## JACK KEMP ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with

Sen. ROBERT J. ("BOB") DOLE

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Interviewer

Morton Kondracke

JACK KEMP FOUNDATION WASHINGTON, DC

Morton Kondracke: This is a Jack Kemp oral history interview with former Senator and presidential nominee Bob Dole. Today is September 17, 2012, we're at his law offices at Alston and Bird [LLP] in Washington, DC and I'm Morton Kondracke. Thank you so much for doing this.

Sen. Robert J. Dole: Thank you, and thank you for mentioning the firm. I love it. It may end up on the cutting floor, but—

Kondracke: When you think about Jack Kemp, what immediately comes to mind?

Dole: Just a guy who just seemed to be everywhere. Everybody was his friend. He was over you like a blanket—I don't mean a wet blanket, but he just had tentacles that reached everywhere. He had an excellent civil rights record. He was the first really well-known Republican House member, and there were probably others too, President [Gerald R.] Ford [Jr.] and others, who had some flexibility. I mean, Jack was for new ideas, and anything to help somebody in need, Jack was right there, generally spearheading it. So that's how I look at Jack, and how I looked at him in '96, to reach out to maybe different groups than Republicans normally do. It didn't work, but it was still the right thing to do.

Kondracke: So in '96 you hoped that Jack would attract African-Americans and Latinos and people like that, that's part of why you chose him? Dole: That's probably the primary reason, because he knew everybody. People said, well, he didn't have any constituency, you couldn't get five votes from somewhere because he never lived there. He lived everywhere, California, New York, but we thought it got down to [Cornelius H. M.] Connie Mack [III], Jack and a few others, even Justice [Antonin G.] Scalia was mentioned. We didn't interview him but he had some strong supporters.

Kondracke: What do you think he accomplished in his career?

Dole: We used to talk about the Roth-Kemp bill when it was in the Senate, and when it was in the House it was the Kemp-Roth bill, but to be perfectly clear, it was the Kemp bill. [William V.] Bill Roth was a great guy and had thought of some of the things, he'd put in a tax cut, but Jack was sort of the pioneer and the advocate and a good friend of Arthur [B.] Laffer of supply-side fame, very close to President [Ronald W.] Reagan. So he had a lot of plusses. He did, sometimes, extend his speaking requirements, I mean Jack liked to talk. I remember once in San Diego, our wives were behind us because we were going to speak, and Joanne was right behind Jack, and he was just getting warmed up, and it had been quite a while, and she reached over and tugged on his coat. I thought that only happened in the movies. Just a good guy, and I knew at the time that there was a cabal in the House who weren't Bob Dole fans, because we wanted to cut spending, if you were going to do something with taxes. Plus the older Republicans like me, it's two main things, and that's keeping a balance between spending and taxes, not the one excluding the other. You can't get there. Well, you can get there, but it wouldn't be good. Jack felt the same way, only with more passion than I did. I kind of regret

that we were never very close friends, because he was in the House, I was in the Senate, we never did a lot of socializing. But I'd seen him often enough that even though we may have had some differences, you may have read about them—

Kondracke: I was going to ask you about them. You were a supplyside skeptic.

Dole: Right. I didn't believe you just cut taxes and everything falls in you lap. I don't think it does yet. It hasn't been explained to me. But Jack could explain it, and you could say it worked. Reagan came in in 1981, largest tax cut, I think, in history, pretty much across the board. Now we're supposed to get a reduction in spending with every tax cut, and that's where we failed, because I must say, in the Senate we got a spending cut bill, but there was a little gang which included Jack in the House, who didn't want to cut any of the programs, and after we sweat blood to get it passed by one vote in the Senate, bringing a guy in from the hospital, [Peter B.] Pete Wilson, to make that one vote. Jack wasn't the spearhead. I think he went to the meetings, but Congressman [Newton L. "Newt"] Gingrich at the time, he thought it was a big mistake.

Kondracke: This was on the spending cuts or on the '82 TEFRA [Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982]?

