

JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

SYMPOSIUM

JACK KEMP AND THE 1988 REPUBLICAN
PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY

April 14, 2012

PANEL 1

CAMPAIGN STRATEGY, THEMES,
AND LAUNCH

JACK KEMP FOUNDATION
WASHINGTON, DC

James P. "Jimmy" Kemp: Welcome to this Jack Kemp Oral History Symposium on Jack Kemp and the 1988 Republican presidential primary. This is a project of the Jack Kemp Foundation. My name is Jimmy Kemp and I'm privileged to be president of the Jack Kemp Foundation. My father in 1988 ran a campaign that all of us were incredibly proud of. My two sisters Jennifer [Kemp Andrews] and Judith [Kemp] worked in New Hampshire and Iowa and many other states on the campaign while I was in high school and my older brother Jeff [Kemp] was playing football for, let's see, he was with the Seattle Seahawks at that time. And as a family, it was an incredible time. Mom and Dad were traveling; they loved it. Here at the Jack Kemp Foundation our mission is to develop, engage and recognize exceptional leaders. Some people say, "I wish Jack was here today. What would Jack do?" The more important question, we think, is what *did* Jack do? The Jack Kemp Oral History Project is an effort on our part to identify what it is that my father did and this symposium is focused on his 1988 presidential primary run. I'd like to read a commentary from my father on that campaign, and what drove him to run for president, and to share his ideas with the country.

I campaigned on the ideas of freedom, growth and the family. That freedom of thought and freedom of economic initiative are the linchpins of a prosperous society. That contrary to the doomsayers in both parties, there are no limits to what free men, free women, and free markets can accomplish. That our Judeo-Christian values must be nurtured and protected if self-government is to endure. That in order to preserve this most precious legacy, we must meet threats to the United States of American with resolve, and promote peace through strength.

Dad's words live on. And this Kemp oral history led by Morton Kondracke is an effort to capture those words and the experiences of those who worked alongside him and with him, and enabled him to become the leader that he was. Thank you for taking the time to be with us and your interest in these issues, which we believe are so important to not only our country but our world. Thank you.

Kondracke: I'm Morton Kondracke. Welcome to this Jack Kemp Oral History Project Symposium, with key participants of the 1988 campaign. Today's May 3 and we're at the Capitol Hill Club in Washington, DC. First we're going to play a clip from Jack Kemp's announcement speech in 1988.

[clip]

Kondracke: Good, thank you. We're going to have everyone introduce themselves, coming down the line. Say what you did during the campaign and why you signed on. Charlie?

Charles R. "Charlie" Black, Jr.: I'm Charlie Black. I was campaign manager. I signed on because I thought Jack was the greatest political leader of his generation, and I now know, in fact, he was the greatest leader of his generation in America.

Frank Cannon: I'm Frank Cannon. I was director of administration. I was involved in all the operations of the campaign and involved in fund raising. I think having watched that, I'm just reminded that Jack's message is incredibly timeless, that there was a transformation in

conservatism that made it optimistic, forward-looking, and available to every American, and it's exactly what motivated me to want to be in that campaign and why I think it's very important that we look at what he did as it applies to what is necessary to move conservatism, and indeed the country forward now.

Mona Charen: I'm Mona Charen. My job was to tell Charlie Black what to do. [laughs] Actually, I was a speechwriter. I had previously been working in the [Ronald W.] Reagan White House, and around 1986 a lot of us were sort of deciding which horse we wanted to back in 1988, and a lot of people were signing on with George H.W. Bush, who was the sitting vice president and I did not want to work for Bush. I wanted to throw whatever support I could, whatever limited things I had to offer to Jack Kemp, because as the others have said, I found him incredibly inspiring and I thought that he was the intellectual godfather in many ways of the greatest successes of the Reagan presidency. And I thought he was a much more exciting candidate, so that's why I signed up.

Marci Robinson: My name is Marci Robinson. I was the Congressional press secretary during the campaign. I come to the Kemp camp from a little bit of a different outlook. I was a big time lefty, I worked for CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System] and then became a convert, I became a Kemp Republican and a very enthusiastic one. And I echo everything that was said, but in particular it was his optimism and focus on every American on the economic scale that attracted me to him.

Kondracke: I'm going to ask each of you another question, and I know that you've all had vivid memories of your association with Jack Kemp, but if you could remember two or three of the most vivid just anecdotes, what would they be? Charlie?

