

JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with
NEWTON L. "NEWT" GINGRICH
December 13, 2012

Interviewer
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JACK KEMP FOUNDATION
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Morton Kondracke: This is a Jack Kemp Oral History Project interview with former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. We're doing this at Gingrich Productions in Arlington, Virginia. Today is December 13, 2012, and I'm Morton Kondracke. Thanks so much for doing this.

Newt Gingrich: Good to be with you.

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

Gingrich: Boundless energy and optimism. He was a remarkable leader.

Kondracke: Talk about his leadership a little. In what—

Gingrich: You have to understand how much Kemp was a quarterback, and so he got up every morning, ready to go on the field, and when he went on the field, he wanted to throw a pass, and he was determined to score, and he thought on offense all the time. He also thought as a quarterback his job was to arouse and encourage the team, so if you were part of his team, he wanted to make sure you were out there being excited and moving the ball forward. It was just a deep part of who he was as a person, part of also, I think, how he enjoyed life. He was really the closest I've ever come to Theodore Roosevelt, in somebody who just enjoyed life, lived it to the fullest, whether it was playing tennis or skiing or it was reading books or making speeches. He just had endless energy.

Kondracke: You said in 1984 that he was the most important Republican since Theodore Roosevelt. I saw that quoted somewhere. Do you remember what the context was?

Gingrich: I don't know where we were at the time, but it was I think because Reagan's domestic policy's really Kemp. Kemp could come the closest to getting us back to being an optimistic, inclusive, pro-growth pro-opportunity party of anybody, and had done so against enormous resistance. People forget how bitterly the establishment disliked Kemp and disliked what Kemp stood for.

Kondracke: Talk about that a little.

Gingrich: There were a lot of different factors. First of all, the Republican Party is historically—you have to understand my bias. I was deeply shaped by Theodore Roosevelt's *Making of the President* in 1960.

Kondracke: Theodore [H.] White.

Gingrich: I'm sorry, Theodore White. And White's description of the idea-oriented wing of the Party leading with Teddy. And after 1916 being rejected by the regulars, who actually kind of liked having a party they controlled even if it was mindless. And I think that string is still there. I think there's a huge underlying bias in favor of not knowing very much, not thinking very much and not doing very much. So that wing of the Party, which believe you ought to get in an orderly line and you'll be promoted over time, you should know your place. That wing of the Party found Kemp to be outrageous in every way.

He'd been a football quarterback, he hadn't been a lawyer, he hadn't been an accountant, he hadn't been a manager, he was noisy. He was perennially optimistic when they were in fact dour and skeptical. He was inclusive where they were exclusive; he was for ideas where they hated ideas. They thought of ideas as being risks. There's a wonderful line from [Henry L.] H.L. Mencken who said that Warren G. Harding and his administration represented an army of ants tromping across the desert, who when they found an idea would stamp on it and try to figure out what it was and then leave it behind dying, as they kept marching across the desert. You had to have been in the rooms to understand how much Jack put people's teeth on edge. And then he was for an inclusive party. He wanted people to come in that lots of Republicans knew weren't Republicans, shouldn't be Republicans. There were folks in south Florida who resented the Cubans. So when you said, "We're going to be inclusive" they said, "You mean, they are going to be here?" There were folks who frankly resented African-Americans, and they said, "They're going to be here?" And then there were people who derided women and wondered, "Do we really have to have women in active roles?" And Jack was very big-hearted. Jack wanted everybody to play.

Kondracke: Do you have any specific memories in those rooms having him putting teeth on edge and getting slapped or people grouching?

Gingrich: Well, Barber [B.] Conable [Jr.] hated the idea that Jack Kemp had the dominant tax bill because Jack wasn't on [House Committee on] Ways and Means. He was Conable's neighbor in New York, he showed no respect for Conable's seniority. Conable knew, correctly, that he understood the tax code a hundred times better than

Kemp, and Conable didn't understand that that didn't matter, that Jack was a political being, not a legislative being, and he was reshaping how we thought. He wasn't reshaping line 2705 of the [U.S.] Code.

Kondracke: He called himself a bleeding heart, radical conservative, all that kind of stuff, and I guess that that was in opposition to Herbert [C.] Hoover, right?

Gingrich: It wasn't opposition to Hoover, it was opposition to much of the existing Republican Party. In many ways it's easy to forget how tough the fights were in the mid-seventies between the [Gerald R.] Ford [Jr.] and the [Ronald W.] Reagan wings, and how really different they were. And you see this in 1989 when [George H. W.] Bush basically wipes out the Reagan wing of the Party. After eight years of being Reagan's vice president, repays him by eliminating everybody, because it was that deep and that personal. It's still there today. And so Kemp represented sort of the activist, noisy wing of Reaganism, so however bad Reagan was, Kemp was worse.

Kondracke: When did you first meet him?

Gingrich: I actually don't know the date. I think it was '76 or '77. I'd run and lost in '74. He came down to the Republican state convention in Savannah [Georgia], and I ended up spending an hour with him talking about ideas. It was enthralling in part because I'd been an active Republican since August of 1958, and the idea that you'd run into an elected Republican who really cared deeply about ideas. I mean a lot of the guys who were smart just didn't care about ideas. Well, Jack was both smart and he cared about ideas. And so I got the

standard Kemp hour-long lecture on supply-side economics and it really became the base of my 1978 campaign. We ran a very supply-side campaign in '78, and I think it actually worked, I think it was very helpful. And I give [William E.] Bill Brock some credit for having the courage to have paid for the 'tax clipper,' the 'tax cut clipper' [airplane carrying supply-siders Jack Kemp and Sen. [William V.] Bill Roth] which went around the country. Again, with tremendous opposition internally. I mean, Brock got scarred up for having sided with Jack on this particular project.