Dole: TEFRA? Well they were opposed to TEFRA, and all we did in TEFRA was close one giant loophole called "leasing." These companies that make off with \$100 million in a tax advantage, incentive, I guess you'd call it. It didn't make any sense to me, or to Pete [V.] Domenici,

who I think, well, is probably largely responsible, because he was the Budget chairman and he would say we can't do this. We finally were able to free Social Security for six months. That doesn't sound like much, but in this town even a freeze, not a cut, just freezing \$8000 or \$800 a month makes a big difference in what we call the out years, years later. And we passed that, and we bruised a lot of feelings. We did pick up two Senate seats that cycle and lost 10 House members, so it wasn't that bad. Again, I think Jack was really the originator. He was the prime pusher early on because of his relationship with President Reagan.

Kondracke: What did you think about Kemp himself in those days when he was pushing supply-side? I mean here he is a House member, not a member of Ways and Means.

Dole: He was a free-lancer.

Kondracke: Yes. Did you think he was out of his lane, over his head?

Dole: No. He might have been over my head, but not over his. He knew the subject matter and he could talk at the drop of a hat for whatever you want. Of course, I was with him when he was speaking to big crowds in the '96 election, and he would kind of electrify some in the audience. If you were a Jack Kemp fan, you're never going to quit, never back off. And Jack, through his own personality, which I think helps a great deal in our line of work, he was a very successful politician in the right sense of the word, with a great family, but we lost.

Kondracke: Did you pick him partly because he would also excite the conservative base?

Dole: That was part of it. Even though I thought I was a conservative. I voted on all of Jesse [A.] Helms [Jr.]' right-to-life votes. They were not one a day, but they were frequent. But I thought my support of Reagan was fourth of fifth, which I thought, if he was the top conservative, there were a lot of us who followed Reagan because he told me when I was Republican leader for 10 years, he said, "If you can't get it all, see if you can get 70 percent and we'll get the rest next year." He wasn't one of these hidebound Republicans who's either my way or the highway. President Reagan wanted to get something done and he wasn't going to surrender principle, or principles, just to do it, and he had this knack, which I think Jack had too, of sitting down with the opposite party leaders, committee chairmen, just trying to get acquainted—something that I think isn't being done now—but every president has his own style. Jack was the kind of a guy who, if you were seated in a room with some empty chairs next to you, he'd come over and sit down and shoot the breeze. It didn't take much to turn him on. The Laffer curve and taxes and why it was going to work. I remember with President Reagan we got the tax cuts but we never got the spending cuts, and of course in the Senate we thought that was because Donald [T.] Regan, who was then the chief-of-staff, blocked our efforts to do this little six-month freeze, plus some other painful choices. Believe me you can't get there unless you're willing to make painful choices, and if you don't make painful choices, it's going to be rough for somebody down the line. We keep kicking the can to the next

generation. I don't think you and I will be here another 50 years. I'd like to see something done before too long.

Kondracke: Did you ever talk to Ronald Reagan about Kemp? Do you know what Ronald Reagan thought about Kemp?

Dole: No, but I spent a lot of time with [Franklyn C.] Lyn Nofziger, who spent a lot of time with Reagan, and Lyn was a disciple. He was always kidding around with sort of negative jokes, but he thought a lot of Kemp. In the early Reagan years he was sort of a semi-permanent fixture in the White House. As years went on his influence faded. I did talk to [Robert D.S.] Bob Novak about Kemp, and Bob Novak, a fellow journalist, now deceased, I remember calling him at the Convention. I was still in D.C. and he was in San Diego, and I said, "Bob, you're a good friend of Jack Kemp's, aren't you? I want to be sure I got the right response." And he said yes. And I said, "What would you think if he were on the ticket?" He said, "I think it would be a good choice." Because they were close friends, but not for that reason. Friendship was part of it, but he thought Jack, again, Bob was a supply-sider, and he thought Jack would really excite the middleclass. I did too, but it didn't excite enough.

Kondracke: How do you think Kemp performed as a vice presidential candidate?

Dole: Well, there was some comment about the debate. I saw part of it. I invaded somebody's living room somewhere in Illinois, I think we were, that they thought he hadn't been tough enough defending me or laying out our program. But again, it wasn't Jack's style. He wasn't

one of these people who want to chop the block and take you along with it. He could be very passionate. I don't recall him ever saying very much personal in a critical way about another colleague. Now again I didn't work with him on a daily basis. He was quotable, when he made a speech or said something it would wind up in print, maybe television, but he had this personality that he wasn't hard to get acquainted with, and I think he was pretty loyal after he got acquainted. He was a lot of help, of course, on the Kemp-Roth tax bill. He spent time in the Senate, he spent time lobbying Senators, and I think had influence on a lot of them.