Black: I was thrilled to see Jack speak at the 1980 Republican National Convention because it was the first time that he demonstrated to me that he could play in the major leagues. And in fact I had the chance that weekend after the convention speech to go with him to *Meet the Press*, where he was asked to appear. He also that day did a remarkable job on *Meet the Press* under the typical kind of tough questioning, and so I didn't talk to him right then in the summer of 1980 about running for president, but it was the first time I got interested in that. The other anecdotes would be more personal, that if Jack was your friend, it did not matter what you did or if you made a mistake or you got into some kind of trouble, he was your friend, had always in my case, and I think in most people's case, looked out for your interest. If he thought you needed something, he'd call and try to provide it if he possibly could. But also it was great fun when you got the chance to sit in the Kemp household during football games and hear him talk back to the television and prove that he knew a lot more than Brent [W.] Musberger did about what was going on in the game, and occasionally take a shout out at Jennifer or Judith or Jimmy about something, that they were in the way of the TV set or something. With Jack, he was the optimist not only in public but also in private, and always, in any setting, he was the leader of the group.

Cannon: I'm going to steal the first one from my wife because to me it's the quintessential Kemp story. My wife was Mary Brunette at the time, and she was the deputy press spokeswoman on the campaign, and we're one of I think six couples that became engaged through the campaign, so it's a very prolific campaign in terms of producing children and grandchildren of the Kemp campaign. She talked about Jack visiting with the ambassador from China to the United States, and they were discussing the one-child policy, and they went on, and Jack in his very personal way started talking to him about himself, his family, what was going on, and he asked him how many kids he had, and the ambassador took out his wallet, showed him three kids, and Jack said, "Which two of them would you like to get rid of?" And what I like about that as a story is that it was the courage and straightforwardness of Jack, it was the personal level of Jack to be able to engage the person he was dealing with, even at a high level, to make them have to think and look at it, and it was the idea that he was going to fight on that principle, even if it was awkward. I love that story; I wish I'd actually been there, but it's my favorite story I've heard from those with him. What I remember most about him was the fact that he couldn't avoid the human part of the campaign, he was so natural at it. But it would disturb speeches. He'd be in the middle of bringing a crowd to tears and he'd be talking about great principles, and he'd see somebody like Mark [D.] Siljander who'd retired from Congress and he'd wave and say, "Hey, Mark, how are you doing?" And suddenly it would stop. It was infectious. He really cared about the people that were around him, the people that he'd worked with, and to him people were more important, I think, than anything else. His own family, starting there, but also in policy, he saw it in terms of real living human beings.

Charen: I'll follow up on Frank's comments because you're looking over the course of the years as I have watching politics since having worked for Jack, you often see people in politics who you think, "Oh, you know, they have tremendous talent and they have all the right positions or many of the right positions from our point of view, but being a good candidate requires an incredible mix of things. You can't be a successful candidate unless you have all of them. I'll tell you the first time that I met Jack I saw with my own eyes that he clearly had one of the traits that makes for a successful politician. At the time I was working in the White House and I had gone over to the Heritage Foundation for the afternoon. There were a few speakers, Jack was going to be one of them. So there were a group of us from the White House, between eight and 10 staffers, who were backstage and were going to be introduced to Jack before he went out to give his talk. So, he came in and he shook hands with all of us and exchanged a couple of words and got our names, and then he went off and he gave a half an hour speech. And when he was finished, he came back through the same room where we were all still waiting and he said goodbye to each one of us by name. That's a real talent, and that shows first of all a great memory, but also that he paid attention to people and he sort of internalized who you were. I never saw him forget anybody's name. I'm notoriously bad about this myself, so I was very impressed that he always seemed able to remember people. And he had tremendous political courage and would take positions that would anger people on his own side, and certainly people on the other side, but I think that he was an extremely principled politician.

Robinson: I think the thing that I enjoyed most about working with Jack Kemp was that you always knew he was sincere, and I don't think anyone ever really questioned his sincerity. You saw it across the board in his life, whether he was thinking about his son's football game that he wasn't going to miss, both sons, or any of the causes that he was championing. And sometimes he did take on fights with or without the support that he needed to win because he just thought it was the right thing to do. I can remember quite a few of those incidences. He also had a very playful side to him that should really not be overlooked. He had a great sense of humor and often liked to play tricks on staff, and we often liked to play tricks on him, and he enjoyed it and he allowed for that kind of camaraderie, which was very healthy, especially if you had someone who was going to dissect every issue from every angle and put you through the ringer to make sure that he is very secure in taking the position that he was going to take on. I remember one time we were walking back from a press conference or a vote and we were heading through the building, and there was an escalator going down, there was a little hallway over there, and John [W.] Buckley and one or two other staff members were walking, heading down the escalator, and he thought it would just be so much fun to hide in the hallway and have everyone going down the escalator looking for him, and that happened more than once. He just enjoyed those little pranks. But the very bottom line is what strikes me more than anything is his optimism and his sincerity.

Kondracke: So Charlie, and everybody else, when and how did you get signed on to the campaign and what did you think at the time were Jack's prospects of actually getting the nomination?

