

JACK KEMP  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with  
EDWARD J. (ED) RUTKOWSKI  
July 7, 2011

Interviewer  
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JACK KEMP FOUNDATION  
WASHINGTON, DC

Kondracke: This is a [Jack] Kemp Oral History Project interview with Ed Rutkowski, former teammate on the Buffalo Bills with Jack Kemp, and later his First District director in Buffalo. We are at Ed Rutkowski's house in Hamburg, New York, and today is July 7, 2011.

What do you think Jack Kemp's most significant personality traits were; character traits?

Rutkowski: Well, his determination, his passion. As Jeff [Kemp] or Jimmy [Kemp], would say, Jack's passion was passion." He was passionate about everything he did, whether it was politics or football or going to the movies or playing bumper pool with me in my house or shooting hoops or something. He was very passionate about what he did, and you can't take that away from him.

I think there was a famous German philosopher, [Georg W.F.] Hegel, who said that nothing can be accomplished or nothing has been accomplished without passion. I always like to tell that story about the Greeks; they never wrote obituaries. They only asked one question of a person when they died: did he or she have passion in what they did. And he had it in spades.

Kondracke: Where did it come from? Did you ever talk to him about where he got this from?

Rutkowski: I don't know, but he always talked about his roots in California, his dad owning the trucking firm, and how he took a company that only had one truck and then

made some money out of that and bought a bunch of other trucks and hired other people. Jack was one of the drivers on the route, and that's probably where he learned those infamous, or famous, driving skills of his. I think he learned it the hard way. He earned that passionate way of living.

Kondracke: So when did you first meet him?

Rutkowski: Met him when I first came to Buffalo. I came to Buffalo as a rookie in 1963 from the University of Notre Dame. Jack had been in Buffalo the year previous to that. [Louis H.] Lou Saban, who was the coach of the Buffalo Bills at that time, picked him up on the waiver list from the [San Diego] Chargers. Jack had a broken finger, and I think they tried to hide him on an injured list, and I think Lou Saban discovered that and he paid a hundred bucks for Jack. Jack's favorite joke about it was, "I didn't mind them getting me for a hundred bucks, but when they asked for change, that really bothered me." [laughs]

So I met him when I first came to Buffalo. We lived here in Hamburg and Jack lived in Hamburg also, about half a mile away, so he and I would drive to and from practice, and that's how we developed our close relationship.

I looked at Jack as not only a good friend but kind of like an older brother. I had a lot of respect for him and admired him and was deeply appreciative and admiring of his intellect. He was a self-taught individual, especially when it comes to economics.

Kondracke: So you traveled every day to practice with him. Would you say that you were close personal friends? Did you talk about your cares and your families and stuff like that, or was it more about football?

Rutkowski: Both. Both. It was about family and it was about football. He would always talk about Jeff and Judith [Kemp] and Jennifer [Kemp] and Jimmy, and always had a fond regard for his children and was very family oriented. Couldn't say enough about JoAnne [Kemp]. She was the glue that held the Kemp family together.

We had an ideal opportunity, driving to and from practice, to talk about our personal lives and about football, and I had a chance to sit there and listen to him talk about politics, and that was my indoctrination to Republicanism. Because I'm an old Democrat from the coal mines of Pennsylvania. I mean, you grow up in Pennsylvania, and I always tell the story about my mother and my grandmother going to the voting booth when I was a little kid. They took me along with them, and I recall vividly my mother taking my grandmother into the voting booth and they closed the curtain and there was a big commotion in there. When the curtain opened, my mom had my grandmother by the arm and she said, "Mom, you voted Republican. You voted Republican."

My grandmother, to this day I can see her, she said, "No, I voted Democrat. A, B, C, D. D, Democrat." [laughs]

So when I came to Buffalo, I had never met a Republican until I met Jack and we started talking politics, and what he was talking about I certainly agreed with. He said, "You're not a Democrat; you're a Republican."

I said, "I realize that."

He said somewhere along the line he was going to get involved in politics after football and he wanted me to help him. In fact, when he retired, I happened to retire at the same time, I ran his campaign and I wanted to switch affiliations. He said, "Oh, no, no. You keep your affiliation as a Democrat because it'll look good in Buffalo," because there are a lot of good Democrats in Buffalo, especially in Cheektowaga, which is heavily Polish.

Kondracke: So what arguments did he use on you to persuade you that you were a Republican?

Rutkowski: He didn't. He just talked about what was happening at the national and the local level, talked about the spirit of entrepreneurship. We would exchange books. He liked to give me books about economics. He always used to say the greatest entrepreneurial activity is the huddle, the football huddle. You get a group of people together and you make a decision, and everybody has to agree to perform a certain role in the successive play that's called. As a quarterback, you have about three and a half seconds to accomplish what you set out to do. If you're successful, you're rewarded, and if you're not successful, you're penalized.

I said I certainly believe in that. He liked to use that analogy many times about entrepreneurs.

Kondracke: So were you roommates when you traveled?

Rutkowski: No. We had a situation where if we went on an away trip, we would get a list of people who we were going to room with. I recall once we were coming back from practice and Jack had a list. Jack was our team captain at that time, and he said, “Did you see the room list?”

I said, “Yes.”

He said, “Why do they have all the white guys rooming with all the white guys and all the black guys rooming with all the black guys? Why don’t they mix it up, make it interracial?”

I said, “I don’t know, Jack. You’re the captain. Find out.”

So he called Jack Horrigan, who was our Vice President of Public Relations for the Buffalo Bills, and he asked him. He said, “Why don’t we have blacks rooming with whites?”

He said, “I don’t know. We thought you guys wanted it that way.”

He said, “No, we don’t want it that way. We want to have interracial rooming.”

So, I don’t know, we might have been the first team of professional football to do that. Jack roomed with Art Powell. I roomed with Booker [T.] Edgerson. Booker just came on the Wall of Fame. To this day, those relationships that we developed in Buffalo as teammates still carry on today. Some of my best friends here in Buffalo are my black teammates: Charley [E.] Ferguson, Booker Edgerson, [Ernest] Ernie Warlick. [George] “Butch” Byrd used to be a good, close friend of mine. He’s in Boston now.

Kondracke: Was there any beef from anybody when Jack decided to mix it up?

Rutkowski: No, it was kind of neat, and not at all. Because I roomed with Booker the one weekend we were playing the Kansas City Chiefs, and Booker learned a lot about Polish kielbasa and I learned a lot about black-eyed peas, and that was good.

Kondracke: So who decided that he was “the senator,” so called?

Rutkowski: Well, I think it was through osmosis. Jack would always let you know where he stood on a lot of issues, and a lot of people respected him for his keen intellect and the fact that he would take a position. Witness the situation with blacks rooming with the white teammates with the Buffalo Bills. So I think people respected that because he just didn’t talk about things; he acted on what he believed was right. So I think that just carried on and everybody admired him for that.

Kondracke: Speaking of the integration issue, were you there at the All-Star Game in New Orleans when the black players refused to play because they were discriminated against?

Rutkowski: No, I wasn’t, but I heard a lot about it from Jack. Jack was down there with Ernie Warlick and [Charlton C. ] “Cookie” Gilchrist, who recently passed away.

