

JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with
WILLIAM L. "BILLY" SHAW

August 17, 2011

Interviewer
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JACK KEMP FOUNDATION
WASHINGTON, DC

Brien Williams: This is a Kemp Oral History Project interview for the Jack Kemp Foundation, with William L. "Billy" Shaw, former Buffalo Bills football player. We are in his home located outside Toccoa, Georgia. Today is Wednesday, August 17, 2011, and I'm Brien Williams.

Let's start with this, Billy. What thoughts first come to mind when I say Jack Kemp?

Billy Shaw: Intelligence. There are a lot of characteristics that would define Jack. I'm often asked about Jack, and I have to answer that Jack was probably one of the more intelligent people that I'd ever been around. Doesn't matter what we were talking about or where we were going with that conversation, but you knew immediately that Jack had some special gifts when it came to the intelligent side of our character.

Williams: Do you want to name some of those gifts?

Shaw: His vocabulary he worked on constantly, and I think it was a game from time to time. He'd come up with words. He even did it in the huddle. I can't remember the terminologies that he would use, but we would laugh from time to time as some of the things that he would say in the huddle, knowing that it was a joke, but he had practiced the words somewhere along the line to spring on us. But day-to-day Jack was able to communicate in a way that was refreshing but different.

Williams: Can you remember any of the words that came up in that—

Shaw: I can't even pronounce the words, much less try to spell the words that he would use. All of us made fun of Jack and his words, which just

actually gave him the fire and the fuel to do more. You ask me to name some of the words. I couldn't name them if I had to because they go in one ear and out the other, but he had a vocabulary.

Williams: What do you think his motivation was in doing that?

Shaw: I think that Jack was probably practicing somewhere along the way, but I'm not so sure it was a game. We made fun of him because he used so many big words that we didn't know the definition to, much less we couldn't say them or pronounce them. We accused Jack of going to the dictionary and picking out words for that day. I don't know if that was fair or not, because Jack had command of our language, and those were not everyday words because he's talking to a bunch of football players, but Jack had command of his vocabulary anyway.

Williams: How did he manage to do that and at the same time maintain the respect and so forth of the team? Why didn't he begin to be perceived as an egghead or an intellectual, and therefore not a he-man football player?

Shaw: Well, the proof in the pudding is what you bring on Sundays at the game. Jack had way above average playing skills. He was not an extremely big guy, but he was a very tough individual. He had the physical skills to go along with his mental skills so nobody ever doubted his ability to play the game, and we put all our trust in him. You know, we just put up with some of the stuff to make sure that he did his job.

Williams: Other gifts come to mind?

Shaw: Jack never met a stranger. He had the ability to communicate with people. He had tremendous communication skills, those skills along with the intelligence that he had, and he could draw on his characteristics like that immediately when he needed to.

He did that on the football field. He would see a defense out there that was not common and he knew immediately what plays to switch to. That was kind of the way I perceived him as a politician. He was quick on his feet. He always knew—this is my perception—he always knew the right answer. And that doesn't come to a person that's not ready for whatever situation might come up, and Jack was always ready, on the field and off the field.

Williams: I don't mean to be pushing you too far here, but any other gifts that come to mind?

Shaw: Jack had a very broad character. The meeting people, the being able to communicate, his characteristics as an athlete. He was quick. He was very strong. I mentioned that he was very tough. As we start talking about individuals and what make up individuals, we've already probably looked at some of the more important characteristics in a person.

For me, the thing that I liked about Jack probably the most is that he had tremendous faith and he practiced his faith. His ability to communicate without vulgar language, his ability to be consistent in his everyday life was something that a lot of us, including myself, looked up to. You say push. If you push me to go to the depth of what I thought made up Jack Kemp, it wouldn't be his intelligence, although he was as I said, probably the most intelligent person I had ever been around; it would be his faith in the way that he communicated that.

Williams: I was going to come to that subject a little later but let's deal with it right now. How did he practice his faith? Talk about it a little bit.

Shaw: Well, he didn't knock you down with it. I don't know that I ever saw him talk about "salvation" part of the faith. That was somewhat private to him. But the life that he lived, the clean language. I don't know that I ever saw alcohol consumed by Jack. The way he treated people, you knew that he was special. The faith, you can go many different ways with that, but I think that Jack's ability to be consistent in his everyday life. He was a tremendous father. He was a tremendous husband. He was kind to people. That's what I remember the most about my friend.

Williams: So I think what you're saying is that he lived a Christian life but he didn't impose a Christian life on others.

Shaw: That's what I'm saying. Exactly. You knew that he was different. You knew that he was special. When I said that I never had seen him communicate to an individual, "You're doing this in life when you should be going in this path in life." Never saw him do that. But he led by example, and he would lead you in that direction, whether you knew you were headed in that direction or not. And that's the important thing about Jack. Jack was a very influential person and he knew that. He was very consistent about how he molded a young player or an older guy, how he presented himself to that person. I don't think you will find anybody that played with or knew Jack that would have anything negative to say about Jack and his personal life.

Williams: He was active in a Christian athletes' group.

Shaw: Well, I don't know if Jack was with Fellowship of Christian Athletes, FCA, or some of the other groups, but it wouldn't surprise me. Back during our playing day when I would see Jack every day, we weren't hands-on involved.