Kondracke: You were the leader then, so he was a help getting the Reagan tax—

Dole: He worked with people like [William L.] Bill Armstrong, former Senator Bill Armstrong, who I've always thought as a real conservative. He wasn't as active. But people like that. Jack knew everybody, not just the conservatives, and he had no quarrel with the quote moderates, end quote. I know it's not relevant, but in my state we had seven moderates in the state Senate, and seven were defeated a couple of weeks ago. So they're moving further to the right. There can't be much more room over there.

Kondracke: I was going to ask you what do you think Jack Kemp would think about what's going on in the Republican Party nowadays?

Dole: If I know Jack, I think he'd be out there trying to calm the waters and make a deal in the right sense, in other words work it out, put a package together, choke a little if you have to to support it. I'd

be surprised if Jack were here today, if he could appreciate some of the new members of Congress. We're a conservative party and I think we've gone about far enough that way.

Kondracke: Just one more question about the '96 campaign. When you picked him it surprised a lot of people. You said you picked him because he would outreach to minorities, that he would outreach to the middleclass. Did you have any expectation that he would be an attack dog the way vice presidential candidates usually are?

Dole: Well, I thought at the time I needed one, so I wasn't the attack dog. I'd played that role long enough. And I think Jack had trouble filling that niche. Everything else was great. He drew good crowds, he gave good speeches, people left with a very positive mind about our ticket, but he didn't want to get into a contest with [Albert A. "Al"] Gore [Jr.], for example.

Kondracke: Scott [W.] Reed told me that during the Gore debate, that you were on the phone with Scott again and again and again saying, "When's the quarterback going to go on the attack." Do you remember that?

Dole: I probably did. We were in a private home listening to TV, but we did kind of wait for him to go for the jugular, and he did a good job. I think sometimes people's expectations of the attack dog theory is misplaced.

Kondracke: I heard from somebody that in later years, that Mrs.

[Mary Elizabeth] Dole and Joanne [Kemp] sort of got you and Jack to be friends. Do Mrs. Dole and Joanne have a lot in common?

Dole: Yes, well they're great friends, and they're women of great faith. When they talked they probably talked about how their husbands should do this or that. But I don't remember any—

Kondracke: Not with you and Jack.

Dole: No. I think we were friends anyway. We weren't close friends, we weren't close socially, but we were friends, and I knew he was a rising star in the Party. There were so many plusses, versus maybe two or three negatives, it seemed like the right choice.

Kondracke: Just to go back to supply-side, you thought that Kemp and Laffer and those guys thought that all you had to do was cut taxes and the growth would be so big that you wouldn't have to worry about cutting spending, and therefore that was wrong and that the deficits would rise, I take it. That was your basic objection?

Dole: Yes, that was my personal objection, but I was the leader, so it wasn't the Republican Party's position. I just never could figure out how you could stimulate the economy just by cutting taxes, and we're in a bind right now, because we have the sequester coming along, and if all those spending cuts, particularly defense, go into effect, it's going to be mayhem around here. Now Jack would not let that happen. He was conservative, but I think sometimes he was confused as being ultra-right, and he wasn't. He was a very compassionate guy.

Because I watched people when I was in the Senate, and watched House members too, and the economy was too good. You can't go out and say, "I wish we'd have a recession. It would certainly help our ticket." The campaign would be short-lived. So you have to have a program, you have to spell it out, which Romney needs to do now, and you've got to give people a reason to vote for you. Not that you can attack your opponent, he's not your enemy. They're not enemies, they're opponents.

Kondracke: What did you think about Laffer and [Jude T.] Wanniski? Did you think they had too much influence on Jack?

Dole: I hadn't thought about Wanniski. I used to spend a lot of time with him, because he was really aggressive on supply-side. And they had, again I'm not privy to it, Jack would rate all these people. Joanne might, and maybe [C.] Trent Lott or someone, or Newt, somebody who worked closely with him. I think Jack and Lott and Connie Mack, a lot of those members were fairly young at the time. They were conservatives, but they weren't over the top. So you could be a conservative and still be Republican. It's gotten to the point in some places that you almost have to sign an oath or a pledge, not like Grover [G.] Norquist's pledges, but it's going to have to change.