My favorite story was when Jack and Cookie and Ernie were trying to catch a cab back to the hotel and these cabs kept passing them. They finally ran up to a stoplight where there was a cab stopped, and Cookie was banging on the side of the door. He said, “We want a cab.” The cabbie said, “Y’all got to get a colored cab.”

Cookie said, "I don't care what color it is. We just want a cab."

Ernie Warlick was talking about how they got on the bus to go to the hotels, and the first stop people were getting off the bus to go to the hotel, and when it came to the black guys, they said, "Oh, hold on. You can't stay here. We have a special hotel for you guys. We have a black hotel."

The more those guys thought about it, you know, we never experienced that back here in Buffalo. Ernie and Jack and Cookie just thought that was inappropriate, not the right thing to do, and everybody talked about it and they decided that—and even in the stadium, the end zone had special segregated seating. Blacks couldn't sit with whites; they had to sit in a special section. They had certain lavatories. They couldn't go to white lavatories or concession stands. So they just said, "This is not acceptable." They got together and just decided that they're not going to play the game there, and they moved it to Houston, and good for them.

Kondracke: So Jack at that stage was the president of the AFL [American Football League] Players Association.

Rutkowski: I think he was, yes.

Kondracke: So did he have any involvement in the movement of the game to Houston?

Rutkowski: Oh, I'm sure he did, yes. Jack worked with Ernie Warlick and Cookie in doing that. Cookie, although he was vociferous about it, he didn't want to be the lead



guy. He wanted Jack to take a leadership position along with Ernie, and I think they did that.

It's kind of interesting, because Cookie would call Jack a lot during the year, and he'd call me once or twice a year. We developed a pretty good relationship and a very close relationship. When Jack passed away, I had to call Cookie. We were on the phone and I told him that Jack had passed away. Here's Cookie Gilchrist; six-foot-four, two hundred and forty-five, two hundred and fifty pounds, just as mean as can be and as tough as can be, and when I told him that Jack had passed, there was a long pause and he started sobbing on the phone. He said, "This is the saddest day of my life to hear that Jack has passed away." That's kind of the relationship that all of us had formed and bonded when we were teammates with the Buffalo Bills.

Kondracke: But he was kind of reserved. He didn't go out partying with everybody and playing poker on planes and stuff like that.

Rutkowski: No. No, absolutely. I recall vividly when we were at training camp up in Niagara University, and on a Friday night after practice we'd be able to go out and then come back for curfew at eleven o'clock at night, a lot of guys would go out drinking beer and go to some of the parties at some of the taverns up there, and Jack would take me down to the B & B Bookstore in Niagara Falls and we'd go through *The New York Times* and *Time* and *Newsweek* and *U.S. News & World Report*. [laughs] People to this day don't believe that, but it's a true story. Yes, he would drag me down to the B & B

Bookstore and we'd start going through all those magazines and he'd take them back to the room and start reading that stuff.

Kondracke: Did anybody think he was standoffish?

Rutkowski: No, not at all. Not at all.

Kondracke: How did he get away with it, then?

Rutkowski: Because he was Jack. They figured, "You're our leader. You learn all that stuff and you lead us. You do your homework and you do the studying, and let us go out and do the other stuff." They had that kind of respect in his judgment, of his judgment.

Kondracke: Was there anybody in the Bills who didn't like him?

Rutkowski: No. No. No way.

Kondracke: Who picked captains?

Rutkowski: The team would pick the captains. [William L.] Billy Shaw and Jack were co-captains.

Kondracke: Did you get involved in the players' union?

Rutkowski: No. No, we all belonged to the union, but I know that Jack had some pretty innovative ideas that he tried to get passed. One was a CAP, I think it was a career adjustment pay, because when people retired from professional football, they were going from a pretty good level of income to a level of income that wasn't commensurate with their football salary. If you played professional football for four or five years and all of the sudden you weren't playing professional football, you had to start, like, a new career, and your peers had five years of experience on you. So it was tough to come into a mid-level professional career to get the same kind of pay that your peers might have been able to get because they had five more years of experience on you. So he had proposed that. I don't know if that was ever accepted, but he had some pretty unique economic ideas.

Kondracke: Any others?

Rutkowski: That was about the biggest one that I can remember.

Kondracke: So when did you first vote Republican then?

Rutkowski: When did I first vote Republican? Well, I think it was for John F. Kennedy.

[laughs]

Kondracke: No, John F. Kennedy was a Democrat.

Rutkowski: Oh, Democrat, yes. Yes, that's right. Oh, I don't know.

Kondracke: Was it for Jack Kemp?

Rutkowski: Well, of course it was for Jack Kemp.

Kondracke: Had you ever voted Republican before 1970?

Rutkowski: Yes.

Kondracke: Did you vote for [Richard M.] Nixon or for [Hubert H.] Humphrey?

Rutkowski: I voted for Nixon, yes. But Jack always wanted me to try to see if I could keep my Democratic affiliation because he thought that that would look good that he would have a member of his staff who was not a hard-core Republican.

Kondracke: So what about [Barry M.] Goldwater? Did you vote for Goldwater?

Rutkowski: Absolutely, yes. Jack was a big Goldwater fan.

Kondracke: So Jack had changed your mind from 1963 to 1964?

Rutkowski: He didn't really change my mind. I agreed with the positions that he enunciated, and he said, "You know, you're not really a Democrat. You're a Republican. That's a Republican philosophy." I realize that now, but when you're in old Pennsylvania, in the coal mines of Pennsylvania, they just automatically assume that you grew up as a Democrat because your parents were Democrats, your grandparents were Democrats.

Kondracke: So how far away from here did he live? Did you live in this house in those days?

Rutkowski: Yes.

Kondracke: Where did he live?

Rutkowski: He lived on [50] Idlewood [Avenue]. It's about maybe a mile or so away from here.

Kondracke: And when did he sell that house and move to Washington [D.C.]?

Rutkowski: He sold the house when he was elected, because he had to move to Washington. He had to keep a residency here. There was a residency that he bought on Long Avenue just so he had a residency in the district, but he spent most of his time in Washington and would fly back here on the weekends.

Kondracke: When did you first get the idea that he was going to run for political office? When did he first start talking about that?

Rutkowski: He always talked about it, even when we played football. He said eventually he would like to get involved in politics. He was working for, I think, the Republican National Committee during the off-season. [Herbert G.] Herb Klein, who was at the newspaper in San Diego, hired him to be a writer, and Jack had written some articles. Jack had a very conservative Republican point of view, and Herb was kind of like his political mentor. He got involved in, I think, the Nixon campaign or the Goldwater campaign during the off-season. Did a lot of political things during the off-season after football.

Kondracke: Did he ever talk about going back to California to run for political office?

Rutkowski: No, he didn't. The only thing he talked about going back to California—and this is something we might want to get involved in later on—was about the Commissioner of the National Football League, if you're interested in that.

Kondracke: Sure. What did he say about that?

Rutkowski: Well, he was close to [Alvin Ray] Pete Rozelle. JoAnne and Jack had a very good relationship with Pete and Carrie Rozelle. Jack—this is when he was in

Congress—he thought eventually that if and when Pete Rozelle retired, he'd like to become Commissioner of the National Football League. We talked about it and he said, “Do you think they'd always have to have the National Football League office in New York City? Do you think they can move it to California?”