Black: We actually, several of us including Frank and Jeffrey [L.] Bell, who's here, and one of my partners Roger [J.] Stone, one of my partners at the time, we really started working with Jack in 1984, and it was sort of a tacit plan to get him to run for president. He didn't have to commit to it and we didn't expect him to, and he didn't really make the decision until some time in the second half of 1986, but that group that had formed around him pretty much was the makings of a campaign team. We had to go out and recruit some other staff people and some other experts in media production and that kind of thing. Listen, he was the best political leader of that time, but he knew and we knew that his nomination was a long shot. No sitting congressman representing only one Congressional district had been nominated since the nineteenth century, number one. Number two, his opponents were the sitting vice president of the United States and the Republican leader of the U.S. Senate, who had been the majority leader of the U.S. Senate, both of whom had universal name identification in the country as well as with Republicans. Jack was well-known to the activists and the Party leaders, but when we started this his hard name identification among Republican voters was about 25 percent. The other two had a huge financial base from raising money for themselves and for others nationally for many years. Jack didn't have a very large financial base. We weren't starting from scratch, exactly, but we had to work for every dollar, as Frank can vouch for. And at the time we planned this race in late '86, early '87, we did not realize that [Marion G.] Pat Robertson would be such a huge factor in the race. There was an evangelical constituency in the Republican Party for many years, but as the first evangelical leader with a national following to attract that constituency. He turned out, in fact to be more dangerous to Jack's chances than [Robert J.] Bob Dole did.

Again, I think we were realistic, but he did it for the right reasons. He did think he was the rightful heir to the Reagan mantle and wanted to take the Reagan Revolution to the next step, take it further, as you heard at the beginning of his announcement speech, and we were all on board. We believed in him, we thought he was the best person to be president, so we had fun with it and I don't think until we actually lost that we considered it lost.

Kondracke: So up until the time that he, he had been identified as somebody who was going to run for president for a very long time, and there was a gearing up that began in '84, as you suggest, between that time and the time that he actually made the decision, was there ever any doubt that he was going to run?

Black: Oh, I wouldn't have guaranteed it. I thought it was 90 percent or so, but at some point he and Joanne sat down with the family and said, "Okay, we got to make this decision." Look, he knew if he ran he would give up his House seat, and that would mean he either won the long-shot chance to be president, or he'd have to go find a new job, a third career. So he was courageous and risked everything, so there wasn't a guarantee of that until he and the family made the decision.

Kondracke: When did you sign on?

Cannon: I worked for the political action committee prior to that and it was pretty standard at that point that you'd have a political action committee foundation and whatever office you held, and each of those would work on various aspects of creating a profile for a national figure, allow them to participate in elections around the country, allow

them to produce books, make trips to things, so I worked, I was deputy director of the political action committee, I guess, starting in '86, with the intention that Jack would run. But I want to emphasize something that Charlie said. I was 25, so I assumed we were going to win. But didn't really have a practical sense of all of the elements that it would take, but I remember Jack asking what the financial figure was going to be to be able to be a serious presidential candidate. I remember Charlie saying it was about \$25 million, I think. You can see how much things have changed today. But \$25 million with \$1,000 limits was an incredible amount to try to raise, and to try to do that with a base that was really a Congressional base rather than a Senate or vice presidential base was an enormous task. That was one of the things that from the beginning was something that the others really didn't have to spend that much time thinking about, but where we had to concentrate step by step by step to try to reach what was a reasonable figure for the race. I think we got to seventeen or eighteen million dollars by the end of the—

Black: After the federal matching funds we were over twenty, not too far shy of twenty-five.

Cannon: But it took everything we had to get to that.

Kondracke: Charlie, so how did you set about creating a campaign organization? Who did you hire first and second and third and so on, and how did you build the organization and who were the key people that you recruited?

Black: Well, we hired, and by the way, in a campaign like this we were all involved in one way or another in helping to organize the states, especially those of us who had worked in the Reagan campaigns, because we knew who the key players were in the states, but we hired a woman named Ann Stanley [phonetic], who was an organizer. She had worked for Reagan but also for the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee, had run a number of Congressional campaigns around the country. She was a great nuts and bolts organizer, and we hired Ann to organize everybody else and to get the states organized. You're going to hear from some of our state leaders, state and regional leaders, on the next panel. We had very good success at attracting some of the most effective people in the Reagan organization and in the conservative movement around the country. We had to run heavy on volunteers. We didn't have the option to go into a state and hire 12 or 15 people, to pay them to organize. We'd hire one or two, then they had to go recruit volunteers to do the rest of the work, and I think in terms of the grassroots organization, we certainly were more effective for the money spent than the other campaigns, who had more money and could go put more people on the payroll.

Kondracke: Jeff Bell had been a longstanding ally of Jack's from tax reform days and so on. He became the issues director, is that right?