We did a lot of speaking to events. In fact, I got my first speaking engagement because of Jack. He wanted \$100 and they didn't have but \$50, and I would've gone for \$25. So all the ones that Jack had to turn down eventually came my way, so I made sure that he stayed up here so I could just kind of climb up a little bit. But most of that was with young people, where faith was involved and where you talk about character and how you get from this level to this level. I learned a lot from Jack.

Williams: Were you making those types of speaking engagements in Buffalo or elsewhere?

Shaw: Well, certainly in Buffalo. The Bills had a program back in the early years. Our days off, which was Monday, was Community Day. It was not mandatory, it was a volunteer program. Jack was involved and everybody wanted Jack. So when Jack couldn't go somewhere, then the second-tier people moved up. So I would always try to find out where Jack was going so that I could be in line for the ones that he turned down and couldn't go to.

But, yes, we did a lot. I volunteered for schools where some of the guys volunteered for hospitals or nursing homes, those type things. Jack did a lot of the political fight, where he would go to little towns in and around Buffalo and be involved in town meetings and that kind of thing where his expertise was known. I did schools and enjoyed speaking to PTAs and that kind of thing.

Williams: Just briefly, your topics would mostly be what?

Shaw: Well, let me tell you a quick story if you have time. I got in the mail a year ago a picture. The picture was taken in Lockport, New York, south of Buffalo, at a PTA [Parent-Teachers Association] meeting where I spoke to the kids and the parents. A picture was taken at that PTA meeting where I talked about what it took to play the game, what it took to be a student, the involvement with Mom and Dad, how important that was, so that was kind of the meat of that particular meeting that night. This took place in 1965 where this picture was taken, and this picture came to me in 2010. I took a picture with a little boy that was seven and a little boy that was five and the mother of the two little boys. The picture, I signed it, and that was all I was asked to do, I signed the picture, mailed it back.

Then I get a phone call from the five-year-old boy in that picture. He is the athletic director at Urbana University in Urbana, Ohio, and he asked me if I will come to Urbana and speak to their All-Sports Banquet. So I do, and that was just a few months ago, May of 2011.

At that banquet was the other brother in the picture, and we take a picture similar to the one we took in '65, and now one of them is fifty and one of them is fifty-two. But also at that banquet was the mother that was in that picture. It was neat how things just—you asked me what the topic was, and both could tell me almost word for word what was said fifty years ago. So you never know how much influence you have.

Jack was a master at that kind of thing. He was so fluent and elegant in the way he presented himself. People remembered that, but they also remembered what his topic was and what he had to say. Where this is one example of something that happened for me, it happened numerous times for Jack.

We go back to Buffalo every year in September for a reunion, and there will be two, three, four instances during that week where some stranger will come up and the conversation will be what Jack might have said at some banquet when he was a kid, or something in Jack's later life that was an influence on them. We hear that all the time. It really makes you feel good.

Williams: What were Jack's topics?

Shaw: Well, Jack was big on character, just like his life. Jack was big on character. He was partial to the quarterbacks, and he would give them advice as to how to throw the football, and to get strong and study hard and know the playbook and be the leader on the field, that kind of thing when he was talking to a sports group. Never was with him a great deal when we were doing those kinds of things because where he couldn't go, I got to go. So I can never remember doing any together, maybe other than a question-and-answer-type thing at a banquet. But Jack's topics were really dealing with the growth of the young person that he was talking to.

Williams: Do you have any idea who created the Monday public service concept at Buffalo?

Shaw: No, that was just kind of a—you know, when I got there. Of course, I got there in '61, Jack got there in '62, so the team was only one year old when I got there and two years old when Jack got there, so I don't know where that came. I just kind of said, "Well, this is part of the deal." But I enjoyed that, and obviously he was in demand everywhere.

Williams: So it wouldn't be correct to attribute it necessarily to Ralph [C.] Wilson [Jr.] or to [Garrard S.] Buster Ramsey?

Shaw: Well, certainly not Buster Ramsey, and Mr. Wilson probably didn't do it. I don't know where it came from, to be honest with you, but we enjoyed it.

Williams: Let's start talking about Buffalo Bills football and whatnot, but before we do, just briefly tell me about your playing both ways at Georgia Tech and why you had to do that.

Shaw: Well, back in the late fifties, early sixties, just because Billy Shaw played offensive tackle and defensive tackle and played both ways, that doesn't make him a hero, because back in those days the rule was that when you started a quarter, you had to finish the quarter, meaning that if you were taken out, you couldn't go back in. So to stay, if you were an offensive player and you were important for the offensive side of the ball, they couldn't take you out; they had to play you on defense. So you played both ways, and it was all because of the crazy rule that existed. I know it existed in '58 and '59 and '60, because that's when I was in college playing college football. So that's the reason we went both ways.

Now, it did several things for you. It gave the pros a look at you on both sides of the football, and back in the early, early days of the AFL [American Football League], we only had thirty-three-man teams, so as an offensive guard I was a backup defensive end. There were isolated times where I got in on the defensive side of the football only because of an injury or something, and I certainly didn't stay there very long. But that's how it came about on the college side.

Williams: Just to clarify, you couldn't come back in within that quarter.