I said, “Well, if you're the commissioner, you can move it anywhere you want to.”

He said, “Well, that'd be neat. I can move the office out to California, maybe San Diego someplace, still keep the office in New York. You run the New York office and I'll run the California office.”

I said, “That sounds good.”

So for years, I mean, that was my train of thought, that eventually when Jack got out of politics and Rozelle retired, Jack would slide into the commissioner's office and I would be his right-hand guy and I'd be running the National Football League New York City office.

But something very interesting happened. [George H.W.] Bush had asked Jack to become a member of his Cabinet and Jack had made a commitment to become HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] secretary.

So something happened in the Rozelle family, and I don't know what it was, but it kind of caught everybody off guard. Pete Rozelle resigned as commissioner. I called Jack and I said, “What do you want to do? The plan was to always try to get involved and you were going to succeed Rozelle.”

He said, “I don't know. I just feel uncomfortable doing it because I made a commitment to Bush about coming on his Cabinet.”

I said, “Jack, this was the plan. Let me make some calls on your behalf.”

He said, “Why don’t you do that, because I’d feel uncomfortable doing that.”

Sometimes your memory plays tricks on you, but I recall I called [Norman] Norm Braman because I had met Norm Braman through Jack—he was the owner of the Philadelphia Eagles—and asked him if he would support Jack as Commissioner of the National Football League. He was very much for it. Norm was a big Jack Kemp fan.

I then called the Cleveland Browns, [Arthur B.] Art Modell. Art said, “I’d have no problem with Jack as commissioner. I called [Allen] Al Davis. Al didn’t have a problem. And then something very interesting happened. I called Ralph [C.] Wilson [Jr.], the owner of the Buffalo Bills. I got him on the phone and I said, “Mr. Wilson, I’m calling on behalf of Jack. As you know, Commissioner Rozelle resigned or retired. Jack would like to be commissioner.”

There was kind of a long pause, and he said, “Eddie, I love you like a son, but why are you calling me? Why isn’t Jack calling me? This is a big job.” He said, “You shouldn’t be calling me.” And he sounded like he was getting a little testy with me. He said, “You shouldn’t be calling me. Jack should be calling me. You tell him that.”

So I said, “Yes, Mr. Wilson, I will,” and we hung up.

As soon as we hung up, I called Jack. It’s like, “Houston, we have a problem.” I said, “Jack, you got a problem.”

He said, “What?”

I told him about the conversation I had with Ralph, and I said, “If you can’t get the support of your own owner, nothing’s going to happen. You’ve got to call him.”



He said, "I can't do that. I made a commitment to Bush and I can't break that commitment."

I admired him and respected him for not going back on his word, but, to me personally, I mean, that was not only his plan, but that was my future. I thought, "Oh, boy. Where do we go from here?" But I respected him for that decision.

[Paul J.] Tagliabue became Commissioner of the National Football League and Jack went on to serve at HUD. I tried to convince him. I said, "Jack, if you want to get involved in politics again," you know, the holy grail of politics, when you're somebody like Jack, is eventually the presidency. I said, "You could be Commissioner of the National Football for ten, fifteen years. You would have national and international recognition and fame, and then if you wanted to run again in politics, you'd have no problem getting back into politics."

He said, "I can't do it. I just can't go back on my word."

Kondracke: During all those years when he talked about it, what years would those be?

Rutkowski: Oh, boy. Let's see.

Kondracke: He was HUD secretary from '88 to '90.

Rutkowski: I was his district representative at that time, so it had to be those years between '70 and '78. Yes, it was during those years.

Kondracke: So did he lift a finger to actually pave the way for him to succeed Rozelle?

Rutkowski: Well, he always had that close relationship with Pete Rozelle, but he never shared with me if he had put that plan in place or if he had ever talked to Rozelle about if Rozelle would pave the way or smooth the way for Jack to become his successor. He never shared that with me if indeed he had had that kind of a conversation with Rozelle.

Kondracke: So, going back to 1970, how did his campaign for Congress unfold? How did it get rolled out?

Rutkowski: Well, first of all, we worked with an ad agency. Alden Schutte, who was the creative director, said, “One, you look too boyish.” We had to make him look older than he was. They had painted little crow’s-feet on the edge of his eyes and disheveled his hair a little bit—he had little pieces of hair hanging out—just to make him look older because he had kind of a baby face about him. His voice, they wanted him to try to develop a deeper voice. When people say, “Do you do an imitation of Jack?” I go, [demonstrates], “Jack Kemp. How you doing? Pleasure to meet you.”

One of the problems was that although he had great name recognition in Buffalo, a lot of people would say, “Why does a football player think he should be a congressman? What qualifications does a football player have to become a congressman?”

Well, when we realized that—you get that information through polling—we realized that we had to get him out to as many groups as possible. We had this group

called the Kemp Campaigners. These were women who dressed up with the Kemp outfits and everything. We tried to have coffee klatches with neighborhoods so that we could get Jack in front of groups of people and have him articulate the issues and show that he can, you know, walk and chew gum at the same time. He was very knowledgeable about the issues, and once we got him in front of people like that, word spread and we realized that although he had very good name recognition, we had to overcome that image of the dumb jock football player.

Kondracke: Did you actually poll on the dumb-jock issue?

Rutkowski: Probably did. I don't recall the results of that. Alex Armonderos was our campaign manager at that time. You'd pick some of those vibes up from some of the people you talk to, like, "What the hell does Jack think he's got to be qualified to be a congressman?"

We said, "Well, you know, he's not just a dumb jock; he's a quarterback. You've got to be smart to be a quarterback. He worked during the off-season for Goldwater. He's a student of politics and he understands what economics are all about."

Even though he won, he only won by 51 percent of the vote because our first campaign was against [Thomas P.] Tom Flaherty. He was an Irish lawyer who was a widower with four or five kids. It was a tough campaign. I recall the night of the campaign we were driving through the tollbooth here in Hamburg, and when the results were first coming in, they weren't too good. They had Jack trailing, and I thought, "Oh, boy. This is going to be a long night." But when the outlying suburban areas came in,

which were heavily Republican, things turned around and he eventually won by 51 percent of the vote.

Kondracke: What was his last season? Was it '68 or '69?

Rutkowski: I think it was '69 or '70.

Kondracke: Well, he ran in '70, so he couldn't have been playing in '70.

Rutkowski: Sixty-nine, then, it would have been.

Kondracke: What was the year that you played quarterback?

Rutkowski: That was '68. That's when Jack got injured, along with [Thomas R.] Tom Flores and a bunch of other quarterbacks. I ended up the last part of the season as the quarterback for the Bills.

Kondracke: So who played in '69?

Rutkowski: I think it was Jack. I think he had recovered from his knee injury, because he had one year with O.J. [Simpson]. Yes, I'm pretty sure it was Jack. Yes, it must have been Jack, because I went up to Montreal as a quarterback. I played one year as a

quarterback with the Allouettes, and then when Jack decided to retire, he wanted me to help him run his campaign.