Kondracke: Not to dwell excessively on this, but you and Jack traded some barbs from time to time. You once said that "The good news was that a bus full of supply-siders went over a cliff, and the bad news was that three seats were empty." And he accused you of being "a Hoover, deep root canal Republican." How personal was this in those days? In *those* days?

Dole: Well, I think we'd fume and froth at the mouth, and when you first read it or see in on TV or hear it on the radio, but I think early on when I was the leader it used to grate on me quite a bit. But then I understood, "Fire back, if you want to keep it going, but better yet, just let it disappear. Change the subject." But again, I never put Jack with the real, I'm not sure "conservatives" is the right word. The inflexible, rigid people in the Congress, particularly our party. Because Reagan came along and made all of us members of the majority, and I became chairman of the Finance Committee. I can't even do my own taxes. But we had a lot of good help. I'm just trying to think, I don't think Jack and I in the campaign ever had a bad word. I think we may have suggested after the Gore debate, Scott Reed, I think, was going to tell Jack he had to be a little tougher because we knew we were behind, and you can't win with just a negative campaign, but when you're behind, you have to do something to catch up, so if you're going to play the game, you have to walk the walk.

Kondracke: Did you think that Jack didn't walk the walk, quite?

Dole: No, I think I heard Jack speak a couple times, once in San Diego, and I think he gave the Republican message. He didn't dwell on any one theory on tax cuts, flat tax, whatever people might be for.

Kondracke: When all is said and done, do you think Reaganomics worked, the tax cuts and the—? It seemed to produce prosperity. In the late seventies you had a 70 percent top rate and stagflation, and along comes Reagan, and he does what he does. The deficits were

big, but prosperity seemed to result. So how did you come out thinking that the Reagan years went?

Dole: I thought we had a pretty good combination on revenues and spending, though I must say that we fell behind on the spending reduction side. It's easy to get the tax cuts, but it's much harder to get people to vote to freeze, or to cut one percent from any program. I don't know. It gets to be pretty frustrating, because we thought the House, under Newt's leadership, didn't care a lot for the Senate. In fact, he used to have a favorite term for us, which I can't use here.

Kondracke: [laughs] Do you think that's inherent? Is there always distaste between the House and the Senate? Sometimes I think that it's worse than the distaste between Republicans and Democrats.

Dole: Well, the House members used to tell me, "We've got a lot of bright guys in the House, but they're never on television. You've got to be a Senator, even though you may not know anything. You're introduced as a Senator." And we're seeing now some of these bright new House members who have good programs, they have some flexibility, they're realistic. But I think there were times when I used to say, "Richard [M.] Nixon couldn't be nominated in today's Party," because he was another moderate, I guess, if you use terms. You know, the Republicans who didn't like me, a couple of weeks ago invited me to come out and raise money the 28th of September, so things fly right by. You're hot today and cold tomorrow.

Kondracke: What about the '86 tax reform? There was Bradley-Gephardt, and there was Kemp-Kasten, and there was a Reagan plan, and then [Robert W.] Bob Packwood's plan finally passed. How much credit do you think Kemp deserves for that '86 reform?

Dole: What I remember best was Packwood. His performance on the Senate floor, when he'd go down into the well and walk back and forth. He didn't have any notes, he didn't need any. And I don't know whether Jack, surely had some influence, because he was the tax man on the House side when we had a tax issue. I'm sure they'd consult with Kemp most every time. He was the go-to guy on taxes, and deservedly so. He believed it and he preached it and he traveled all over the country, and served on boards when it was legal. We gave it our best shot. We didn't do as well as he should have. We carried, what, 19 states? Something like that.

Kondracke: In the '96 campaign, you actually advocated a 15 percent across-the-board tax cut. So did you become a kind of supply-sider, do you think?

Dole: The polls didn't reflect it. And I'm always wondering when somebody says on television that so and so is a supply-sider, how many people out in the audience have even any idea what he's talking about or what she's talking about. I think that's one shortcoming that we have over the interviewee and the interviewer. A lot of these things, we deal with them every day, but some people, when they hear it for the first time, don't have the foggiest notion. Now if Jack were making a speech, they wouldn't have any foggy notion, because he would lay it out, and lay it out again if he thought the message hadn't gotten through.