Shaw: Within that quarter. You could start the second quarter. It was a crazy rule. I remember my good friend [Patrick F.] Pat Dye at the University of Georgia—I went to Georgia Tech and there's just bad blood between Georgia Tech and Georgia. It's quite a rivalry. And Pat was a tremendous defensive linebacker, but he only weighed about 195 pounds. He had to play offensive guard at 195 pounds on the college level. Now, he was fast as all get-out, and so to lead sweeps he—but when it came down to the nose-to-nose, sometimes it was a detriment to a really good player being small, being a defensive player.

Williams: Tell the story, then, of your entrance into the AFL.

Shaw: My entrance into the AFL, I was drafted number two by the Buffalo Bills. Only eight teams, so I was the ninth, tenth, eleventh player picked in the AFL 1961. I went to my college coach, [Robert L.] Bobby Dodd, and asked him for advice. He told me, he says—before I go that far, I had had contact with the Dallas Cowboys and the NFL, and they wanted me to play linebacker. I'd never played linebacker in my life, but they had seen what the good lord had blessed me with as far as foot speed was concerned, and they felt like I could play an outside linebacker position.

So I go to Coach Dodd, and I'm drafted and the Bills have made me an offer, and I go to Coach Dodd and I present all the facts to him. "Here's what the Bills did. This is their offer. The Cowboys have called. They want to draft me as a linebacker. What should I do?"

Coach Dodd, in 1961, says, "There is a place in professional football for a new league. You can sign with the Buffalo Bills and be a part of history when the leagues merge, because they very well might merge, or they

might go their separate ways and the AFL will get stronger and stronger and stronger.”

So I signed with the Bills. That was before the NFL draft, and the NFL, the Cowboys, go ahead and draft me anyway, fourteenth round, 184th person picked. But they had my rights if the AFL folded. But Coach Dodd was Johnny-on-the-spot. I mean, he was a special person.

Williams: Other than Coach Dodd, who else was advising you? This was before the days of agents.

Shaw: Nobody. My wife [Patsy M. Shaw]. [laughs] No, nobody was advising us. Gosh, I don't know if I talked to anybody else other than Coach Dodd about pro football. I didn't. I didn't talk to anybody else. That first contract was more money than I'd ever seen in my life. It was an \$11,000 contract, no cut, which means that I was guaranteed that, a \$5,000 bonus and a 1960 Bonneville Pontiac. Now, you talk about the richest guy on Georgia Tech campus, that was me. [laughs]

Williams: So, characterize your first season with Buffalo. The team went six and eight, I believe. What was it like?

Shaw: It was different. Mr. Ramsey was a different coach, black and white compared to Bobby Dodd. Totally different. Demeanor was different, approach was different, language was different. This was pro football. This wasn't college or high school stuff. This was the real thing.

That first year was very difficult because, gosh, the facilities, we didn't have any facilities. We practiced at East Aurora New York High School, or that's where we dressed. We practiced on the polo grounds outside of East Aurora, which was not very smooth. We stayed at the Roycroft Inn in East

Aurora. There were bunk beds and a room that probably slept forty people, something like that. So it was totally different. It was a league just trying to make itself known. So the things that people take for granted weren't there.

On the field, we were competitive. I think we were six and eight. That was about where they were the year before, their very first year. There were some rookies that year that made the Bills team. [Stewart C.] Stew Barber, [Albert D.] Al Bemiller, myself, were rookies that came in together. We ended up playing center guard and tackle for nine years next to each other. So you have to think that the success that we had later on kind of started there with the development of the offensive line that stayed together for that period of time. We came in together and we left together.

Jack came to us in '62. He might have played a little bit at the end of '62, but we were in the playoff game in '63, got beat. Won it in '64 and '65 and got beat in '66, so that was the beginning of the Bills dominance of the AFL for a short period of time. The character came in '64 and '62, and [Charlton C.] Cookie Gilchrist. That was a period of time that the parts of the puzzle were getting to be put together.

Williams: The Internet lists five men who played quarterback in '61.

Shaw: In '61?

Williams: Right. [John E.] Johnny Green, [Thomas B.] Tommy O'Connell, [Richard J.] Richie Lucas—I guess only four—and Bob Brodhead.

Shaw: Don't remember Brodhead playing.

Williams: Oh, I'm sorry. I just read the wrong—it was Johnny Green, [S.] Warren Rabb, [Mack C.] M.C. Reynolds, Richie Lucas, and Tommy O'Connell.

Shaw: Yes, I'll agree to every one of those. M.C. Reynolds did. Probably Richie Lucas got hurt. Richie Lucas was a starter. He was the Bills number-one draft choice of all time. He was drafted in 1960, and he quarterbacked them in '60. Then in 1961 he was the starting quarterback. He got his leg broken in a game in Houston, so that ended his career.

Tommy O'Connell was a coach, a quarterback coach, and he put on the pads and he played quarterback for a few games. It doesn't seem like that Warren came until '62, but he might have come in '61. But Warren was a good quarterback, and he was the quarterback when Jack came and he was the quarterback that Jack had to beat out. Warren was a good quarterback. Johnny Green played quarterback in '60 and '61. He was a backup to Richie Lucas. Those are the ones that I remember.

Williams: Why was Ramsey fired, and what was it like, the transition then to [Louis H.] Lou Saban?

Shaw: I don't know if I know the answer this many years later. Buster was a tough coach. Buster did not have a lot of personal skills, personnel skills in handling the public. Everything was black and white. There was no in-between with Buster. I loved him. I absolutely loved him because he was an offensive guard in his day.