I wasn't too keen on getting out of football. I thought I could play about four or five more years. You always think that, but I was at the point in my life where I didn't want to go from one team to another team, different parts of the country, and pick your family up and move them. So I made a decision that that was a pretty good chapter of my life. I want to go on to something new. This is my good friend Jack and I believe in what he stands for and I want to help him, and it's a new chapter for me in my life. So I decided to help him in his campaign. I ran his volunteer campaign.

Kondracke: Did he seek the nomination? Did he have a primary in '70?

Rutkowski: No.

Kondracke: So did he get endorsed by the Erie County Republicans?

Rutkowski: Yes, I think it was George Bellanca at that time.

Kondracke: Al Bellanca?

Rutkowski: Al Bellanca. I'm thinking of George Borelli. George Borelli was a political reporter. Al Bellanca at that time, yes, he was keen on Jack and very much wanted Jack to run.

Kondracke: So did Bellanca ask him to run or did he suggest to Bellanca that he run?

Rutkowski: I think Al asked Jack if he was interested, and Jack said he was. Then we started talking with some of the businesspeople and getting their support, and people were very high on it.

Kondracke: Do you know who else he consulted with?

Rutkowski: No. I know a lot of the local people at that time who became involved in his campaign, Jim Dillon was a good banking friend of his, Jake Schoelkopf, I think was his first finance chairman. There was Mickey Buckley, who was a lawyer. He was a resident of Hamburg and a good friend of the Kemps. Myself, Dennis McDade, who was an accountant.

Kondracke: Did he try the idea out on any media people?

Rutkowski: The idea?

Kondracke: The idea of running, his running. Did he float it with media people before he actually announced?

Rutkowski: I don't think so, no. No, I don't recall him talking to any of the media people about it.

Kondracke: Do you know if he talked to Rick Azar about it?

Rutkowski: Could have. Could have.

Kondracke: Did it get into the papers as speculation before he actually—

Rutkowski: I think there was some speculation. The congressman previous to that was [Richard D.] Max McCarthy, and he had decided he wanted to run for the Senate, and then when something happened, he was going to try to come back and run for his congressional seat and there's something that prevented him from doing that. So there was a lot of political speculation about what would happen in that congressional seat. Jack, having the name recognition, a lot of people thought that he would be a good candidate.

Kondracke: So if Max McCarthy had kept the seat, had decided to continue as a congressman, would Jack have run against him?

Rutkowski: Would have been a tough race. Would have been a tough race. I think he would have, but that would have been a tough race because then you're running against

an incumbent. When you get a novice running against an incumbent, especially in a district that's a pretty strong Democratic district, it would have been a tough race.

Kondracke: So he never talked about ever going back to California to run for Congress?

Rutkowski: No.

Kondracke: How Democratic was the district? Was McCarthy an accident or did he represent the political complexion of the district? Did it go Democratic in presidential years, and did it have a Democratic executive and all that?

Rutkowski: No, the Erie County executive was always a Republican. At that time I think it was Ed Rath. But there was some hard Democratic districts especially in Cheektowaga. I don't know if Jack had any part of the city of Buffalo at that time. I don't think he did, but the overlay was a majority of Democrats in that district.

Kondracke: But it was blue-collar?

Rutkowski: Blue-collar, yes.

Kondracke: Ethnic?



Rutkowski: Ethnic, yes. That's another thing. I don't know if I told you the story that when Jack was head of our Players Association, the predominant Democratic congressman in the district was [Thaddeus] Ted Dulski, a cigar-chomping, gruff Democratic congressman, and thought very highly of Jack and liked him a lot, even though he was a Democrat, wrote a very nice piece in the *Congressional Record* about Jack's accomplishments as head of the Players Association. So we took that page out of the *Congressional Record*, which had the seal of Congress on it. On the back of it we printed "Can a union president ever be elected to Congress?" Because Jack was president of our Players Association.

I recall vividly we'd go down to the Bethlehem Steel plant at, like, six-thirty in the morning when they had the shift, and we'd stand there passing out these pages to the union workers at the steel plant, shaking hands with them. I think that impressed the heck out of a lot of people that here's a guy who's willing to come down and meet with the people and shake their hands, because they didn't expect it out of a star the stature of Jack Kemp, especially being a quarterback for the Buffalo Bills. You just don't think people like that would be doing that kind of thing.

Kondracke: So were there actually factories in the district or was this like a bedroom community for the factory workers?

Rutkowski: Bethlehem Steel is located in Lackawanna. That was part of the district at that time.

Kondracke: So were these basically conservative white ethnics who were offended by what had been going on during the sixties, all the campus riots and all that kind of thing?

Rutkowski: I think so, but I think Jack's message cut across party lines. He was talking about lower taxes, smaller government, entrepreneurial activity, that if you tax something, you get less of it. You should be able to control your money the way you want to or spend your money the way you want to instead of having somebody from government tell you how to spend your money. He always had that famous line, "I would rely on the first twenty-five names in the Buffalo phone book than on the Council of Economic Advisors any day of the week." And that resonated well with the people here. People in Buffalo, even though they might have been Democrat, you know, are hard working, thrifty. They work hard for their money and they want to keep as much as possible.

I recall Jack would say, "Hey, I want to give you more of your money back. It's going to help the economy, because you get more of your money back, you do one of three things, you spend it or you save it or you invest it, and all three of those things help the economy." People bought into that, they liked it, and it resonated with them.

I recall up in our living room there by the fireplace when he came back one weekend he was so excited, and he'd get pumped up and he'd say, "I've got this new Act I proposed. It's called Jobs Creation Act." He talked about he had taken a page from what [John F.] Kennedy did in the early sixties about reducing taxes and how the economy took off. He said, "It's great."

I said, "What's so great about it?"

He says, “Well, one, it’s what I believe in and it’s going to stimulate the economy. The other thing is they can’t criticize me for it.”

I said, “What do you mean?”

He said, “The Democrats. If they criticize me, I’m just going to say, ‘Well, I’m just doing something that one of your guys did.’ ‘What’s that?’ ‘It’s cut taxes.’ ‘And who did that?’ ‘Well, John F. Kennedy.’” And he did have a good argument there, and people were hard pressed to refute that argument when he was challenged about cutting taxes.

Kondracke: Was he already a tax cutter in 1970 in the first campaign?

Rutkowski: Did he actually propose it?

Kondracke: Were taxes an issue in 1970? This is the first campaign before he gets to Washington.

Rutkowski: You know, I’m a little fuzzy on that. I think there were, but I can’t specifically say yes or no to that.

Kondracke: You said it was a tough campaign. In what sense was it tough?

Rutkowski: Trying to get people to understand that Jack was very knowledgeable about the issues and can articulate the issues, that he just wasn’t a football player running on his

name and reputation. That's the big thing that we had to overcome. And the fact that, as I said, visually we had to make him look a little more mature, a little more believable, because visually people respond to some of those things. First images are what some people respond to.

Kondracke: So the crow's-feet, was that for ad purposes or is that for when he was making public appearances?

Rutkowski: Well, no, for ad purposes, to make him look a little more mature.

Kondracke: He didn't wear makeup?

Rutkowski: No, no, no. But with maturity comes wisdom in the minds of a lot of people.

Kondracke: So what were the issues in the campaign? What did Flaherty throw at him?

Rutkowski: I think it was free trade, unions, the economy, things such as that. Making sure that people can earn a decent wage and make a decent living, especially in this part of the country, this part of the state. Taxes, heavy taxes.