Kondracke: Brock has talked about how Kemp got ragged over in the Chowder and Marching Society a little bit, but he hasn't talked anything about how he got scarred up.

Gingrich: Well, I'm not sure he even know, but people Conable did not approve of, the Republican National Committee paying for this idea, I mean you have to remember, cutting taxes for economic growth was John F. Kennedy. The regular Republicans in 1961 opposed Kennedy, because they believed in balancing the budget more than they believed in economic growth. Interestingly, one of the people who I found very seminal in all this, there were two essays in 1976 by Irving Kristol in the *Wall Street Journal*. One was called "The Stupid Party" and the other was called "The Future of the Republican Party," and they're both worth your looking at, because they both were in effect, without necessarily going out and saying Kemp by name, they were in effect making the Kempite argument. Interestingly Kristol said to me the other day that when Ford lost, his father turned and said "We may have to look for Jack in '80, because I can't quite imagine Reagan running."

Kondracke: Kristol and Jude [T.] Wanniski and those people wanted Kemp to run, even against Reagan.

Gingrich: I talked to Jack, I think it was on a Wednesday, just before he flew out to California to see Reagan, because by then I was a member [of Congress] and I was clearly his ally, and he basically said, "I'm going to go out and talk to him and if he will adopt a three-year tax cut I'll offer to chair his campaign, and if he doesn't adopt a three-year tax cut, I'm going to run."

Kondracke: When would that have been?

Gingrich: That would have been some time in the fall of '79.

Kondracke: Did he report back what had happened?

Gingrich: Yes, he came back the following week and said, "I'm going to campaign on the three-year tax cut."

Kondracke: See, there's a bit of a dispute over what happened. There was a meeting at the end of 1979 at LAX [Los Angeles International Airport], at the Marriott Hotel near the LAX airport, and some people say that was the quote, unquote 'boarding party,' where Kemp and [David M.] Dave Smick and John [D.] Mueller and people like that, and Jude was there, and [Arthur B. "Art"] Laffer was there. That that's when Reagan signed on as a supply-sider.

Gingrich: Conceivably it was that late, but I doubt it because Jack had to run in New Hampshire. My sense was it was earlier in the fall. It could well be that earlier in the fall Reagan said, "Yes, I'm sort of for it," and then they had the meeting and at which they explained what "sort of for it" meant.

Kondracke: He's going to fly out there, and he says that—

Gingrich: He said, "If Reagan is going to campaign on the three-year tax cut, I'm going to chair his campaign and help him get elected. And if he won't do that, I'm going to run for president, because we need somebody to represent a growth-oriented, opportunity-oriented Republican Party.

Kondracke: It wasn't clear at that point that Reagan was a supply-sider.

Gingrich: No, not at all. In fact, you could have made a pretty good case that he was not a supply-sider yet at that point.

Kondracke: And so when Jack got back, do you remember the conversation?

Gingrich: No. Just that he was beaming and happy and said, "Reagan's in and I'm in." Therefore I was in too.

Kondracke: Right. Do you remember an incident, or did you hear about an incident where Arthur Laffer was trying to get Jack to say that he was going to run, tell Reagan that "I'm going to run against

you, but I'm going to deliver my delegates to you at the end of the game." The whole idea, Laffer's whole idea was to get Jack into the race, basically telling Reagan that he was going to cooperate, in hopes that he would be vice president. Did you ever hear about that plot?

Gingrich: No.

Kondracke: Okay. Let me go back to '78. Actually, if I'm not mistaken, the entire Republican Conference signed onto Kemp-Roth [eventually becomes the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981], even though some people probably hated it in that campaign, and yet the Republicans, you were one of only net six pickup in the House. Why didn't that idea, which was sort of, the proposition in California [Proposition 13: People's Initiative to Limit Property Taxation, 1978] had passed, [Jeffrey L.] Jeff Bell had defeated Clifford [P.] Case. I mean it was sort of even the Democrats were starting to talk about tax cuts. Why wasn't the Party more successful?

Gingrich: I think a) there was not a wave. Remember that in '74 in November, we were down to 18 percent identifying as Republicans. I'm actually writing a paper right now on this. You go through this trough where you go from the Reagan re-election, which is one of the largest margins in history, to the collapse of the Party two years later, to the Nixon re-election, to the collapse of the Party two years later to the Reagan election and landslide six years later. I mean this is an amazing trough. And so we were still coming out of the trough, and technically the campaign committee would have told you they misjudged who was vulnerable. They spent enormous resources going after freshmen, and in fact that particular class of Democratic

freshmen were very hard to beat. It was actually by the way a pretty big class, because we also had a lot of retirees, so if I remember correctly we were like 59 out of maybe 160 members. We were an enormous class, proportionate to the whole House Party, which has a big impact on [Richard B. "Dick"] Cheney and on me and on several other people.

Kondracke: I didn't realize that it was that big a group. You met with all the supply-side gurus, did you?