Black: Well Jeff was actually more than that. He was the campaign director, he was more or less the number two guy to look after things under me, and Frank, as he said, was the director of operations and so he was kind of like the COO in terms of getting the detail work done in the campaign, Frank did it. Jeff did play a major role in issues and

policy. He was philosophically an alter-ego to Jack on a lot of these more complex issues like monetary policy, where I can only listen and pretend I knew what they were talking about, Jeff could go toe to toe with Jack and for that matter with Jude [T.] Wanniski and [Lewis E.] Lew Lehrman and others of similar intellect, so he played an important role in that. Jeff also was sort of the final arbiter of what issues we should be talking about at a give time.

Kondracke: What about John Maxwell, who was he?

Black: John [C.] Maxwell ran the political action committee during that stage of 1985 and '86, and the political action committee managed Jack's travel around the country and kept names of people who might be willing to be involved in the campaign later.

Kondracke: And your partner Roger Stone? What did he do?

Black: Well Roger did a lot of the political organization in the Northeast, especially in New Hampshire. You're going to hear from our New Hampshire folks in a few minutes, but Roger had worked New Hampshire and all the Northeast for Reagan. He also knew the Reaganites around the country, so he was very valuable in identifying the people we should be recruiting and helping recruit them.

Kondracke: In February of '87 you get [Edward J.] Ed Rollins aboard. Now how did that work? How did you, and I gather at the time since Rollins had been Reagan's '84 campaign manager, this was a big coup?

Black: It was a big coup for Jack. Ed had been White House political director and then the campaign manager of the successful '84 Reagan campaign, so at this time he was if not the biggest name in Republican politics at the operative level, certainly, one of the top two or three, and Ed would have, I think, been welcome in any of the other campaigns, but he liked Jack and Jack recruited him.

Kondracke: Jack personally recruited him?

Black: Yes, I had helped some, but it was Jack who got Ed to come on board, which was a big coup for us and a big addition to the campaign.

Kondracke: How did you all relate to this kitchen cabinet, the Jude Wanniskis and the Irving Kristols and Lew Lehrman and those kind of people? Where were they, what role did they play?

Black: We actually had several different groups, sort of a revolving kitchen cabinet, if you will. I don't think they ever all got together but maybe once or twice in the course of the whole campaign and the planning. But there was the group you mentioned, sort of the intellectual advisers. They would come in and meet with Jack, Jeff might be there, even Mona or somebody else on the policy staff. I wouldn't necessarily be in that meeting. The Congressional colleagues advisory, we had a number of Jack's colleagues who were for him and working for him, but his closest friends were [John V.] Vin Weber, [Newton L.] Newt Gingrich, [C.] Trent Lott, one or two others, they would meet sometimes for dinner frequently at the Kemp home. I would usually be in those discussions. Then you had the really, the really close family group of [Thomas P.] Tom Kemp, who was a

tremendous help in the campaign, and [Richard J.] Dick Fox and a couple others, who Jack had commissioned to sort of look over the shoulders of the staff and make sure that we knew where we stood financially, which was a wise thing to have, having smart business people to play that role.

Kondracke: Did you have a lot to do with Tom Kemp and Dick Fox? What did they actually do?

Cannon: They did two things. One, there was a certain standard that Jack had developed in the Congressional office, of maintaining great correspondence with people he met, being able to respond quickly on issue questions no matter what they were, and when you have a campaign exploding and you go from hundreds of letters to thousands and tens of thousands, they wanted to maintain some quality control over that. So there was a lot of questioning of how do you make sure that the Kemp brand and the Kemp quality gets maintained. The second thing was on the financial side. One of the big questions was how do you develop a list from where we were to the kind of list that would sustain a presidential campaign. They were, particularly Dick and Tom, were very involved in coming to the understanding that we could prospect at a loss in a way that most entities couldn't, that we could go ahead and get the matching funds that would give us net dollars from that. And then Charlie had developed a way to be able to borrow against that, to be able to fund activities well beyond what any other campaign of our size might have been able to do. They got to a point where there was a question about whether that was really dead or not, but it was accepted by the bank as collateral because it was guaranteed by the federal—so Dick and Tom were involved in all of

that, wanting to make sure that that all went smoothly, that the campaign didn't end with large debt, and I think that as Charlie said, it was a great help to make sure both quality control and financial control was there.

Kondracke: Who was the finance director?

[voices: Rod Smith [phonetic]

Kondracke: And who recruited him?

Black: Jack recruited him, he was a friend of mine, I recommended him, but he wasn't so sure how much money you could raise for Jack Kemp. Jack persuaded him to come try, and he became a believer and did an excellent job for us.

Kondracke: So kind of a baseline. There was a [Arthur J.] Finkelstein poll in May of 1986 of registered Republican voters around the country. It comes out Bush, 40; Dole, 8.5; Howard [H.] Baker [Jr.], 8.1 and Jack Kemp 6.6. I mean Bush with a huge lead. What was the strategy for winning the nomination against the sitting vice president?

Black: Let me give you a summary rather than take up the rest of the hour with a more detailed strategy.

Kondracke: We'll get to the detail.