The second or third day at practice he had—well, let me go back. We were at the College All-Star Game. [Arthur R.] Art Baker, the fullback, [Stewart C.] Stew Barber, who was a linebacker first, and myself were in Chicago at the College All-Star Game. The ballgame in Chicago was played on a Friday night. We got into Buffalo on Saturday morning, put our stuff on

a bus, drove to Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, and played Hamilton an exhibition game on Saturday night. I started and played every play, did not know a play. But Stew started and played every play at linebacker. Art started and played every play at fullback, and we had been told the plays from Buffalo to Hamilton so we had some concept of what was going on. Buster did that on purpose, I'm sure. He was mad because we spent two weeks at the College All-Star Game and weren't in camp, and we were the high draft choices of that particular year. So that's the kind of guy Buster was.

But being an offensive player, being an offensive guard, and I remember the third or fourth day at practice the play was I was pulling right and blocking the defensive end. He didn't like the way that I did it, and he became the defensive end with no pads on. So he says, "Pull and hit me." He didn't think I put the effort into it. So I pull and go to Buster, and he's standing there with no pads on. So I go through the motions. He goes berserk, you know, just absolutely goes berserk because I didn't hit him. So we're going to do it again. So this time I put everything I got into it. I don't remember if I knocked him down or not—I hope I did—because he didn't have any pads on. But from that time on, I said, "He's got his heart right."

Sixty and '61 were not real good years. He did not get along well with the public and didn't communicate well with the media. But I visited him for years when he moved back to Tennessee, and I liked him.

Now, to carry that on further, you asked about Lou. Lou and I got along extremely well. Lou was kind of Jack in a way. Lou was certainly no dummy; a very intelligent person. He understood some of Jack from his intelligent side. He was an interpreter, narrator or interpreter during one of the wars and he spoke some foreign languages fluently and was an interpreter. He was a smart guy. Lou was very intelligent and understood people. He knew that my character was different from Jack's character, my

makeup was different from somebody else's, and he made sure that he knew what turns you on. I liked him for that.

Williams: How did the game plan change?

Shaw: From Lou's era versus Buster's era? Well, Lou started getting the athletes. Buster didn't have the quality of athlete that Lou had, so that was a major difference there. You had Jack at quarterback, you had Cookie Gilchrist at fullback, who was, and still I say today, the best football player that I ever saw or were around, was Cookie Gilchrist. Not the best athlete. O.J. Simpson was the best athlete, but Cookie was the best football player. Just a phenomenal, phenomenal football player.

We had the receiving crew, we had Glenn [A.] Bass and [Ernest] Ernie Warlick, and Elbert Dubenion. Elbert was on Buster's teams in the sixties, but "Duby" was scared to death of Buster, and Lou saw that and he made friends with Duby, got Duby's confidence, and Elbert "Duby" Dubenion became a leader in the AFL as a receiver just because of the way that Lou handled him.

Williams: Let's move on to '63, then. Explain to me why a man by the name of Daryle [P.] Lamonica suddenly arrived on the scene.

Shaw: Well, I don't know why they drafted him. Jack was quarterback. I don't even know who Jack's backup was in '62, but Jack didn't play a lot at the end of '62. Daryle was drafted. It had nothing to do with Jack. The philosophy with a lot of professional football teams even back as far as '63 or '64—Daryle was drafted in '64, not '63, right?

Williams: Let me just check that. No, he came in '63.

Shaw: He did come in '63? Okay. You draft a person not necessarily by the position. When it's your time, you look at the best athlete and usually that person can be a help to you. Jack came to us as an injured quarterback. Was he going to be our quarterback for six or eight or ten years? Nobody knew that. So I'm sure that Daryle was drafted by the Bills as an insurance to the quarterback position, not necessarily to Jack. But that's probably the reason that Daryle was drafted.

Williams: It's interesting, though, that there were two big passers known for their passing in Jack Kemp and Daryle Lamonica on a team that was really run-oriented. Wasn't that Lou Saban's major philosophy, to run the ball?

Shaw: Well, yes, because we had Cookie and we had [Linwood] Wray Carlton. I don't mean to demise Wray in any way, but we had two big running backs. We had an offensive line that was very mobile, and we did a lot of sweeps and a lot of long traps, and, yes, we did run the ball. But that does not demean in any way the ability that Jack had in throwing the football. Daryle, you know, Daryle got into games with injury, primarily, to Jack.

Williams: I was surprised that over the time they were both on the team, Jack started thirty-nine games and Lamonica started three.

Shaw: Jack was the quarterback. Jack was the starting quarterback. Now, that doesn't tell you that games that Jack started that Daryle came into. If Jack were alive, he would shoot me dead right now for what I'm about to say. Daryle was probably a better passer, long passer than Jack was. But Jack was as good as they come at knowing when to throw the football and

who to throw the football to, and that's the big difference. But they did split some time in '63 and '64, and, of course, Jack was MVP of the league in '65.

Williams: What about fan reaction to these two men?

Shaw: That was a long time ago, and I forget the plays and exactly how it came about. But Daryle got a lot of fan appreciation when he came in. Daryle had some success in throwing the long ball and bringing us out of a game when we looked like we were down. When Jack would throw an interception, if Daryle came in and didn't throw an interception, then the ovation was so strong for Daryle and there were boos for Jack. That's just the way it was in Buffalo.