Gingrich: Not particularly. I mean I knew them, you'd meet them, but it's not like I went to meetings where we sat down and talked about this stuff.

Kondracke: One guy who's dead, Jude Wanniski, so give me a word picture of Jude Wanniski and his relationship with Jack Kemp.

Gingrich: Oh, I think he was in many ways the person who Jack most respected, and had the most influence on Jack, because he was dynamic, he was engaging, he had the power of the *Wall Street Journal* for a long time, he was willing to be aggressive, and much more aggressive and less academic than Laffer. I think Wanniski played a very major role.

Kondracke: How often do you think they talked?

Gingrich: I wouldn't be surprised if they talked almost daily, by phone, just because they were symbiotically a partnership trying to

create a new wing of the Republican Party, and through that a new model for American politics.

Kondracke: What do you think Kemp's influence--well we talked about it a little—on Ronald Reagan was? You said he was the basis of his domestic policy. Did it go beyond supply-side?

Gingrich: You mean Kemp's impact?

Kondracke: Yes.

Gingrich: Again, Kemp was a broader figure than just—because he's an all-around House member—so he had some impact I think in getting them, he was very much a Cold warrior, he was very much for defeating the Soviet empire, so he's a part of the military build-up, he's a part of being supportive of the Pentagon. And once he becomes [Republican] Conference chair, I think he has a pretty broad impact on how things are moving in a cheerleader kind of sense. But Jack had very specific ideas, which I don't know that Reagan particularly picked them up, but for example the experiments in allowing people to have sweat equity in public housing, enterprise zones, things that we had strongly agreed on, that were a big deal. And then Jack, of course, is one of the key's in '84 to adopt the no tax increase platform, which was a real internal fight.

Kondracke: We'll get to that. So what would you say his influence on you was, and yours on him, for that matter?

Gingrich: I don't know how much I influenced Jack. I think Jack influenced me. He strengthened the idea you could be idea-oriented, he strengthened the idea you could be inclusive, he got me much more intrigued with inner-city problems and how we were going to fix these and how we would take responsibility for them, and he convinced me that you had to be permanently on offense on ideas in a way that was much more aggressive than I probably would have been if I never met Kemp.

Kondracke: No one has ever accused you of not being aggressive about ideas.

Gingrich: But he had a cheerfulness about, I mean every day. I'd been aggressive about developing big ideas, but he was every day on offense.

Kondracke: And what did that consist of?

Gingrich: Grabbing you in the hall, talking to you at lunch, giving speeches in the Conference, writing papers, being in op-eds. Jack was pretty much everywhere. For a House Republican—remember this is an era when the House Republicans have gotten habituated into not meaning much—Jack was one of the keys towards our coming back to being an institution that mattered.

Kondracke: Did you go to the '80 Convention?

Gingrich: No.

Kondracke: You weren't there for the demonstration or the speeches. So in 1981, he wasn't on Ways and Means, and Barber Conable was, and the tax bill that got passed was Conable-Hance [Substitute Tax Bill of 1981], so what role did Jack play in getting—

Gingrich: I think at the point he's rallying the troops and he's creating a sense of support for the ideas. He's out selling them in Democratic districts. Remember, we have to get about a third of the Democrats to pass the bill. Jack, in the end he didn't win certain arguments. He never won the scoring argument, for example. He never got people convinced that economic growth mattered in a dynamic way. But he was making those arguments and he was softening the edge of the people who wanted to have a straight out "how do I cut spending to pay for this?" And Reagan basically bought that part of Kemp's argument. So Kemp was like a guy who had suddenly trained an elephant to batter down the walls, so people like Conable were going to be for the Reagan bill. It was the price of being the ranking member.

Kondracke: So Kemp believed that revenues would go up if you cut tax rates, in other words that tax cuts paid for themselves. Is that true?

Gingrich: It's probably 60 to 70 percent true. Yes, I think a larger economy generates more revenue over time. Certainly you look at the Kennedy experience where they literally expected a loss and got a gain. You look at what we did with capital gains in the late nineties, where it went up radically. I mean C.B.O. [Congressional Budget Office]'s score was totally false, joint tax, if you prefer. So you can

make that argument. But it also depends where the rates are. One of the reasons we're in a different era is Kemp is debating at the end of the 72 percent marginal rate. Well, you have a much bigger free flow if you're talking about dramatically reducing 72 percent than if you're talking about dramatically reducing 33 percent. I think that's also situational. Remember the Laffer curve did have a point where you actually got more money. The Laffer curve wasn't a straight cut taxes always. It was, gee, you actually gain money by raising taxes until you get to this point.

Kondracke: There are no numbers on the Laffer curve. Did Jack have an idea of what the appropriate number was?

Gingrich: I don't know of anybody who ever thought about what I just said to you. The Laffer curve was an explanation of why we all agreed in that era that it was too high, so let's cut it. And by the way, it would be interesting to ask Art what does he think notionally the optimum tax rate is.

Kondracke: Because Jack at some point said it was 25, he sometimes said it was 20, he wanted flat tax. In '95 I think he said the flat tax of 20, he'd just as soon have it 19. Your gang, the Kemp gang, included David [A.] Stockman. Kemp gets David Stockman named OMB [Office of Management and Budget] director and then Stockman absconds, or turns coat.