Kondracke: Did they have debates?

Rutkowski: Yes. Yes, they had debates. Jack did well in debates. Jack was very knowledgeable and very articulate in the debates.

Kondracke: Flaherty never ran for anything after that?

Rutkowski: I don't think so. I think he got a judgeship, but I'm not sure.

Kondracke: What was your role in that campaign?

Rutkowski: I was in charge of the volunteer effort to try to recruit as many volunteers as possible in the different towns and villages, and put people in charge, and getting people to go door-to-door and pass out literature, and just get the word out about Jack.

That's something that we initially had to get him used to. He was used to being a quarterback and used to being catered to. We had an office out in Williamsville. I'd be in the office and it would be during the afternoon and I'd say, "Really, Jack, we ought to be going door-to-door and shaking hands and doing things that you have to do." Initially he resisted that because quarterbacks didn't usually do that kind of stuff, but once he got into that mood, he was great at it. In fact, he was a master at it. He just loved meeting with people, and I think that was one of his strong points; he resonated with people.

When we had constituent meetings, he'd always say when he was first elected to Congress—his office was on Huron Street in downtown Buffalo, and that wasn't part of his district. People would complain that we live in the suburbs and we don't know the city of Buffalo and we don't know the parking arrangements and things such as that, so

Jack said, "Well, let's go out to the people." That's how we started those constituent meetings. We'd go and hire the Town Hall out in Cheektowaga or Lancaster or in Hamburg, and Jack would promote the fact through newspaper ads. Jack would meet with them to talk about their problems and see what he could do to iron out their problems, take our whole staff out there for an entire day. People would come not just to talk about their problems, but to meet him. Jack was a former star quarterback for the Buffalo Bills. They just wanted to have a picture taken with him or shake his hand or say hi to him, which was good, incredible that they'd like to do that even though he was a congressman at that time.

Kondracke: So what was election night like? So after you get through this tollbooth, you're presumably going to your headquarters.

Rutkowski: Yes.

Kondracke: So was there a big party? Was it early evening that you've figured that you'd won? Tell me about it.

Rutkowski: It wasn't early evening, no. Early on we were behind and I was getting a little anxious about it, but when we got down to headquarters, when the outlying results from some of the strong Republican areas started coming in, we pretty well knew that we were going to win, that it was going to be close, but that we were going to win. We were

ecstatic about it. We didn't do high-fives at that time. We just kind of hugged each other.

Kondracke: So when did he ask you to run the district office?

Rutkowski: When he became elected, he said he'd like me to run the district office. It was kind of unique because we both had come off football careers. We both had pretty good name recognition. He had greater name recognition than I had. He was in great demand as a speaker, but you couldn't really come back during the week because he had to stay and do his legislative duties in Congress in Washington. So for all the invites he got to speak during the week we'd say, "Well, Jack really can't make it because he's in Washington. What about his representative, Ed Rutkowski?"

"Oh, yes, we'd like to have Ed because we know Ed and we know about him." So unbeknownst to me, I developed kind of a political following myself because I was out there representing Jack so many times. But on the weekends, Jack would come back and we'd have him go to as many engagements as possible on Friday night and Saturday, and then he'd be able to get back to Washington sometime Sunday evening to be with the family.

Kondracke: In the first couple of terms he must have been back here all the time, right?

Rutkowski: Oh, yes, absolutely. In fact, there was one weekend he came back to Buffalo three times in one day. In one day.

Kondracke: How did that work?

Rutkowski: There was a vote in Washington in the morning. He left, came back for a late morning meeting, flew back to Washington for a luncheon, came back to Buffalo for a late afternoon meeting—that was twice in one day—for a late afternoon meeting and then made a speech that night and spoke at a breakfast, I think on a Saturday or Sunday morning. But it was just incredible. His schedule was just unbelievable. But he loved it. As I said before, for a guy who initially was a little hesitant to go out and meet with people, that was his strongpoint. He just loved meeting with people, talking about the problems, enunciating his idea of what government should be and how he could help people.

Kondracke: So where was your district office?

Rutkowski: It was in downtown Buffalo on West Huron Street. It was in the Federal Building.

Kondracke: And then did you move it into the district later or was it always on Huron Street?

Rutkowski: No, it was always there. It was always there, yes. That's why we did the constituent meetings out in the district.



Kondracke: What did the office look like? How many people were there?

Rutkowski: There was myself, we had two case workers, and a secretary.

Kondracke: Did Jack have his own office?

Rutkowski: He had his own office.

Kondracke: What did that look like?

Rutkowski: Which I would use when he was not there. It was a nice large room. It had a couch, a long meeting table for constituents to come in, and then there was a nice desk and a chair. There was a window at his back which you can overlook Lake Erie, and then there was a greeting area as you came in the office door, and then there was some closet space or storage space, and then there was a small office for our case worker and another small office for Jack's secretary.

Kondracke: He was legendarily messy. Was the office messy?

Rutkowski: [laughs] I carried his trait with him; the most important things to him would be his left shirt pocket, and then I think his left outside jacket pocket and then his right outside jacket pocket, and a folder with all kinds of written notes on it. Then he would be

a little messy on where he would leave things, and he'd forget things. You can ask some of his secretaries about how many times they had to call hotels and look for a wallet, a championship ring, a folder with some files in it that he had forgotten to take with him.

Kondracke: So tell me your favorite driving stories now.

Rutkowski: Oh. [laughter]

Kondracke: Just go on and on about driving stories.

Rutkowski: The best one, he was always late for his flight, and god knows how he ever made it, but I recall vividly I was driving him out to the airport, and he said, "You've got to go faster. You've got to go—."

I said, "Jack, there's a stoplight there." There was an actual stoplight.

He said, "Go through it."

I said, "I can't go through it."

He said, "Go through it!"

I said, "You want to drive?"

He said, "Yeah."

So I said, "All right." So I got out of the car and he got out of the car. He pulled the car up on the sidewalk, and there weren't any cars coming crossways, drove across the street. We flew down Genesee [Street] to the airport. He got there and got on the plane just as they were closing the door. I mean, you talk about anybody who has driven

him and they'll tell you stories like that. I mean, he would actually put his foot on my foot on the gas pedal to see if I could drive faster.

We went to a dinner out here in Hamburg on Lake Shore. It was Ken Lipke's house. It was at night and we were driving down this path, and he said, "Turn! Turn here!"

I said, "Where?"

"Turn here!" He said, "Turn here!" He actually grabbed the steering wheel and we turned into a big thicket of bushes. The car stalled and he stopped and he said, "Gee, I apologize. I really thought there was a road here." [laughs]

We'd get stopped by maybe a state trooper or a Buffalo police car. As they were pulling over, he'd say, "Tell them I'll give them an autographed Buffalo Bills football. Go ahead. Tell them I'll give them an autographed Buffalo Bills football."

When they found out who it was, they'd say, "Congressman, slow down and take it easy and watch where you're going."

Kondracke: It was kind of reckless, wasn't it?

Rutkowski: Let me put it this way. JoAnne said about Jack's driving ability, she said, "You know, for a guy who doesn't obey the rules, he's a pretty good driver." [laughter] And he was. And he drove with two feet. He had his right foot on the gas pedal, left foot on the brake, which I've never tried that, and I don't know anybody else who drives that way, but that's how he'd drive. He said, "I get better control, and I can stop and start a lot faster and a lot quicker that way."