Williams: You had remarked somewhere that you thought maybe Daryle was actually the fans' favorite.

Shaw: Just judging from the reaction at a game from here and there, it would lead you to believe that. But "Lamonica" in Buffalo, New York, was more appealing than "Kemp" in Buffalo, New York. A lot of Italian people loved Daryle, and rightfully so. He was a good quarterback. It really showed what his career was going to be like when he was traded from Buffalo. Sixty-six?

Williams: To Oakland.

Shaw: To Oakland in '66, I think.

Williams: Yes, it was at the end of the '65 season, I believe.

Shaw: Yes, because Jack was the MVP [Most Valuable Player] of the league in '65, and so if you got talent, the Bills recognized that and sent him off.

Williams: So take yourself back to taking your stance at the line for a play and Jack Kemp is behind you versus Daryle Lamonica. Any difference in your feelings at the time?

Shaw: I can't say that there was. If there was any and we're at the line of scrimmage and there's going to be a check-off, I know immediately if Jack's in there, that it is the absolute right play. I know that, so there's that confidence. Not that Daryle lacked the intelligence; he just lacked the experience. So if there was a difference, you know, we had a ton of trust in whatever Jack was going to call at the line of scrimmage. Again, not that we didn't have the trust in Daryle, it was just that he was still wet behind the ears, and you thought about that.

Williams: Why was Cookie let go at the end of the '64 season? Who was behind that?

Shaw: Cookie, probably. I just mentioned that he was the best football player I ever played with or ever saw. He was also one of the most difficult to get along with. Jack gets all the credit, and deservedly so, in dealing with Cookie during those difficult years that Cookie was there. But I was the captain of the team, and I can tell you that my conversations with Lou during that period of time with Cookie was most difficult, because Lou was a no-nonsense-type person and Cookie was just different, and his philosophy of life was different.

The big incident that Jack did help solve was—and Cookie had a lot of respect for Jack, a lot of respect for Jack. Cookie didn't think that the play-

calling benefited him because we were throwing the football, and he refuses to go into the game, and Lou suspends him and we need Cookie really bad, regardless of how different he was. He was just a different guy in the way that his thought process, but, boy, when he walked on the football field, he was the real deal.

Williams: Talk a little bit more about the Kemp-Gilchrist relationship.

Shaw: I think that Cookie probably blamed Jack for the times that he didn't get the ball when he thought he should get the ball, but Jack was looking at the big picture in what was best for the team, not for Cookie. But Cookie wanted the ball every time the ball was centered, and he was physically prepared to run the football every time it was centered. We knew that. He knew that. But that's just not the way the game works. So the differences that Jack and Cookie had were over play-calling. Cookie had a tremendous amount of respect for Jack and the intelligence that Jack had for the game. Deep down, Cookie wanted to win, but Cookie thought we could win with him carrying the football every time, and Jack saw it completely different, obviously. That was the only time that they really had differences.

But the flip side of that is that deep down Cookie knew where Jack was coming from. This an old Southern saying. When Jack told you that the cow ate the cabbage, there's no cabbage left, and that's the way Cookie looked at him, that he knew what he was talking about and deep down what Jack said was right, and you always go back to that parable.

Williams: So would you characterize their relationship as close?

Shaw: Respectful for one another. Close, no. Close definition for me is when you spend a whole lot of time together outside whatever the main activity is that brings you together. That didn't happen.

Williams: Did Cookie have any close associates on the team?

Shaw: Yes. Yes, I think Booker [T.] Edgerson was as close to Cookie as anybody and stayed that way up until Cookie's death. So, yes, he had a few. I don't know who they were outside of the team, but there were people that he associated with outside the team.

Williams: You mentioned you were captain. You weren't co-captain?

Shaw: Well, yes, I was co-captain. [Thomas J.] Tom Sestak—they called us—well, in one of the pictures it does say co-captain, but offensive captain, defensive captain is the way it looks like.

Williams: But you have said that Jack was really the leader.

Shaw: Jack was the leader, absolutely.

Williams: So how did you work out being captain and his being leader? Was that troublesome at times?

Shaw: I didn't have trouble with it. He might have had a problem with it. [laughs] No, I'm just kidding. The captain duty back in that day was you were more of a go-between between the coach, the head coach, and the team. In my particular case, it was strictly the offensive side of the team.

I had a great relationship with Lou, I had a really good relationship with the team, and so it was a natural fit to be able to communicate between the two. Jack's abilities to the team had more depth than what the captain's duties were at the time. Jack did not want to demean himself to step down to be the captain. Jack was the leader.

Williams: Now, if Jack had an issue with Lou Saban, would he take it to you to pass on or would he go to the coach himself?

Shaw: We'd talk about it. We would talk about it. Jack had very few of those because there were times, probably numerous times, that the play that came into the huddle, Jack might alter that play at the line of scrimmage and take the consequences when he went to the bench. But more times than not, they worked for us.

Williams: I want to pause here just for a moment.

[pause]

Williams: We haven't talked about race as an issue yet, and I'd like to hear your observations on that, and in particular about the All-Star Game in '65.

Shaw: Okay. Never had a problem with race. I felt suspect from time to time, having been born and raised in Mississippi, particularly during the integration years, but being elected co-captain, offensive captain of the Bills in 1962 and having that responsibility up until being injured in '67 and then doing it again in the last few years of my career, that was not an issue, just never been an issue with my family.