Gingrich: Yes, well you'd have to ask either David or his chief of staff, who's the number two guy at A.E.I. [American Enterprise Institute]. I don't know that Stockman ever believed in supply-side economics.

Stockman believed in noise, he believed in being on offense, he believed in lower taxes generally. But I also think Stockman collided with—and I always thought his book was sort of funny in the sense that it's a cry of anguish from somebody who discovers the world's harder than they thought it was. Stockman then reverted to a standard Michigan Republican position which actually wasn't far from where John [B.] Anderson would have been, whom Stockman had worked for. The reason Reagan is such a radical break is Reagan is saying—this is pure [Milton] Friedman—if your choice is smaller government with a bigger deficit, or bigger government with a smaller deficit, go for smaller government and don't worry about the deficit. And Reagan's also in the position, this being the height of the Cold War, of saying, "If my choice is deficit or defense, I'll always pick defense." Well those were, for traditional Republicans, those were very jarring ideas.

Kondracke: How did Jack respond to Stockman's turn, and especially the [William] Greider [Atlantic Monthly article, "The Education of David Stockman" December 1981]—

Gingrich: I don't remember ever talking to him about it.

Kondracke: Okay. So then '82 comes along and Reagan raises taxes.

Gingrich: Right.

Kondracke: And you were against it and Kemp was against it, and Kemp was a leader, though. Kemp was the number three leader of

the House. And then he did it in '83 and he did it in '84 and so on. So how much guff did he take for that ?

Gingrich: I suspect none from Reagan, and some from the White House staff. I mean Reagan didn't believe in that stuff. When you read Reagan's diary, he thinks it's nuts. They've talked him into doing something he doesn't believe in. It's sort of like the fight over taxes in '84. The White House staff hated what we were doing on no tax increase. Reagan didn't. The reason they could never get Reagan engaged on the platform, because he was with us, he wasn't with them. And by the way, there are two side anecdotes. One, when they put Reagan on TV and the RNC [Republican National Committee] pays for him to speak to the country about the tax increase, which I think is '82, it's the least effective speech in his presidency, because his whole base tuned in and went, "That's weird. He can't have meant that." Nobody called. It was one of those "That was really strange."

Kondracke: Why did he do it?

Gingrich: Because he got talked into it. Reagan had been governor. One of the great lines is when he says, "The sound you're hearing is concrete breaking." Reagan had been there, Reagan understood these things. Reagan was never, I believe, Reagan was never an absolutist. He was a man of general directions. He wanted to defeat the Soviet empire. That didn't mean he couldn't talk to [Mikhail S.] Gorbachev once [Margaret H.] Thatcher thought Gorbachev was reasonable. He wanted the lowest rate he could get. That didn't mean he was wedded to not being practical. And he had in [James A. "Jim"] Baker, I think, somebody who he trusted, and in [Richard D. "Dick"] Darman

somebody's who's extraordinarily smart. My one anecdote is when Bush breaks his word and raises taxes in '90, I'm now in leadership, and so I oppose it. I get one call, from Dick Cheney, who says, "I've been asked to give you a call, see where you're at." I said, "Dick, I was just reading your 1982 speech opposing the Reagan tax increase, and I must tell you it is a marvelous speech." He said, "Talk to you later." [laughter]

Kondracke: That was the only call. You didn't get—

Gingrich: Well, a couple of other guys called me, but that was the only one that had any hope of getting anywhere, and he instantly got the joke.

Kondracke: Right. You think Kemp was an absolutist about cutting taxes.

Gingrich: Yes. And he also understood something that these guys didn't want to confront, which is the Democrats will spend everything we give them. And I suspect Kemp at one level believed in the Grace Commission model [the Private Sector Survey on Cost Control submitted to Congress in 1984], he believed that there is enough waste that there are lots of things you can do instead of raising taxes. He also, remember, '82 is still a very severe recession, so to go back to Buffalo raising taxes, you have to ask what hope are you taking with you? If the tax [unclear] have only barely started working when they begin to try to raise them, and the story, which may be apocryphal, is that Darman and Stockman, the night the bill passed the House, actually sat in the car and talked about how to unwind it.

Kondracke: The '81 bill.

Gingrich: Yes. So here you have a situation where the full weight of the Reagan tax cuts doesn't come in until '83, '84, and they're already trying to screw it up, and you're Jack Kemp and you really believe in economic growth, and you really want to go home to Buffalo. I used to tell people there are two things you have to remember about Kemp that make him very different from most Republicans is although he represented the Buffalo suburbs, he thought of himself as representing Buffalo. That means he thought of himself as much more a blue collar Congressman than he was. But psychologically he felt that way, and that he had showered with many people of backgrounds who are not normally in the Republican Party, and that until you understood that about him, you didn't realize how really different he was from the normal Republican.

Kondracke: Do you think that it was the economic downturns in Buffalo that originally got him into tax policy?

Gingrich: Yes, I think it was really trying to sort out, if we don't believe in socialism, then what do we do to turn this economy around? Again, it's easy to forget, but you start in '73 with the oil shock. A really long decade of pain, something we're now experimenting with again. And as that wears on for a while, people begin looking around, saying, "Well, this ain't working. So what could we do?"

Kondracke: And supply-side economics did get the country out of it.