Kondracke: Tell them again and again and again sometimes.

Dole: Yes, well that's an old story. If you didn't get it the first time, we'll give it to you the eighth, ninth and tenth time.

Kondracke: What's your most vivid memory of Jack Kemp?

Dole: Trying to find him. Like the time I made up my mind, and we'd called Jack, and he and Joanne were off somewhere, and I had [Roderick A.] Rod De Arment and Sheila [P.] Burke. They were my two bird dogs. They finally located Jack and Joanne somewhere, like in West Virginia, I'm not certain. And then they came to Russell [Kansas], and I asked Jack. I said, "Jack, I've announced that I'd like to have you as my running mate." He said, "Did you think of it carefully?" I said, "Yes, we spent weeks interviewing people—not trying to make a spectacle of it—parading people in and out of the office. We know we're behind, we know that they're some who don't believe I'm conservative enough, and so we have to stiffen up our conservative base." So he decided there in Russell, Kansas, I think he'd already decided, but he wanted to be sure that I was sincere and that I knew what I was doing, and that I knew that his primary goal was to reduce taxes, in combination to get more growth.

Kondracke: He was checking with you to see whether you were dedicated to his program before he was going to take the job?

Dole: No. In picking Jack that's one of the things that I felt certain would be helpful. He never raised it.

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Kondracke: Did you call him somewhere to offer him the vice

presidency, or did Scott or somebody else?

Dole: No, I called him. Scott may have too, because they were very close. But I know Sheila and Rod tracked him down somewhere, and they all flew out to Kansas. But in my own thinking on it, "Well, this may help me a few points, because nobody is quarreling about Jack's credentials, conservative, but there are some who believe that I'm not conservative enough."

Kondracke: You said this to him?

Dole: Yes. He knew it anyway. He may have felt the same way. I think as I said earlier, I was not as high a supporter of Reagan and Jesse Helms, I think I ranked fourth or fifth, so that was conservative enough, and we got a lot done. But Jack, I think, because we hadn't had this day-to-day, getting acquainted talking about the bills, and talking about his family and his wife and himself—but Jack would give great introductions, making you feel like giving a good speech.

Kondracke: So is that sort of Russell unveiling your most vivid memory of Kemp? I mean, he was hidden away in a motel room somewhere.

Dole: Yes. The press was trying to find him.

Kondracke: It didn't leak, did it, before he was announced?

Dole: I always thought maybe I'd called Novak before we'd made a decision, and there might just be a slight chance that Bob kind of trickled it out there. It wasn't a surprise factor, because I doubt that makes that much difference. But what you don't want to do is to make up your mind and then call the person and they decline. That's one thing I learned from Nixon. Don't call somebody unless you know the answer. So I didn't call anybody. Well, not really.

Kondracke: You knew that Kemp would accept, because Reed and John [W.] Buckley had talked to him. Right?

Dole: Yes.

Kondracke: So then you called him in West Virginia.

Dole: I'm not sure of the state, but—

Kondracke: Do you remember anything about the conversation?

Dole: Well, I think it was pretty matter-of-fact, you know, that it's getting time for the Convention. I thought we should have announced early, because we were grasping for straws on how we can pick up some more states, and there were quite a few in play that we lost by fairly close margins. And that's where I thought Jack, kind of a utility guy, I don't think he ever had an enemy. He was always full of pep and full of vigor, patting you on the back. He was strong. And I think he did do that in some states. I've never gone back to check. And when Elizabeth had her little run, Jack went down to speak for her,

gave her money, did anything she wanted. So I ended up knowing Jack a lot better than I did going in, and it was a plus.

Kondracke: This was in later years, then, when Mrs. Dole was running for the Senate. Was he around for her re-elect too?

Dole: I don't think he could run for re-election.

Kondracke: When did she run for re-election?

Voice: 2008.

Kondracke: So how would you rank Jack Kemp as a twentieth century political figure? We'll come to the end here. And is there anything that I haven't asked about him that you remember that you'd like to have on the record?

Dole: If Jack were around now, it's too bad you lose people like Jack, and your own personal story, but the thing about Jack is, when we lost, he wasn't depressed or anything. Politics hadn't been very good to him, and his poll numbers were not as strong as they had been. But once he got in the race his numbers picked up again. It's only when they put us together that we lost. He had a big asset in Joanne, too. She's a wonderful person. She traveled with us quite often. Keep us on time. Both Jack and I, well, we weren't like Clinton, but we were late sometimes.