The '65 All-Star Game was one in which we were in New Orleans. It was not really an All-Star Game; it was the All-Stars playing the Buffalo Bills, which had never been done before. We were league champions and they picked an All-Star team to play us.

Williams: Did that happen only once?

Shaw: That's it. That was it.

Williams: A real anomaly.

Shaw: Yes. That was it. We were in New Orleans, and we had played exhibition games in the Deep South prior to that '65 All-Star Game, where I remember Mobile, we played an exhibition game in Mobile, '62, '63, somewhere along in there, and the black guys stayed in a separate hotel from the white guys during that time. So it was nothing new, but in this particular case the guys could not get rides, the cabs would not pick them up, and it was an issue.

Now, two years doesn't sound like a long period of time, but from the time that we had done an exhibition game there in the early sixties to '65, a lot had gone under the bridge during that period of time. The guys made a stand which all of us supported. They moved the game from New Orleans to Houston. Of course, Cookie was one of those athletes, black athletes, that could not get the cab ride, was denied entrance into some of the clubs on Bourbon Street, French Quarters. And Jack supported him, along with, as far as I know, every other player there, every white player supported the black player, and we moved it.

Williams: As co-captain, did you take any particular role in that?

Shaw: I did not. I did not. It happened quick. It kind of had an All-Star—because everybody was there, just not the Bills. The guys were mixing it up together, so it didn't have a Buffalo Bills prominence. It was an All-Star prominence, but Jack was one of the leaders that actually got that game moved.

Williams: Did the All-Stars play a role in that?

Shaw: Sure. Oh, yes. Oh, absolutely. That wasn't a Buffalo thing. No, that was not a Buffalo thing at all.

Williams: So in 1965, at the end of the season, Lou Saban departs for the University of Maryland. Why?

Shaw: I don't know. Lou never stayed anywhere very long. Had nothing to do with his ability to coach. Well, let me rephrase that. I don't really know how good a coach Lou was, but he was a tremendous communicator. One of the positive characteristics that I saw in Lou's ability to handle a football team was that he let his assistant coaches coach. Now, how many buttons were pushed and mashed in meetings prior to the practice field? I don't know. But he communicated extremely well with those assistant coaches.

Why he moved around so much, I don't know. He's looking for another challenge somewhere down the road. How old was Lou when he passed away? Eighty-nine? Late eighties, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. He had to be eighty-seven. I visited with him on numerous occasions when we would go to Myrtle Beach. He told me at age eighty-seven that he was ready to get back into the coaching game, did I know of a position. And he always liked schools that might have hit the bottom, to bring them back up.

Numerous occasions—I say numerous occasions—on some occasions he took schools that had a new program. Then he coached in a couple of semi-pro leagues that had a new program. So he just kind of liked to coach. I don't know what his motivation was about leaving a championship team. But he went to Maryland, I don't even want to go there. He ended up in Denver somewhere.

Williams: Well, I think he was only at Maryland for one or two seasons and then he went to the Broncos, where he was, interestingly enough, reunited with Cookie.

Shaw: That's correct. That is correct.

Williams: So [Joel D.] Joe Collier takes over in '66, and you had a nine, four, and one season and you lost out to K.C. [Kansas City Chiefs] at the end, the championship. Talk about that.

Shaw: Let's talk about Joe. Boy, he was a special guy. Two people that paralleled one another was Jack Kemp and Joe, from the intelligence side, the way they approached the game. Joe and Jack's character was really close in the thought process, which actually made us pretty good because they really communicated well. Coach Collier was really respected as Coach Saban's number-one assistant guy. He wasn't the head coach, but you knew that some day he would be and you hoped that it would be with us, and it worked out that way. Knew the game of football in and out.

That particular year we were not the best football team in the AFL, although three weeks prior to that championship game that you mentioned, we beat Kansas City in Kansas City. And here we are going to play them in Buffalo, and it's the first Super Bowl; the winner goes to the first Super

Bowl. I couldn't have been any more ready for a game than that one. The thought process was that we just beat them three weeks ago, we got them here at home, so for a Super Bowl, nobody said this is a done deal, but we kind of thought that. They beat us like 31 to 7, I think, something like that. We fumbled. Jack threw a couple of interceptions. There was a special team runback. I think we were down like 21 to nothing before the dew got off of the ground. We never recovered.

Williams: Now, one player from that era said that he thought that if Lou Saban had been the coach, you would have won that game.

Shaw: That's not my thought process at all. We just got beat like a drum.

Williams: So '67 through '69 were years of transition and whatnot and so on, and you and Jack both retired in '69.

Shaw: Yes.

Williams: Talk about that sort of downslide.

Shaw: Well, there still wasn't a lot of change in personnel. A lot of the same personnel was there that was there in '64 and '65 and '66. We had gotten older or were getting older. We had some bumps and bruises. Our 4:07:40 time now was 5:00 flat. You know, the way it is. The velocity of the arm on the quarterback was not what it was before. The speed of the receiver was a step slower. We were at that point in our football careers where we were not as competitive as we had been in the past. The new guys that joined us, quite frankly, were not as competitive as the ones that

they replaced. So combination of the two was a football team that needed an infusion of some sort.

Williams: Well, quite a number of you retired in '69. You mentioned that earlier. Did you discuss amongst yourselves, "We're going out"?