Gingrich: Yes. I mean you can argue what the side effects were, but it strikes me that the combination of the military buildup to defeat the Soviets and supply-side economics rebuilt the American economy in the eighties, probably beyond the wildest dreams of any of the people who were doing it.

Kondracke: Some people argue that it was a Keynesian effect, in other words between Reagan and the Democratic Congress and defense buildup and cutting taxes, that it was basically stimulus, that it was—

Gingrich: Right. The question you have to test is, first of all supply-side economics is just general economics pre-Keynes. It's nothing fancy about it. It's just a good title, good sales pitch. What you have to ask is are you creating incentives that increase the investment in productivity, and thereby mop up inflation? There's a downside of Keynesian economics that you create inflation, because what you're doing is you're maximizing demand, which is chasing too few goods. And Kemp understood this. The other factor which I think made an even bigger case in the long run for the supply-side was, as you grew into a bigger and bigger world market, you had better find incentives for investing in the U.S. because you need to continually upgrade your equipment if you're going to compete with lower price producers. And Kemp sort of intuitively understood that. He didn't understand it in a great way, and he wanted to be in a world market, he didn't want to be a protectionist. That meant he had to have a strategy that optimized a continual modernization of productivity in order to keep open the border and keep Buffalo employed.

Kondracke: The one thing that he was also pretty absolutist about that he never got anywhere with, and I wonder why, is a dollar as good as gold, or the gold standard. He talked about it all the time, and nobody seemed to listen. Why was that? Not even Reagan.

Gingrich: Listen, I had the same problem this year in space. There are ideas whose time has not come, may not come, or left. There's actually a line, which I can't quote from [Alexis de] Tocqueville, where he talks about when the larger populace has engaged in an idea. Even the people who are opposed to it quit fighting it because it gets to be too big. To go—Jack had a relatively simple—this is an important thing to remember about Kemp—he had a relatively simple case: you will have more money in your wallet, and therefore you'll have a better job, so you'll have a bigger paycheck with even more money in your wallet. Would you like that? Okay, now you can get pretty high, 90 percent understanding of that phrase. Now he's into an explanation of monetary policy, inflation, why gold makes sense, and I remember him doing it in Iowa in '88 and it just didn't make—despite the best effort of my good friends who are gold bugs—you couldn't get it down to a point where it made sense to a normal person.

Kondracke: It strikes me, I just wanted to explore whether you think he was courageous in the times when he opposed Reagan, because after all, he was a leader, and you've been through this experience, and he opposed him not only on all those tax increases, but also he thought [Paul A.] Volcker [Jr.] shouldn't be reappointed as Fed [Federal Reserve Board] chairman—

Gingrich: I think there's just a couple of observations. House members and Senate members do not serve under presidents, they serve with presidents. They render co-equal judgment. It's really easy to forget that. We're not a parliamentary model. Kemp had been in a party where people were pretty cheerful on the right disagreeing with Gerald Ford. He was in a party where people on the left, [Robert W. "Bob"] Packwood, for example, were pretty cheerful about arguing with Ronald Reagan, and I think he's sort of saying, "I have the same rights as these other guys do." In addition, Jack thought a lot of his own judgment, and he would have thought he was failing to do his constitutional duty to not render that judgment when he significantly disagreed with the President, and I suspect he felt he was on the President's team enough that the President knew that overall Jack was his friend, that even on this one item—sometimes this one item could be five or six—but it wasn't in opposition to Reagan. It was focused on a series of specific things that I think he felt. So I doubt if he ever very much worried about it. People who would be—I don't know quite how to say this right—I think there are people who come into Congress to actually pursue something they believe in, and I think they measure their career and their lives by the pursuit of what they believe in. They don't measure it by the esteem of people around them, for whom, frankly, they don't care. I suspect most of the people who would be the most hostile to Kemp, Jack didn't care about. He would have said, "Why would I pay attention to them? Those are the guys who would keep us as a minority forever." I think that was a piece of this.

Kondracke: Did he care as much as you cared about winning control of the House?

Gingrich: Well, I think he cared about winning control of the country. Jack was probably always a presidential figure rather than a Congressional figure. He was always trying to figure out the larger story, the larger campaign. Although he campaigned a lot, I don't think Jack spent much time trying to figure out how to get a Republican majority, or thought of that as his assignment. Remember also that, as you can remember from your own experience, prior to late Tuesday night, 1994, there was no one who thought we'd get a majority. So why would Kemp have invested himself in the impossible? He could imagine reshaping national policy. He couldn't imagine electing a Republican House.

Kondracke: Tell me what you remember about the 1986 tax reform.

Gingrich: Let me tell you one story about Kemp from a different angle. Early on until it was killed by the Reagan people, the Tidewater was a conference of ideas which had grown out of something Packwood had actually done in Oregon. And I will never forget, so this must have been, because the Reagan people killed it pretty quickly once they were in charge, this is probably the spring of 1980. We always went to [Robert E.] Bob Bauman's house when he was the Congressman from the Eastern Shore. So you'd do the Tidewater Conference in Easton [Maryland], and then a bunch of us would go to Bauman's for lunch before we came back. And I remember one day, which must have been in the spring of '80, walking around this buffet table, filling up our plates, with Kemp lecturing me on Napoleonic tax policy in the Rhineland, and I'm thinking, you know, I'm a Ph.D. in history, and I know a fair amount about this, and he's technically right

in his argument. And it was just a very interesting example of how much he knew, how passionate he was, but it was always very Kemp-like to be in the middle of this passionate argument, walking around the buffet table talking about this stuff. The other side of it, I once asked [Albert S.] Steve Hanser, who's been my mentor since 1973, about Jack, and he said, "You have to understand that Jack's an autodidact, and the great challenge of autodidacts is what they really know they know really well, but they don't know what they don't know, and so they actually assert their ignorance with the same intensity as their knowledge." Some of the things you'd see, where Jack would go off cliffs, would be that kind of behavior.

