legislation would have affected the underdog or the underserved, so it was my way of being a champion for the people who didn't have voices and who weren't even informed enough to know what was happening to them.

Heininger: Did you like working in the Senate?

Williams: I loved it. I would never have worked on the House side. It was just a totally different atmosphere. I loved the Senate side, I really did. It was great fun.

Heininger: How did you deal with Boston? Because there's a long history of Judiciary issues that affect Boston, as well.

Williams: What was really funny is that the Senator had a great network of Massachusetts organizations, allies, special interests, so in addition to just dealing with the day-to-day federal stuff like the hate crimes, the Sentencing Commission, and everything else, we still had to make time to deal with the Massachusetts-based issues, too, because he represented Massachusetts, even though it felt like the Senator was really the U.S. people's Senator.

There were times when you had to make time to listen to people who were pitching their programs to receive federal grants, looking for the Senator's approval and sign-off on things, wanting the Senator to participate in certain projects and programs. But you know, it was still good to get the grassroots efforts, and there were people from Boston, in particular, who were very helpful on the federal legislative front as well, when it came time to talk about juvenile justice issues, or it came time to talk about guns. These were real live people who were doing things on the ground with great success, in Boston.

Heininger: Well, it sounds like you were there during a very interesting time.

Williams: I know, but I think it's probably all interesting. Of course not everybody will get the impeachment, you know, and I don't wish that on anybody.

Heininger: Is there anything else that we should know?

Williams: No, we covered the major issues that I worked on, and things that, as I reflect, really stick out in my mind as prominent events and parts of history. There's always the legislative report and the *Congressional Record* that tells the rest of the story and fills in the blanks for my memory loss and lapses.

Heininger: But what's important is the big picture that you provided. This has been fascinating. I want to thank you.

Williams: Oh, it's been my pleasure.