Kondracke: And always speeding?

Rutkowski: Well, most of the time. But he was a pretty good driver for a guy who kind of drove on the edge. He had pretty good driving skills. I think that came about because of the way he drove for his father's trucking firm. He had to make certain deliveries, a certain amount of deliveries in a certain period of time. You know, you're talking about driving in L.A. traffic. The traffic here in Buffalo isn't as bad as it is and was in Washington, D.C., where you're changing lanes.

Kondracke: So did he indulge in any other sort of reckless behavior?

Rutkowski: That was about it. That was about it. You have to define reckless behavior. I recall once, though, with the Buffalo Bills we were playing the Kansas City Chiefs, and the night before, we wanted to go out to dinner, so we went out to dinner. The two of us are sitting in a restaurant, and he said, "You think we can have some wine?"

I said, "Well, yes. Why not." So we ordered a bottle of wine, and we were so concerned that somebody would recognize us as pro football players drinking wine the night before a game, that he took our linen napkin and wrapped it around the bottle so people wouldn't notice that it was a wine bottle. I said, "Jack, why don't you put a brown paper bag on it. It sticks out like a sore thumb, wrapping your linen napkin around it."

Kondracke: Was this for reputational reasons?

Rutkowski: Oh, yes. Absolutely, yes. [laughs]

Kondracke: What were the major constituency issues that you handled? He was not a small-government conservative, right? He believed in using government to help people.

Rutkowski: His case workers were absolutely magnificent. He made sure that they put their heart and soul into helping people. We'd help people with Social Security problems, help people with military problems. Our staff—and he had a couple in Washington—they would go after these regulatory agencies in government, and if they didn't think they were getting the proper treatment, Jack would make the phone call, and, boy, I'll tell you what, people would pay attention. When you have a congressman making personal phone calls to agencies, they start paying attention to you. And he had a great reputation. His office had a tremendous reputation for helping constituents.

Kondracke: Do you have any all-time favorite constituency stories? Problems solved?

Rutkowski: Well, I told you the story about when we were out in Cheektowaga, the lady with the problem who—[reference to Buffalo Symposium Panel 2 group interview, 3-04-11]

Kondracke: Was being spoken to by creatures from outer space.

Rutkowski: Yes, yes. She was the last one of about thirty-four people.

Kondracke: He couldn't help you with that.

Rutkowski: But to an extent our casework was so good, especially in military situations, that before you can act on behalf of a person in the military, you had to ask them first if they wanted help from a congressman. Because you'd have a mother or a father or somebody in the family complaining about something with their son or daughter in the military, and we'd go to work and all of a sudden this guy's being called by his commanding officer and he's going to be sent home for some particular reason. He said, "Well, I didn't want to be sent home. For what?"

They said, "Well, your mother called and she want—."

He said, "No, no. She shouldn't have done that."

So I think it became standard protocol before you can act on any kind of a case in the military that you had to talk to the person first to see if they wanted you to do that, because sometimes you had to go over the head of the commanding officer or the person in charge, and people wouldn't want to do that because they feel that there would be some retribution involved if they found out about it.

Kondracke: What about public works and sewage and light rail and all that stuff? Did he get involved in that himself or did you handle that for him?

Rutkowski: He did, and it was basically our Washington office. The one good thing about Jack is that he had a very good working relationship with his fellow Democratic congressmen in the area, John [J.] LaFalce and Henry [J.] Nowak, and shared the praise with them, and that went a long way to getting a lot of those public funds for the light rail, rapid transit system, for instance.

Kondracke: So what did you guys get done in the way of public works projects?

Rutkowski: The biggest one was the light rail rapid transit system. There were also some sewer district construction projects that were undertaken. But most of it was legislation, tax legislation, the Jobs Creation Act, which morphed into Kemp-Roth, which then was the basis for the [Ronald] Reagan Revolution and the tax cuts, and we had economic prosperity for about eight years. Then Reagan talked to [Margaret H.] Maggie Thatcher about the same thing and she cut taxes, so that's pretty good legacy to have from a congressman who started it all.

And I think that's one of the reasons why he never decided to run for governor or maybe even head of the National Football League. He always thought that he was such a strong advocate for tax cuts, that if he ever left that leadership position in that area, that nobody would be there to fill that vacuum or that gap. He really passionately believed in that. But when you think about the fact that it was Jack's idea because he studied political history and saw what Kennedy did with the tax cuts in the early sixties, patterned his Jobs Creation Act after that, which morphed into Kemp-Roth, and then he convinced Reagan about the beneficiaries of cutting taxes, and Reagan adopted that policy. Reagan

talked to Maggie Thatcher and she adopted the policy, and it had worldwide economic ramifications from one guy's idea. Jack always said, "If there's one thing, it's this, that ideas have consequence." He thought that cutting taxes at that time was an idea whose time had come, and it had.

Kondracke: How did he get along with Mario [M.] Cuomo and the rest of the politicians in New York?

Rutkowski: We never discussed that. He must have gotten along with him, because when he got out of politics, he and Mario Cuomo were on some advisory boards together. But I can tell you if there was some kind of a cocktail party, Jack would have been in Cuomo's face talking about the tax cuts and economic development and entrepreneurialism and things such as that.

Kondracke: How about the neighboring congressmen? Originally it was Dulski. Was he a Buffalo congressman?

Rutkowski: Yes, he was a Buffalo congressman.

Kondracke: How long was he around?

Rutkowski: Not very long. Then Hank Nowak became Dulski's replacement, and John LaFalce was on at the same time. So it was LaFalce, Nowak, and Kemp. They got along



very well. I think that benefited everybody, and it certainly benefited the area, because people like to think that the top leadership people in politics are working together, not butting heads against each other. That's one of the good traits about Jack was that he'd share things with Henry and with John when there were announcements; he just wouldn't hog the show.

Kondracke: But there was a difference, was there not, over where the light rail system from Buffalo would go, whether it would go to Amherst, which is I guess in your district, or Tonawanda, was it?

Rutkowski: Initially it was supposed to go from Amherst to Buffalo, and there was going to be a spur going from Buffalo to Hamburg and one going into the Tonawandas. Yes, it had tentacles that went all over the place. I wish it were in place today, because with high gas prices, if you had a nice light rail rapid transit system that went to all of the suburbs, it would have been nice. But they just ended up doing the one segment of it from Amherst into the city of Buffalo.

Kondracke: Where does western New York exactly fit into the Republican hierarchy of the state? He didn't run against [Jacob] Javits. [Alfonse] D'Amato did. D'Amato wins. Could Jack running from here have beaten Javits and become an elected senator or not?

Rutkowski: That wasn't Jack's style. Jack would never run against Jack Javits.

Kondracke: Were they friends?

Rutkowski: I think so. I think Jack would have had a hard time trying to criticize or impugn Jack Javits' reputation. It just wasn't Jack's style. Jack was not a mean-spirited individual. He always thought that it's a competition of ideas. It's like a football game. You have two sides and both have game plans. The one team with the better game plan and the ability to make adjustments during the game is going to come out on top, and that was Jack's idea. You beat the other team by having better ideas and convincing people that your ideas are better than the other ideas.