Kondracke: It was going to be pretty hard for you guys to win in '96 anyway. You had peace and prosperity—

Dole: Yes, I've got this seven-page handwritten letter from Nixon, which I got before the election, and he went down the list. He said, "The age is not a problem. You still have a strong voice." But the one, number seven, was if the economy's good, you can't win, and he was right. I mean why would anybody want to throw Clinton out if they had a job and their family was doing pretty well? So we've teamed up with him on a few things. I don't think Jack, I'm trying to think of an occasion when Jack was all over the opposition. He was sort of in a neutral zone part of the time. He knew that if he made it partisan, we didn't have the horses to get it passed. So that's just the way it is. And he also knew that it would be nice to get 100 percent, but maybe you would only get 70 or 80. Take it. Because you remember in the '81 tax bill there were a lot of places where we went too far, particularly with children and middle-income people, and Reagan was perfectly willing that we close the loopholes and fix it.

Kondracke: Jack was against the fixes. As I understand it, the economy tipped into a recession because [Paul A.] Volcker [Jr.] crunched down on money supply, and my reading of what Kemp thought was that any tax cuts in a recession were a bad idea. So he was against Reagan. Reagan called him into the Oval Office, worked him over, and he said, "Mr. President, I'll never be against you, but I'm going to be against this." So he was pretty rigid on the tax cut issue.

Dole: I think in 20 years, if you're interviewing somebody and ask about 20 years ago there was a member of Congress whose primary

goal was to reduce taxes, you'd probably find some people who could name that person, particularly in the political, the activists.

Kondracke: Jack Kemp would be one of them. Senator Dole, do you have any final thoughts about Jack?

Dole: No. There are always the people afterwards looking for scapegoats, and I had people call me to say what a terrible job Jack did in the debate, that he didn't defend me enough. But it wasn't any personal reason. That was his style. We had him on our list from day one. Of course he'd worked for Reed, for Scott, and Scott had good things to say about him, and I thought Scott was pretty bright politically.

Kondracke: Looking back are you glad you did that, or would you think Connie Mack or John [M.] Engler or Carroll [A.] Campbell [Jr.] would have been better?

Dole: Well, I thought a lot about Connie Mack, because he was from Philly, and his heritage, and Catholic, conservative. Nobody would doubt his credentials. He was about the—well it was either going to be Kemp or Mack. There are probably a lot of good ones out there. I could have called [Richard B. "Dick"] Cheney, or put him as head of the search committee. He'd probably would have come up with a good name.

Kondracke: [laughs] It would have been Cheney.

Dole: I'll say one thing. He has a bright daughter, who seems to be, in defense matters, particularly.

Kondracke: Was there anybody else you consulted besides Novak and your own staff about whether to pick Kemp?

Dole: A couple of friends of mine in Kansas who knew about Jack Kemp because they'd been back here a lot. One was a very successful banker who unfortunately passed away, and the other was a fellow named [David] Dave Owens, a longtime friend, and got in trouble with fundraising. He was bundling. He was collecting from the employees so it could be a big donation, and a lot of it was being done, but Dave had to serve a little time. It's tough. Did you ever think we'd be spending this much money on politics?

Kondracke: No.

Dole: I wonder where Fred Wertheimer is. He's still around, isn't he?

Kondracke: Yes, he's still around. He's mad about it. Citizens United [Supreme Court decision].

Dole: He must be livid.

Kondracke: Let me ask you one other thing. What about Paul Ryan? Paul Ryan worked for Jack. How do you feel about Paul Ryan as a—

Dole: I think that was a plus for him, the fact that he had worked for Jack, and very proud of it, and mentions it frequently. So Jack's

legacy could continue here if we elect the R-and-R [Romney-Ryan] ticket. And that speaks well of Jack. Ryan doesn't have to say anything except that "I worked for Kemp," and that's it, but he was proud of it and properly so, letting people know about it. Jack would really miss this campaign. He's like some of the rest of us. They ring the bell, we're in the ring.

Kondracke: Senator Dole, thank you so much for your time. We really appreciate it.

Dole: Thank you.