Black: The system operated then just as it does today, that Iowa and New Hampshire tend to serve as a filter, and South Carolina as a

further filter, to narrow the race down to two or three people, and then you go, depending on the year and what the calendar is and how the delegates are allocated, you go down the calendar for a while and then somebody gets an overwhelming lead, and it's over. In those days, Iowa and New Hampshire were first and second, just like they are now. There was a Michigan contest that was earlier, but it wasn't a primary or a caucus, it was a set of county caucuses. I don't want to get off-track on that. But at any rate, the strategy was that Jack had a very good opportunity to run well in New Hampshire, and before he could, starting as he did, third in the race or maybe even fourth when Pat Robertson got up a head of steam, before you could take on Bush you had to get past Dole. You had to become the second-place person in the race. The place we thought we could do that was New Hampshire. So Iowa, which had many more social conservatives in the electorate than economic conservatives, we had to just sort of figure out how to survive Iowa and then get to New Hampshire, which had very few, relatively, social conservatives to economic conservatives. Jack, of course, was a social conservative, but his message was treated as economic, fiscal, tax reform message. So, we set out to finish third in Iowa, expecting to finish behind Dole and Bush there, but then we had devoted a lot of our time and money and advertising and effort to New Hampshire, hoping we could beat Dole there, finish second to Bush in New Hampshire, and then declare ourselves the conservative alternative to Bush and go to South Carolina and some more conservative states and make it a horse race. That's a summary of the strategy. A couple of things happened along the way. The most important one was that Pat Robertson showed up. In the beginning of the year nobody took him particularly seriously as a candidate. He showed up in August at the Aimes, Iowa straw poll

with bus after bus after busload of people, which was surprising to me, but didn't shock us as badly as it did the Bush people, who ended up finishing third at the Aimes straw poll, but Robertson established then that he was going to be a big player in Iowa, so we started working very hard to try to get past him, to make sure we finished third in Iowa, and we didn't. We finished fourth, which caused the press, which is the referee of this game, to say, "Okay, Kemp's out of it now." And just before Iowa we'd been even with Dole in the polls in New Hampshire, and we had the momentum versus Dole, we were in a position, if we executed properly, to finish second, ahead of Dole in New Hampshire, but the fourth-place finish in Iowa cut the legs out from under Jack's candidacy.

Cannon: Yes, I believe we were at 18 percent at one point and were moving clearly into second into New Hampshire right before that. The other thing is that Robertson trained his fire on us. He ran commercials and did his ground game targeted at taking the voters away from Jack specifically.

Kondracke: What was his case, what was he arguing?

Cannon: Seriousness about social conservatism, things like that. But he had stances like belief in millennial economics, but it was a deeply religious appeal to evangelical voters about how he connected with them a lot better. And he ran a substantial amount of radio and stuff aimed directly at us.

Kondracke: Mona, on a candidate identification level, I take it that what Jack was trying to do was to identify himself as the natural heir

to Ronald Reagan, and so how was it, you had Vice President Bush, who was, after all, vice president, so how was he going to separate himself or distinguish himself from Bush, as Reagan's heir?

Charen: Right. Well, to the degree I remember it, I think that we did talk about the—you guys can correct me if I'm not remembering it properly—but that all the other candidates in the race had been for raising taxes at one time or another except for Jack, and Dole was famously Mr. Tax Raiser for the welfare state, and they were not, of course, Bush had been the one to describe supply-side economics as voodoo economics, and so his claim to be the heir was suspect.

Whereas Jack of course had been the author of Kemp-Roth and was the intellectual father of the supply-side, at least for a politician in the political realm, of the supply-side revolution that was so responsible for the Reagan boom. And so that was the pitch, but of course as Charlie and Frank have pointed out, it was extremely difficult to run against a sitting vice president and also this sort of blind-siding swipe by Pat Robertson. I mean, these days, social conservative candidates are frequently just that, and economically conservative candidates are often just that, and Jack really did combine them in a completely sincere and passionate way. I think if it had not been for Robertson, he would have had a real claim to those social conservatives in Iowa.

Kondracke: Marci, was there anything that the Congressional office could do to sort of set up issues that would distinguish Jack from Bush and Dole?

Robinson: Bush was always suspect on economic policy and taxes, and Dole was always suspect as being viewed not so much an issue-

specific, in my view, Charlie is really the executive interpreter of all this, but he was seen as a deal-cutter, and so his word wasn't as trustworthy, I think, when you're looking at the base of the Party that was voting. So any time there was an opportunity to hammer Jack's message, and keep in mind, Jack refused to go negative, that was a big problem for everybody. [laughs] And Robertson was going negative, and when you go negative early in a campaign it's deathly.

Kondracke: How did Robertson go negative? What's the worst sort of thing—

Robinson: I'm trying to remember. Everything from a whispers campaign about nonsense to the ads, which I don't really remember. Frank and Charlie could probably address, or the Iowa people could address more concretely.