Shaw: I didn't. My retirement had nothing to do with Jack or Stew or Al or whoever else went out at that particular time. My decision was a collaborative agreement with my wife. We made our home in Louisiana during the football off-season, and we left Buffalo and went to Louisiana. We have three daughters, and two of the girls had started school. They would start school in the Buffalo area, and then after Christmas, depended on how we did, would start school in Louisiana, finish the year. Honestly, the school that she went to in Buffalo was a little more advanced than the school in Louisiana, so she would be so far ahead when we got home and then so far behind the next year starting, that the wife and I sat down and we said, "We don't want to take advantage of football," which we never did, "but we're not going to let football take advantage of our family." And we really retired on that principle. I felt like I had two, three, four more years to play. I felt that way. Might not have made it, but I felt that anyway. But we retired.

To carry that a step further, the Oilers lost both starting guards in 1970 in the first exhibition game. Make a long story short, Houston got the Bills' permission to interview me. I went to Houston, talked to Houston. I was offered more money to play three years than I'd made my whole career in Buffalo, so I'm all excited. I'm going to play for Houston. I go home, and my wife says, "Why did we leave Buffalo?" She says, "A principle's involved."

"Yes, you're right." So we didn't do it. So, retired.

Williams: How do you account for Jack Kemp having been around, I think, three or four NFL teams and never got much further than the taxi squad, and came so quickly to ascension in the AFL?

Shaw: I can't speak to Jack's presence with the Giants. I don't even remember who the quarterback was in 1957 or '58. Was that [Yellberton A.] Y.A. Tittle?

Williams: Might have been.

Shaw: Well, that's one reason that he didn't play a whole lot if that's the case. The AFL was ready for a lot of marginal players. Not that they were bad football players, but they were playing behind some exceptional football players, and they were ready to play. There were several guys that probably came into the AFL like that. Then there were some that came into the AFL—I think about a George [F.] Blanda, that people thought that his career was on the tail end, and he played for umpteen years after that. I don't think it has anything to do with the credibility of the player being less, or in some cases being more in the other league. The timing was right for a new league.

Williams: Do you look back on the AFL as a kind of golden era?

Shaw: I don't know that, Brien, it was a golden era or not, and I go back and think about what Coach Dodd told me in 1961. He could see that there was room for another league and that there either was going to be two separate paths or there would be a merger. And, of course, as we know, the merger happened. But the AFL was different. The Bills and Jack, we were

different than the AFL. We were more NFL than we were AFL a kind of a team because we ran the ball a whole lot more than we threw the ball during that era and that's the way the NFL played.

Now, the San Diego, for an example, they were a real true AFL team in throwing the football. [Joseph W. "Joe"] Namath comes along, AFL. So, yes, it could be golden in that the timing was so perfect for a new league.

[pause]

Williams: Were you surprised when, (a) Jack retired with you, and then, (b), what his next step was to go into politics?

Shaw: No. No. We knew where he was headed from day one. We'd heard enough from day one, all the conversations on the airplanes and the conversations after practice. Yes, no doubt where Jack was headed. No doubt.

Williams: You said somewhere that Jack was always reading and always preaching.

Shaw: Well, he wasn't preaching gospel; he was preaching political aspirations or the direction that we needed to go. Yes, I mean from day one, from day one he made a real impact on all of us. You know, it's satisfying in a way to see a person advocate what he or she wants or is going to do or going to be long before it happens, and then to see it come to life is a fun experience.

Williams: He was called "the senator" some of the time, right?

Shaw: I never called him that, but I think media did. I don't know of a teammate that ever called him senator. We might have called him president but we didn't call him senator.

Williams: He tried to convince a lot of you to vote for Goldwater, didn't he?

Shaw: Absolutely, and did. And did. Yes, Goldwater, Reagan, yes, were his choices back in the day, and, yes, sure did.

Williams: Did you grow up in a politically active family?

Shaw: Did not. Did not. Politics was new to me. One of the few times that Jack and I ever had a disagreement—I hate to say it, but I didn't grow up in a politically motivated family, so the political motivation was just not important to me at the time, so we talked about that. Jack has told me on several occasions, he said, "After football, what are you going to do?"

I said, "Well, I don't know. I'll go into business."

"No, no. What are you going to do to help our United States, our state, or our county? Are you going to get involved?"

And I said, "Probably not."

And he says, "Why wouldn't you? You've been a part of this team, so there is a name recognition. Back in your part of the country nobody else has done that, so you should."

And I said, "That's not me."

So I decide to do it, so I call him and I said, "I didn't want to tell you, but I ran for school board on a local level." And I said, "I got elected."

He says, "Great."

I said, "But I ran as a Democrat." [laughs]

He didn't say anything for a little while, and then he says, "That's okay. That's okay. One of these days you'll come around. That's okay. You made the first step." [laughs] That was the end of it.

Yes, so we argued about it. My philosophy was that the guy that I ran against was Republican. I usually vote for the person, not the party. So we talked about that.

Williams: So you were reelected, weren't you?

Shaw: I was reelected. Let's see. I ran, got elected. It's a four-year term. I ran for a second term, got elected. Then a third time I ran and got beat. So, yes.

Williams: Have you remained a Democrat ever since?

Shaw: No, no. I'm registered now as a Republican.

Williams: So Jack won?

Shaw: He didn't know it.