Kondracke: Where would he go off cliffs?

Gingrich: Well, the gold standard's a good example. The gold standard would have been a crusade comparable to supply-side economics. It wasn't something you could do in passing, it wasn't something you could do occasionally. To have actually tried to drive it into the national consciousness would have been an enormous undertaking.

Kondracke: What's the difference between an autodidact and an intellectual, or is there one?

Gingrich: I think the large difference is between an autodidact and a professional trained person. The number one characteristic of a professionally trained person is you understand how much it takes to learn, and you know how little you've learned, so you have enormous respect for the ignorance that's around you, which is yours. If you're

an autodidact you know how easy it is to learn, because you learned a lot and you know a lot.

Kondracke: He did spend a lot of time learning.

Gingrich: He was an enormously intelligent person. He loved learning and he had a passion for it. In that sense probably the person he most resembled was [William J. "Bill"] Clinton. They both have this ability to absorb information that's pretty remarkable.

Kondracke: He—legendarily he reads all the time. Do you think he remembered what he read? Do you think he read deeply?

Gingrich: Yes, he had a very good memory, he read very deeply about things he cared about, he knew a great deal about things he cared about, and I think you'd have to say that he had a rapacious desire for knowledge.

Kondracke: Let me go back to the timeline here. So what do you remember about the '86 tax reform, because it started with Kemp-Kasten and Bradley-Gephardt?

Gingrich: Well, as I remember, I ended up voting against it, and I think it was largely the way they got sucked into a fundamental mistake of trying to do a revenue-neutral tax cut, which meant that they had to create the—ironically—they had to create the recession in real estate, which I think substantially weakened the Bush administration. So I was very dubious. Actually it made it running in '88 harder, because you suddenly had this whole wave of people who

had made 20-year investments and suddenly been told all the ground rules were changed, which I thought was really bad tax policy. I don't remember where Jack was on this thing, but I remember that—

Kondracke: He saved it. At the end of '85, [Daniel D. "Dan"] Rostenkowski produced a bill which did not cut the personal exemption in half the way all the Republicans wanted it, and there was a huge rebellion against, remember Reagan wanted the tax reform, and the House Republicans all voted it down, voted down the rule, and then Kemp brought Reagan up to the Hill, do you remember this?

Gingrich: Yes.

Kondracke: And Reagan promises that he'll veto the bill if it comes out of the Senate in a bad way. So Kemp sort of saved the day. But you still voted against it, even after Reagan—

Gingrich: I think so. But as I remember, Reagan actually comes up, comes directly from seeing the survivors of the 101st Airborne airplane crash, which crashed coming back from the Middle East, killing a pretty substantial number of people, and Reagan had been at Fort Campbell [Kentucky]. And so it was a very emotional afternoon. If this is the date, I can't remember if this is on final passage or on getting it through the House the first time, but there was a moment that was, you just had this sense of the burden Reagan was carrying, and the desire to help him if you could at all.

Kondracke: Was the real estate downturn that resulted from the tax reform just a mistake, an oversight, or was it inherent in the bill?

Gingrich: No, they knew it would happen, inherent in the bill.

Kondracke: You organized the Conservative Opportunity Society [C.O.S.] beginning in '83, is that right?

Gingrich: Yes.

Kondracke: And what was Jack's relationship to C.O.S.?

Gingrich: I think it's fair to say that Jack and [C.] Trent [Lott], and to a slightly lesser extent Cheney, all three were kind of sponsors. They were too big to be involved, and they were too much part of the establishment to be involved, but they encouraged it, they supported it, they were positive about the people who were engaged in it, they protected us from the establishment.

Kondracke: Your group was his group, right?

Gingrich: Right.

Kondracke: [John V. "Vin"] Weber and [Cornelius H. M.] Connie Mack [III] and—

Gingrich: Yes, Duncan [L.] Hunter, [Robert S.] Bob Walker. Yes, we would have been the people who would have bonded emotionally with Jack.

Kondracke: Jack supposedly felt uncomfortable, though, being as confrontative as you were

Gingrich: Oh, sure, yes.

Kondracke: So, did he talk to you about that?

Gingrich: On occasion, but never in a sense of asking me not to do something, but I mean Jack came out of a background where we're all going to have arguments, but we're really all friends. It really mattered a lot to Jack—we're really all friends.

Kondracke: Even with your opponent.

Gingrich: Even with your opponents. And so it's really important we can find a way to do this that's positive.

Kondracke: So, I've asked other people this. Here you've got a guy who grew up in the most violent contact sport in the country except maybe for boxing, and he's highly competitive, and yet he doesn't hit.

Gingrich: Did you get [William J. "Bill"] Bennett to talk about this?

Kondracke: Actually Bennett said that he was constitutionally incapable of it.