Black: Quickly, the radio ads he ran in Iowa were based, "you can't trust Jack Kemp on right to life. You go listen to him speak. You'll never hear him mention it," that kind of a pitch, that was inaccurate but—

Cannon: It was large volume and high-impact, especially after, you know the Iowa caucus really became, I think, critical after that, because he was able to go from being thought of as a silly candidate in some ways, to producing I think it was 1,000 people for the Aimes caucus, and that made him a much more serious candidate and that was the point at which he started to run the ads.

Kondracke: Famously Jack didn't know how to deliver a negative message himself, right?

Robinson: He wouldn't. He was opposed to it.

Black: Jack, truly his personality, and his leadership philosophy wanted to win on ideas, and he didn't want to tear anybody down. Now, he was willing to debate ideas, so like in the candidate debates he would talk to the other guys about their records and draw distinctions on the issues. He also, upon persuasion, believed in counter-punching, and so if Bush or Dole took a shot at him, then we could get him to respond, not defensively but to counter-punch. But no, he was largely the positive, optimistic person who believed in running on his merits and not tearing other people down. He did adapt to it over the last couple of months of the campaign. We can't say that he lost because he wouldn't go negative.

Kondracke: What's the most negative he ever got?

Black: Well, he turned around to Bush in a debate and said, "If you're the nominee of this Party, the Reagan Revolution is over." That was pretty personal. [laughter]

Kondracke: That was right at the end, right? In South Carolina?

Black: He hit Dole pretty hard about tax increases in TEFRA [Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act] in '82, even said, "You and your colleagues in the Senate persuaded Reagan to raise taxes when he

otherwise never would," and that kind of thing, but no, compared to some of the stuff you hear today, it wasn't very negative, no.

Robinson: He also had us on a leash. He really did not want us to even hint at being negative. John took some shots at other candidates.

Kondracke: John Buckley, who I've interviewed, who was his campaign press secretary, was the negative campaigner, as I get it, to the point where the Bush family decreed that he was not to be employed by the Bush administration at all. So what did John say about Bush and Dole and all that? Does anybody remember?

Black: Sure. Look, John was brilliant intellectually, and very witty, and so he would use the kind of little quips. I can't cite one specifically right now, but you can go back and find them, where Bush would say something about "now is not the time to increase taxes," and John would say something like "How would a rich guy know? One wonders if he knows how much tax he pays." It was Newt that came up with the line that Bob Dole was the tax collector for the welfare state, and so John had a habit of quoting other people like that. President Bush 41, who Jack and a lot of us worked for later when he was the nominee, had and has a fairly thin skin about some of what he considers personal attacks. Buckley sacrificed for the cause, [laughter] fell on the sword.

Robinson: It might have been the line, I think I remember one of them, that Bush supporters were out at coming out parties and the Kemp supporters were at bowling alleys and resting hotdogs, or

something like that. He was so clever at just framing George Bush's being somewhat out of touch, which stuck, unfortunately, being very rich, and Bob Dole being slightly bitter and a deal-cutter. I mean that was—

Charen: Not that they were for a tax on the rich, mind you.

Robinson: There was a little bit of that and it came through in a very clever way.

Kondracke: In May of '86, Ben [T.] Elliott, who was Ronald Reagan's chief speechwriter, joins the Kemp campaign. Was that viewed as a big coup too?

Black: Oh, certainly was among people in the intellectual community and the business of writing speeches, Ben had a terrific reputation, as did Mona and some of the other intellectuals who joined our campaign.

Kondracke: How did the speechwriting shop work?

Charen: When Jack used to introduce me as his speechwriter, I used to say "Well, I write them; he doesn't very often deliver them, because Jack was ebullient and full of ideas, and a little undisciplined, and so sometimes we would spend days working on a speech and going back and forth with drafts, and he would critique what you had done and tell you he wanted to do this differently or that differently, so you'd work hard. And then you'd go to the event, and Jack would have the speech with him, and he'd be up there on the podium, and he'd begin to give the speech and then he'd pull a clipping out of his vest pocket

and say, "You know, this was in the *Times* today and I really have to respond to this," and off he'd go on a tear about that.

Robinson: The press had the copy of his speech too.

Charen: Yes.

Black: We'd eventually get him to give it two or three days later. I think Jack actually delivered 10 to 12 prepared speeches in the course of the campaign. They were all substantive, and very good policy speeches. So that's enough, it just took a lot of work to get him to quit editing and then go give it.

Charen: Right.

Cannon: I think the other thing was that he used speeches as a way to have ideas compete, and phrases compete, till he understood the thing and completed the gap. Ben would write the most beautiful, soaring rhetoric, and there'd be back and forth over all the precise statements of things in order to get, I think, in his mind to a decision about all of the elements, whatever was at issue, foreign policy or what have you. And then once it was set in his mind, the speech had served the main purpose, which was it had clarified, it had presented it, and then he internalized it and would give it in his own words, maybe playing off a news clip or something else. Charlie's right. He would give the speech at a given point, but I think it was more to internalize and to fight out the ideas than from just a pure rhetorical value of the speech.