Kondracke: He didn't have a difficult race except for 1970, right? He was elected 75 percent.

Rutkowski: Yes. After that first race, yes, he was off and running, and people looked at him as the rising star in the political party. Even Democrats felt comfortable in knowing that he's our guy from western New York and he's got that kind of national stature, because everybody was after him to run for governor or run for a higher office or this or that, but he didn't want to leave where he was because of the fact that he thought that nobody would be able to come in and fill that vacuum that would have been created.

Kondracke: Did people actually come to him and say, "You've got to do this. You've got to do that"? Was it something that he actively considered and then rejected?

Rutkowski: Yes, people wanted him to run for governor because they said, “Eventually if you want to become president, one thing on your résumé that you’re missing is you’ve got legislative experience, but you don’t have any administrative experience,” where a governor’s proposing a budget, making the cuts and doing this, whereas legislatively you’re voting and you’ve got safety in numbers sometimes. That was something that was missing in his political résumé. But again, he just rejected that because he just felt that if he left that tax-cut area, there would be a tremendous void and nobody would fill it. Somebody might fill it, but not with the dedication and passion that Jack had.

Kondracke: How much did the redistricting that followed the 1970 census affect the district?

Rutkowski: I think it became a little more Republican. We never really got concerned about pluralities at that time or redistricting, because after that first election he became so popular that it really didn’t matter if there was a Democratic plurality or a Republican plurality. By that time, people knew where Jack stood and people liked the positions that he was taking because it affected their pocketbooks.

Kondracke: Was religion ever an issue in any of his campaigns? He was Protestant.

Rutkowski: A White Anglo-Saxon Protestant.

Kondracke: Yes, exactly. Was that ever a problem?

Rutkowski: No.

Kondracke: Not even in the first race?

Rutkowski: No. No, that never came up.

Kondracke: The fact that he'd ever been a Christian Scientist, did that ever come up?

Rutkowski: Nope, never came up. In fact, the cute story was that year that he got hurt, tore his knee up, I ended up the last half of the season as the starting quarterback for the Bills and I would rely a lot on Jack for his advice because he'd still be at the game, either in the press box or down on the sideline. The first game I went in against I think it was his old team, the Chargers, Jack was on the sideline, leg in a cast. I threw five passes, I think, three of which were incomplete, two were intercepted. The first interception I threw, I came off the field to a kind of a standing ovation because, you know, they're cheering for the underdog, especially a lot of Polish people. Jack looked at me and said, "If only I was Polish Catholic and from Notre Dame." [laughs] He said, "Those are pretty good traits to have in Buffalo."

Kondracke: He did awfully well in the post-Watergate elections. He was obviously pretty popular, but I just wonder, what did he think about Nixon and Nixon's demise?

Rutkowski: We never really discussed that. That's an interesting question. He got through it, and for some reason it never stuck on Jack. Whatever Nixon did and the way he did it just didn't have any kind of an impact or an association with Jack. It was almost like he had a Teflon protection on that one.

Kondracke: But he didn't talk to you about Watergate and what was happening in Washington and how traumatic all that was?

Rutkowski: No.

Kondracke: What about the loss of Vietnam? How did he take that?

Rutkowski: We never discussed some of the major issues, because when he came back to Buffalo we were so concerned about the local economy and what was happening back here that that wasn't a big part of our conversation. Our conversation was, "What's going on with some of the constituent stuff? Who's doing this? Where am I being asked to go to? What do I have to do?" In Buffalo it wasn't as riotous as it was in other parts of the country.

Kondracke: It never came up at town meetings?

Rutkowski: Not that I can think of.

Kondracke: The press didn't want to know what he thought about Nixon?

Rutkowski: If they did, it must not have been that pronounced, because I just don't remember that stuff. Of course, I might have had too many concussions.

Kondracke: So the economy in Buffalo is gradually losing jobs, right?

Rutkowski: Right.

Kondracke: It was later that Bethlehem Steel closed.

Rutkowski: Yes.

Kondracke: But there were layoffs various times. So what did he do to try to stimulate the local economy, or did he have any possibility of doing so besides the Job Creation Act?

Rutkowski: Well, that was his main thesis, the Jobs Creation Act, and trying to help what he could do here in Buffalo with the tax situation. Taxes were a big part of the problem, too, because there were so many taxes and so many different layers of government, the city tax, the village town tax, the state, county taxes. That was his big push.

When I was county executive, I was the guy who got the call from [Walter] Walt Williams from Bethlehem Steel saying they were going to pull out, and I said, "You can't

do this. You've got to give us a chance to come back with an offer." Because the unions weren't making any concessions.

When I called the union heads into my office, it's kind of interesting, we had a long table and some of the older union members sat on one side of the table, the younger guys sat on the other side of the table. The older guys would be pounding the table, saying, "They're bluffing. We'll be here two years from now. They'll be saying the same thing, that they're going to pull out." And the younger guys were willing to make concessions to keep their jobs and keep the business in Buffalo. They just said, "If you don't make the concessions, they're gone. The leadership just wouldn't buy into that or wouldn't believe it." They were gone. They were gone. Free trade became an issue. Imports, exports.

Kondracke: Did Jack help you out trying to save Bethlehem Steel?

Rutkowski: Not much he could do. I recall the people who tried to help bail us out were the state officials. I remember Governor Cuomo at that time, Mario Cuomo, put together a \$1 million educational fund for workers who were going to lose their jobs. I recall they invited me to meet with them and have us meet at the Steelworkers Hall in Lackawanna. The governor's people pulled up, and they were all getting out of the car and they were shaking hands and congratulating everyone about this \$1 million educational fund to help the displaced workers who had lost their jobs.

We walked into this meeting hall. It was a union meeting hall, and they had a whole bunch of union people sitting in there. These were guys who either had lost their

jobs or were going to lose their jobs, which meant that they'd probably have to pull their kids out of college, they wouldn't be able to make a car payment, they wouldn't be able to make a mortgage payment, had no idea what the hell they were going to do for the rest of their lives, because for some of these people it *was* their lives and it was the lives of their families before them.

As we walked down the aisle to go to the stage, I can't repeat some of the comments that were said to us. It had a profound effect on me, but I think a real profound effect on the governor, because they thought they were going to come in here and have a standing ovation and everybody was going to just jump up and down and congratulate everybody for a \$1 million education or job project or job training project, where they felt that their whole lives were being upended. I think he said in one of his books that he wrote subsequent to that, that had a profound effect on him.

Kondracke: Cuomo?

Rutkowski: Yes. That one meeting just walking through all those union members and hearing what they had to say.

Kondracke: I wonder, how did the union members feel about their union bosses?

Rutkowski: It's a good question, because the younger guys were willing to make the concessions. The workforce was kind of half and half. It wasn't just the union leadership, but a good part of their workforce who had grown up in Buffalo and in this



kind of a scenario felt that this was just a ploy by management, the management of Bethlehem Steel, that they just wanted them to make some concessions and that they weren't going to really be serious about pulling out. So it wasn't just the leadership; it was a good part of the membership who had that kind of an attitude.

Kondracke: How did the official union bosses take to Jack as opposed to the union rank and file?