Gingrich: No. Bennett one time had the best line I'd ever heard about this. We're somewhere talking in the late eighties, early nineties, and Bennett says to this audience "I was a tackle; Kemp was a

quarterback. You're a tackle, you're on the line, you get muddy, you get bloody, you get beat up, you beat up the other guy. It's a really long afternoon. You're the quarterback. You go in a huddle with your friends, you get to call things. You dance around the backfield, you throw a touchdown pass. Game's over. This one guy is really dirty and bloody, this other guy is really clean and he's scored all the points. Which guy do you think the cheerleader runs up to?" [laughter] And I think he caught a very large part of Kemp. Kemp was a great competitor, he was not a great opponent. There's a really big difference. Kemp played football to some extent a little bit closer to playing tennis.

Kondracke: You had a completely different attitude. You were there for combat, with [James C. "Jim"] Wright [Jr.] and—

Gingrich: My dad spent 27 years as an infantryman. I agreed with Mao [Zedong]. Politics is war without blood; war is politics with blood. And I'd seen my party fail.

Kondracke: Did you ever discuss that with Kemp?

Gingrich: No, it wasn't worth the effort. I mean Jack was tremendous at being Jack Kemp, but he wasn't going to change. You'd be asking him to do something, I'm paraphrasing Bennett in a sense, but you'd be asking him to do something so outside his experience and his realm of behavior. And as long as he didn't get in my way I didn't care. I didn't need for Jack to, you know, there's a great story. My mind's gone blank. The former quarterback for Georgia and from Minnesota. It will come to me in a second. Anyway, he tells this wonderful story

about the coach calls—[Harry P.] Bud Grant calls this play—and he pitches out the ball, and his job is to take out the tackle, who's huge. So he throws himself on the ground, and to his amazement, the tackle falls over him, and the guy breaks through, runs 45 yards. He spends all day Monday thinking, "This is going to be great. We're going to get to the game film, the coach is going to say"—[Francis A.] Fran Tarkenton—'Fran, look at this.' We get to the game film, we get to that point, he praises the center, he praises the wide receiver, he praises this other guy, he skips my name. We're walking out and I walk up to him and I say, 'Coach, you didn't mention me.' And Grant says, 'Fran, I know you're such a big guy, you wouldn't want to be singled out for something like that.' He said, 'You don't single me out in the future, I ain't throwing the block anymore.'" Well, Tarkington and Kemp could have compared notes. They were both wonderful competitors, they both had huge levels of skill. But I'd grown up in high school playing tackle and fullback. I mean, it's a very different business. Kemp's the guy who handed you the ball as you ran into the line.

Kondracke: He did have an ego and he was kind of vain, wasn't he?
He liked credit

Gingrich: He was a quarterback. It goes with the trade. You show me a quarterback who isn't proud of what he does and doesn't have a big ego, and again, "Look at me, look at me," to quote Laurence [K.] Olivier. This is a guy who wants to stand and has the guts to say, "I'm going to stand in the middle of the field with a minute-five to go, and I'm going to get enough passes completed to win the game. And everybody here is going to get to watch me do it. And if I fail, they're

all going to know that I failed.” Well, you better have a pretty strong ego to do that. And I think that was good for him in the seventies and early eighties, because it gave him the strength to be deviant from his party in a way that gradually brought the Party around. A weaker, more timid personality could never have done what Kemp did.

Kondracke: Do you have any other favorite Kemp anecdotes or experiences, personal experiences with him or moments that you remember particularly?

Gingrich: I’m trying to think.

Kondracke: Think along as we’re going. So you had an agenda that was called the New Opportunity Society. So was that Kempian?

Gingrich: Yes, I think most of it was. I was more of a futurist than Kemp, and I was more interested—

Kondracke: In what way? What do you mean by that?

Gingrich: Thinking about the future, bringing in people like Alvin Toffler, literally. If he went towards Wanniski, I went towards Toffler in that sense. And I was more interested in fundamentally innovating government. Kemp was interested in shaping the incentives of the private sector, and in some ways transforming government very profoundly. People underestimate how big a deal his effort to create occupancy ownership for public housing and his effort to create enterprise zones. Had we followed through on those two, we’d be a substantially different country today, and my prediction is in the next

few years you'll see both of those ideas come back up. This is something that the Kemp Foundation ought to do. Somebody should scrub all of his policy ideas and put together 20 Jack Kemp policies for the 21st century, because you'll find in different speeches an astonishing level of creativity and thoughtfulness and commitment in a belief that people can have a better life and that you can encourage people to have a better life.

Kondracke: By creating incentives to do so.

Gingrich: Yes. Incentivizing the behaviors.

Kondracke: Lots of people think that polarization of American politics started in your era, but Jack wasn't a polarizer. Did you—

Gingrich: I recommend they go see *Lincoln* [the 2012 Steven Spielberg film]. [laughs]

Kondracke: That was the Civil War. So did you and Jack ever talk about the polarization of American politics?

Gingrich: No, not that I remember. I think we were allies and friends, but I think—Jeane [J.] Kirkpatrick once had a great line where she said, "Unity does not require unanimity," and so I think that there were times when we each agreed he'd go over there and do this; I'd go over here and do this, but we were broadly allied on a whole range of fronts. We were particularly allied against liberals and against old-line Republicans, so it was kind of a dual alliance.

Kondracke: Wouldn't you say that you were aligned up against liberals, and he was aligned up against liberalism?