Williams: So fill us in on what else you did after football.

Shaw: Just work. During my football career, and the reason that we lived in Louisiana, is that my dad and I bought a machine shop and a steel fab business after my first year of pro ball. It was in Mississippi, Natchez, and we lived across the river in Vidalia, Louisiana. Did that until 1973. Dad passed away. Sold the machine shop. We moved to Georgia, and I got into the precast concrete business. I worked for a company for four years in

Atlanta, Stone Mountain area, and then decided that I could do it on my own, so I built a plant. And make a long story short, I was in the business for thirty-three years and sold my plants a couple of times. It was very good to me, very good to me.

Williams: Where was the plant located?

Shaw: The very first plant that I built was right here in Toccoa. I serviced Atlanta; Asheville; Greensboro-Spartanburg; Columbia. That was my market area. Built a plant in Columbia, Tennessee; bought a plant in Gainesville, Georgia; built a plant in Athens, Georgia; bought a plant in Atlanta; Green Coast Springs, Florida; two plants in Texas. We just got all over the place.

Williams: But during that time you were living here in Toccoa?

Shaw: I did.

Williams: And this was the school board that you served on here?

Shaw: That is correct. That is correct.

Williams: So let's talk about your induction into the Hall of Fame and who introduced you.

Shaw: [laughs] Well, my presenter was [Edward] Eddie Abramoski, "Abe," who was all of our trainer during our playing days. Abe was the very first employee hired by the Bills, 1960. He came from the Detroit team, as Buster did, and he served as the trainer for forty-something years; '92, '94,

something like that. I chose Abe to be my presenter primarily because of the influence that he had on me, keeping me healthy, giving me the opportunity to play, to build the credentials to get where I was, and I just had to give him all the credit for that.

Williams: And what about Jack?

Shaw: Well, until the day that Jack left us, I don't think he ever forgave me for not having him be my presenter. Jack and I were extremely close. Patsy [M. Shaw] and Joanne [Kemp], extremely close. I watched the kids grow up. He watched my kids grow up. So there was a real connection between Jack and myself, and you absolutely would think that I would have Jack be my presenter. The choice came down between Abe and Jack. There were other teammates that I felt really close to, that I felt would be slighted in naming Jack. Abe meant so much to my career. I really had a tough dilemma. Patsy and I talked about it. We prayed about it. And, oh, maybe a month before the induction it was just evident that Abe was my choice.

Williams: How did you let Jack know?

Shaw: I called him. I kept him aware. I kept him aware of the process that I was going through, that I was struggling with it. He understood, but I don't know if he really understood. But he was very complimentary, and this is Jack in his graciousness, he was very complimentary in my choice of Abe.

Williams: Did he attend the induction that year?

Shaw: He did not. He emailed me. He was in Colorado at the time. This was 1999. He was in Colorado. You know, didn't question it. I understood.

Williams: And it never came up again between you?

Shaw: Never came up again. Never came up again.

Williams: Now, talk a little bit about your effort to get him named to the Hall of Fame.

Shaw: I wrote a very personal letter of recommendation. Jack's credentials of stats as a quarterback are not comparative or competitive with other quarterbacks that are in the Hall of Fame, so if you judge his credential and his worth just strictly on his stats, then he doesn't have a chance going into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. But when you put all the stuff that Jack did for football, actually was the motivator behind the AFL Players Association, which he was president of five or six times, his contribution to football is more than Hall-of-Fame-worthy. So when you put the two together, he very well qualifies as an entity by himself; the contribution side and the playing side. One of the greatest honors that I had in writing that letter. Whether that ever happens or not, will wait to be seen.

Williams: You remain the only strictly AFL player in the Hall of Fame, is that correct?

Shaw: That is not correct. I'm the only guy in the Pro Football Hall of Fame that never played a down in the NFL. I played my whole career in the AFL, so part of what you're saying is correct, but there are thirty-two other guys in the Hall that started their careers in the AFL and finished in the NFL.

Williams: Did you go to some of the Super Bowl parties that Jack held over the years?

Shaw: Yes. Oh, gee, maybe the last one was the Bills, '93. Ninety-three, the Bills played Dallas in Atlanta and I went to that one. That was about the time that Jack had presidential aspirations and wanted to make sure I was there to help him at that point with that.

Williams: You did support him in his runs for the presidency?

Shaw: Absolutely.

Williams: I should say run, because it was really just '88.

Shaw: Yes, that's right.

Williams: Did you do anything during the '96 campaign when he was the VP?

Shaw: No, not structurally assigned an assignment, but if I saw you, he knew where I stood. I was traveling a lot back in that time. I saw a lot of people.

Williams: What were your last contacts with Jack?

Shaw: A couple of months before he quit communicating. I don't remember what the conversation was about. And he called me. But he wouldn't talk to anybody right there toward the end.

Williams: You tried to talk to him?

Shaw: I did not call and try to talk to him directly. I can't remember if we talked to Joanne or not, but I had talked to [Edward J. A. "Eddie"] Rutkowski, and Eddie had talked to him a lot. They were close, really close. Eddie kept me abreast with health-wise where he was.

Williams: How do you think he should be remembered?

Shaw: Jack? Better than average football player. A way better than average politician. One of the greatest Americans that ever faced earth. Good friend.

Williams: Shall we stop there?

Shaw: Yes.

Williams: Thank you very much.

[End of interview]