Black: One anecdote. We needed to give a detailed agriculture policy speech in Iowa, it was Iowa, and Jack said okay, but he was very unenthusiastic about it because he did not think agriculture policy was going to determine the future of Western civilization. And Jeff was pulling his hair out about this, so we got a couple of drafts written and had some stuff that was pretty sound policy, and Jeff sat down with Jack to go over it, and the draft comes back and it's about two-thirds of it about the gold standard. All the farmers' problems could be solved by going to the gold. And we had, because that was what the press used to label him as a stubborn, eccentric intellectual, we had gotten him to commit not to talk about the gold standard, and he did pretty well. He didn't bring it up very much. He loved it if somebody in the crowd asked him a question about it. At any rate, getting that speech done and without the gold standard in it, it was terrific agriculture policy. He gave it at I believe the Iowa Farm Bureau, and never said a word about it again.

Kondracke: What do you think were his best speeches?

Charen: Well, I think his basic stump speech, which he could do completely extemporaneously, was incredibly uplifting, and it was very similar to what you saw in the announcement. It combined a belief in the liberating aspects of human freedom, that if people are free and are allowed to flourish, that they will raise themselves, but not just themselves, but their whole country. He believed that the Declaration of Independence was a document not just for us, but for all time and all places, and that it was a document of universal application. And so when he would talk about those things, I think he was incredibly inspiring and he was at his best. He always brought foreign policy into

it as well, and he had an unyielding and principled opposition to tyranny, which was demonstrated both with regard to regimes of the left and the far right, and he was very consistent and principled about those things. So those were his best speeches, and you didn't ask this, but I'll add that I think where Jack did sometimes get off track is when he would allow his interest, sometimes arcane interest in something about economics to take him off into the realm where the audience just wasn't able to follow him. And he didn't rein it in, he would sometimes give, you know, because he was so excited about the ideas and he was really enthusiastic, and he wanted to share it. Sometimes, to a certain degree you could bring along your audience, but when you started talking about labor and capital and return on the—it would begin to get just a tiny bit arcane, I think.

Kondracke: And too long.

Charen: Too long, yes.

Kondracke: Somebody said, and maybe this is what Charlie is saying, that you would write a speech for him that had a sound bite in it that the press was meant to take away and put in the lead, and then he wouldn't deliver the sound bite.

Charen: That did happen sometimes.

Robinson: He would, I'm trying to remember what was it? Heritage? I can't remember. Michelle Van Cleave will remember. There was a speech that was prepared, a lot of work went into these speeches and you need to understand that the Congressional office was really run

almost like a think tank, with resident scholars and adjunct fellows that were all over the place. It was like a revolving door. You just didn't know who was going to walk in next, and the speechwriters, to their credit, Ben and Mona, really worked very closely with the policy team in putting the speeches together, because they knew Jack wouldn't read it if it didn't resemble what he really believed in. But he gave out a speech and everyone had it, and they were waiting, the cameras were all lined up waiting for the sound bite, and as most camera guys did at the time, waited for the sound bite, ready to pack up and go, and he never gave it. He started off by saying "You all have the speech I was going to give today, but let me tell you what's really on my mind." At which point the speechwriters were found fainting.

Charen: Yes, I think it was a big foreign policy speech. I could be wrong, but I remember that happened more than once.

Robinson: Yes.

Kondracke: Did you ever complain to him about that? Did the campaign complain to him?

Black: Yes.

Kondracke: Okay, and then what?

Black: He would eventually give the speech, usually, a few days later. Could I just say one thing that he deserves credit for? That, yes, he always talked a long time, and having traveled some with Jack for

years and years, he would go into a setting where he was expected to talk 30 minutes, and an hour and 10 minutes later he would stop. And I would ask him why, and he'd say, "Listen, I may never see some of those 300 people again, so they need to hear every idea." Every idea, every subject had to be covered, and he meant it. But he did, to his credit, the last six months or so of the campaign, frankly under pressure from Ed Rollins and me, he got so he could give a 20-minute stump speech, and he got it to 20 minutes, he'd even pride himself sometimes on finishing it at 18, and because a lot of those places, people wanted to do Q and A. It wasn't practical to talk for an hour and then do the Q and A. So he got so that he could do it, and he did it pretty consistently for the last five or six months of the campaign. He dropped out of the race, a week or two later he made a public appearance somewhere, some state Republican Party or something. He got back and he called me, he said, "I spoke 50 minutes!" I said, "You are your own man. Get out. You don't work for me anymore." [laughter]

Cannon: He's one of the few politicians who never said anything that he didn't believe, or didn't feel comfortable about the way he was saying it. That's his strength, that's his strength that he had, that anything that he said he was willing to stand behind. And that's why he cared about the way he said it.