Rutkowski: Some, like George Wessel, would always criticize Jack, but there were a lot of union leaders who supported Jack. The head of the longshoremen, [Thomas W.] Teddy Gleason, Art Sambucki, I think, was with the Bethlehem Steel union. He had some pretty good labor support from some of the union presidents because they bought into his tax-cutting philosophy and that it would benefit the economy and then the hardcore people. Even though George Wessel would criticize Jack, he really liked Jack. I mean, he thought very highly of him, but he thought he had a job to do as a union leader and that was what he was supposed to be doing, criticizing Jack.

Kondracke: In 1978 when Kemp-Roth was the campaign theme of the Republican Party, the head of the New York State AFL-CIO said that Jack Kemp was the most dangerous congressman in America. Do you remember that?

Rutkowski: I think I remember that, but also I think he accused him of voodoo economics. That was the phrase that a lot of people were using against Jack. Jack would

just laugh it off and say, “Hey, if I’m accused of voodoo economics, let everybody know that I’m the chief witchdoctor.” [laughs]

Kondracke: So did you leave in 1978 to become county executive or did you leave for some other reason?

Rutkowski: No, I left to become county executive.

Kondracke: And then Jack helped you get elected in your own right?

Rutkowski: Yes, I was appointed county executive for a two-year term to fill **Ned Regan**’s term, who was the previous county executive. He was elected comptroller. Because of my association with Jack, which helped me build a political base because I went out speaking and representing Jack during the week when he was in Washington, they felt that I had a pretty good reputation and was well known because of my association with Jack. So some of that nice stuff that Jack had going for him rubbed off on me. So they appointed me to fill Ned Regan’s two-year term, and then after that I ran and was elected county executive, and Jack played an instrumental part in that.

Kondracke: During all these hard times in Buffalo, I guess I’ve asked this question, but that’s what you had to deal with, right?

Rutkowski: Absolutely, yes.

Kondracke: So could you get any help from Jack to get the problems solved?

Rutkowski: Our big problem was mandates, federal mandates, Medicaid. Jack could help me by having me go down and testify before a congressional subcommittee. I went down there and I testified about how Medicaid was hurting all the counties, not just Erie County, but all the counties across the state. It's kind of interesting, because one of the congressmen interrupted me and he said, "You were quoted as saying that in New York State we have the Cadillac of the welfare system."

And I said, "No, you're wrong."

He said, "No, no, no."

I said, "We don't have the Cadillac of the welfare system, we have the Rolls-Royce of the welfare system." Because there was no residency requirement. I said, "Quite frankly, if I were a single individual or somebody who needed benefits, I'd come to New York State because you get the most and the best benefits in the country."

But as a county executive you're responsible for a budget, but you can only control about 15 percent of it. The rest is controlled by federal and state mandates. We'd always be trying to meet with state officials and federal officials, and Jack would do whatever he can to promote that at the federal level, but a lot of it was at the state level also.

I recall, and they're still complaining about the same things that we complained back there, fraud and abuse in Medicaid and Medicare, getting rid of that. In fact, when I became elected president of the County Executives Association, I put together a

Medicaid hit team and I made it bipartisan. It was myself from western New York, Jim Coyne, who was a Democratic county executive from Albany, and Lou Heimbach, who was a Republican county executive from Westchester, and we started going across the state to all the editorial boards and talking to them about how these mandates were destroying local county governments. It was kind of interesting. They said, “Where do you want to go first?”

I said, “Well, let’s try New York City.”

So Jim Coyne said, “Why don’t we see if we can get [Edward I.] Ed Koch to support us.” He was the mayor at that time.

So we had set up a meeting with Koch, I think it was ten o’clock in his office, and walked in and we explained our position. He said, “Yes, absolutely. It’s killing me as mayor. What do you want to do?”

We said, “Well, we just want your support.”

He said, “Well, you got my support, but what do you want me to do?”

We said, “Well, what can you do?”

He said, “Well, let’s call a press conference.” So he called a press conference for like twelve noon. Man, he was the Democratic mayor of the City of New York with a bunch of county executives; some are Republican, some Democrat. But he said, “These guys are right on. It’s killing them, it’s killing us, and there have got to be some changes and reforms made.” It was nice to see somebody like Ed Koch step up to the plate and support us.

Kondracke: Did Kemp get into Medicaid reform issues?

Rutkowski: He tried to help as much as he could at the federal level, but, you know, when you're one congressman, how many people are going to vote with you and how many people are going to vote against you?

Kondracke: So did you take any part in his '88 campaign, presidential campaign.

Rutkowski: No.

Kondracke: Did you go to Iowa, New Hampshire?

Rutkowski: No, I didn't do any of that.

Kondracke: Did you stay close friends with him after you left his office? You worked together when you were county executive, but were you friends all the way up to the time he died?

Rutkowski: Oh, sure. Yes, absolutely. Yes, yes.

Kondracke: How often would see him and what did you talk about?

Rutkowski: I wouldn't see him that often, but I'd talk to him a lot. When he was running for vice president, I remember that he called me. He and JoAnne were flying into Erie,

Pennsylvania. He said, “Why don’t you and Marilou [Rutkowski] go down and meet us with Governor [Thomas J.] Ridge in Pennsylvania.” So we drove down there and met with Governor Ridge. In fact, he pulled me up on stage and introduced me and said some nice things about me.

There’s kind of a cute story. We were at the courthouse at Erie, Pennsylvania, and Jack got up and he started talking. He was his ebullient self, and he kept looking over to the side because they had cordoned off part of the street with this yellow tape because they had some demonstrators over there with signs. He kept looking at this one person in particular, and he stopped in the middle of the speech and he said this good-naturedly, he said, “You know, that guy over there, you can make fun of my politics and you can make fun of my economics, but don’t ever make fun of my football.” The guy had a sign that said “Put in [Daryle P.] Lamonica.” [laughter]

On the way back, Marilou and I were driving back to Buffalo after we saw Jack and JoAnne get on the plane to leave, and about an hour later, he calls from the plane. He said, “Eddie, you’ve got to call Daryle.”

I said, “Why?”

He said, “The press are going to pick up on that. They’re going to call Daryle, and Daryle’s going to say something stupid and he’s going to get me in trouble and [Robert J.] Dole in trouble. He’s going to embarrass us.”

I said, “Oh, don’t worry. I’ll take care of it.”

So it took me about two days to track down Daryle and I got him on the phone. I told him the story and he just started laughing. He said, “Tell Jack I support him and I’m

not going to say anything stupid. Tell him not to worry about it.” But that was a cute story.

Kondracke: So all the guy had was “Put in Lamonica,” and Jack said, “Don’t criticize my football”?”

Rutkowski: Yes. He said, “You can criticize my politics and my economics, but don’t ever criticize my football.”

Kondracke: So how is Jack remembered in the Buffalo area, do you think?

Rutkowski: I think he’s remembered as a guy who was very compassionate, did a lot for the area, put his heart and soul into helping people, and was a good person. And the legacy about tax cuts, for a congressman to have made that kind of a profound impact economically on not only local, state, national, and international economies is quite a legacy. Quite a legacy.

Kondracke: Thank you very much.

Rutkowski: My pleasure.

[End of interview]