Kondracke: Let me just go back to the money, and we'll dispense with this. You know there was a fundraiser that you held in November of '85 in New York, black tie, a million dollars. And it was some sort of record. Then after that, I read through the clips that you were always borrowing against federal funding, or there was a telegram that got

leaked about how you were desperate for raising cash, and stuff like that, and some reports were that Jack just hated to raise money, that he hated to make the phone calls. So how bad were you off financially?

Black: Let me talk generally, and Frank probably could provide more detail. That fundraiser in New York was for the political action committee, where people could give up to \$5,000 or \$10,000 a couple, and a lot of people who didn't later support him for president came and gave money to that, so the money was well-used in his travel, and making contributions to candidates. We had, during the course of the presidential campaign, we had a number of high dollar fundraisers, and some of them would do as much as one hundred thousand, maybe even a hundred and fifty, but we probably raised a total of three or four million off those events. Jack did not like to make fundraising calls. He didn't mind calling people to ask them to host a fundraiser, so we'd get him to call a few people to be on the committee for the fundraiser, and then we could do that. But we knew going in, we were going to be driven by small donations and direct mail. In those days you didn't have telemarketing or internet fundraising, it was all direct mail. So direct mail, as Frank alluded to earlier, you invest money in prospecting, you probably take a small loss on that prospecting, but two things: every one of those small donors was matchable by the Federal Election Committee matching funds, and near the end of the campaign, you quit prospecting, go to your house file, those people who have given, and that you make money on. So the kind of system you're operating under is you put a few hundred thousand bucks into prospecting, you get 80 percent of it back, you file those donations to the Federal Election Committee, you don't get that money until

January of the election year, but the banks considered it good collateral, so you'd go borrow against it. So at any given time we probably didn't have much net cash flow, but we had that federal money coming, with which we paid off the loans and then still had the cash to run in the last couple of months of the campaign.

Cannon: That's absolutely right. It became a model for people to use who were non-elite candidates, to be able to use grassroots, and I think what was misunderstood was the degree to which a small dollar campaign became reliant on matching funds. Nobody talks about this now because the limits are much higher, the amount of participant [phonetic] at the high-dollar end were very high, but you had to raise it at \$1,000 a chunk, and the first \$250 was matchable, but what was precious to you was somebody who gave you \$30 five times, seven times, and it might have cost you \$10 to find him or it might have cost you \$40 to find that \$30 contribution the first time, but you got the match the first time, and you got it again and again and again. And I think that there was a complete misunderstanding about that, including among some people internal to the campaign about how that dynamic produced net dollars over the whole period of time.

Kondracke: So you got a worse press on money-raising than you actually was your financial situation?

Cannon: Absolutely. We were able to finance all of the commercials and the things that Charlie had in the budget. We met payroll every time.

Kondracke: Everybody went off payroll in New Hampshire, though, right? You were—

Cannon: Yes, at that point you're putting every net dollar you can into it, people wanted to sacrifice to be able to give us the best shot that we could, but—

Black: After Iowa, when we finished fourth and the press kind of wrote us out of the race, then we were, to use the correct phrase for this setting, throwing the long ball to see what we could do to stay in, so you had to get everybody to work as volunteers and not spend anything, except money for commercials and on the ground contact in the states. You know, a Bush or a Dole could go to a bunch of these fundraisers and get a lot of thousand-dollar contributions, so they got some matching money for it, but they always had a balance without having to borrow money to reinvest in the mail. But in the end, we could go back and look at our books, and we paid off all the loans and had in the neighborhood of ten to twelve million net that we invested in the campaign.

Kondracke: And how much debt did the campaign leave when it was done?

Black: The day that Jack dropped out of the race, we had all the bills paid and \$200,000 in the bank. Now, every campaign has cleanup costs. You've got to do all of these FEC [Federal Election Commission] filings, they do an audit, it costs you a lot of money in accountants and lawyers, but your house file was still good to raise some money, so the

\$200,000 didn't mean that was all that was needed to finish the job, but we were in the black on the day Jack withdrew from the race.

Kondracke: But when all is said and done, how much did Jack have to raise to pay off all of his debts as a result of the campaign?

Cannon: I don't remember the exact amount.

Black: Half a million, something like that.

Cannon: But compared to the size of the file that was loyal to him at that time, it was not a huge amount, and in fact, there were people arguing to go deeper into debt to be able to spend more, but I think that's where Tom and Dick came in, that we never got to a position where we weren't able with a discreet number of mailings, to be able to take care of the debt.

Kondracke: Some people say that he didn't run in '96 because he didn't want to be in debt again to the extent that he'd been after '88. Is that fair?

Cannon: I don't think so.

Black: Not based on conversations I had with him about running in '96. It didn't come up. That doesn't mean he didn't talk to somebody about it.

Kondracke: Thank you very much, Panel One. We're going to now have some of the state leaders, and then you guys will be back. Thank you.