Gingrich: That might be a better way to say it because he was perennially trying to engage people like [William H.] Bill Gray [III] when he was the Democratic whip, an African-American from Philadelphia. And part of what happened, of course, is Gray would almost be helpful, and then the public housing union would call him and say, "Do you really want a primary opponent? Do you want to spend six months of your life getting reelected?" And Gray would say, "Jack, it's an interesting idea."

Kondracke: What about Wright and [Thomas P. "Tip"] O'Neill [Jr.], what was his relationship to them?

Gingrich: My sense would be that he got along with O'Neill fine, probably got along with Wright adequately. Wright was a much harder and more partisan person. I don't remember Jack ever coming to me, and of course he's in the process of leaving as I'm beginning to take on Wright, so I don't know that he would have been part of that. And he was also, starting in '86 and '87, he's moving towards running for president, and he's moving away from worrying about the House, and so he wouldn't have been engaged. Wright moved the House towards a much more partisan environment. [Anthony L. "Tony"] Coehlo did it initially by stealing the seat in Indiana in '85. Then Wright's whole method of running the place was pretty aggressively partisan. But by that stage Jack had sort of checked out of the House and was a national figure doing national things, and my relationship with him at

that point was to help him in his presidential campaign and stuff like that.

Kondracke: Let's talk about that. What was your role in the '88 campaign?

Gingrich: I think I was a surrogate. I went to Iowa a couple of times. In fact my first trips to Iowa, I think, were for Jack Kemp. But it wasn't something where, I mean, he was over there doing that. I went to New Hampshire for him. And I gave him money personally, but it wasn't beyond that. I wasn't central to his campaign.

Kondracke: Did Kemp think he had a prayer beating Bush and [Robert J. "Bob"] Dole?

Gingrich: Yes, I think he did. I think Jack, a little bit like me, in that we both believed, as I disproved again this year, we both believed that ideas and earned media could carry you beyond the immediate weight of organization.

Kondracke: Some people say that he had a tendency to play off people against one another in order to maintain control, and in this case it would have been [Charles R. "Charlie"] Black [Jr.] and [Edward J. "Ed"] Rollins and—

Gingrich: I don't know. That's not something, that wasn't my experience in the House with him. But in the House he was a much more dominant figure, so I don't know. The thing I noticed about Jack which affected him in '88 in the presidential race, '87-88, and affected

him again in '96 is that, two things. One is that for example he ends up in Iowa trying to explain the gold standard. It doesn't make any sense to people. There are limits, I mean if I couldn't sell a lunar colony, I guarantee he couldn't sell the gold standard. And he spent a lot more energy on it. I gave one speech. I mean he gave, you know, this is integral to what he was saying. And the other was, and this really affected him in '96 but I think it also affected him some in '88, to be effective at that level, unless you have an enormous amount of money, you have to have a message that is sufficiently clear and sufficiently disciplined that it becomes a unique selling proposition, and you have to operate within that message. Because every time you clutter it you're going to dramatically weaken it. And it just struck me that watching him campaign and going out to help him—I also helped him in Michigan—in fact I have friendships that go back to the Kemp campaign. [Saulius] Saul Anuzis was my driver going out there, for example, in Michigan. And I think Jack, I talked to his former head coach—

Kondracke: Which one?

Gingrich: I think [Louis H. "Lou"] Saban, the relatively short, ethnic background. During Jack's kickoff, because I was with him before the kickoff in Buffalo and then here, and all that stuff. And I said to Saban, who I'd never really met before, I said, "So how did you manage Kemp?" And he said, "I'll tell you. So we had a game that really mattered. I wanted him to run the ball. And he throws the ball, and it's not working, and I want him to run the ball, and he doesn't want to run the ball. We come in at halftime. I say 'Jackie, come here.' He comes over. I push him into a locker and I close the door,

and he's yelling, 'Coach, coach, let me out.' And I say, 'Jackie, are you going to run the goddamned ball or not?'" [laughter] He said, "That is how you managed Jack Kemp." I don't think he had it in him to go through a disciplined implementation. I think he got bored. And I think he was a natural rollout passer, and so he wanted to do something interesting. And I think that was a real challenge when he got to that level. It wasn't a challenge earlier, because earlier being interesting beat being boring. But when you're at the presidential level, a certain level of discipline, routine, and repetition becomes really important.

Kondracke: Do you think he really wanted to be president?

Gingrich: I have no idea. I assume he did. He had an ego large enough to believe he could be president, he had seen presidents. He knew [Richard M.] Nixon, he knew Ford, he knew [James E. "Jimmy"] Carter, and he knew Bush and Dole, so if you say "Gee." Reagan was a different commodity. [Dwight D.] Eisenhower would have been a different commodity. If you knew those guys you think, "Why not?"

Kondracke: You were at the '88 Convention?

Gingrich: Yes.

Kondracke: Were you there when the talk about his been veep as opposed to [James Danforth "Dan"] Quayle was going on?

Gingrich: Yes, but I don't remember it in any details.

Kondracke: You weren't in the suite or anything when he got the message.

Gingrich: No.

Kondracke: Okay, so he gets offered HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development]—

Gingrich: By the way, it strikes me as wildly implausible that George H.W. Bush would ever have picked Kemp.

Kondracke: Because?

Gingrich: Kemp talked too much, Kemp represented the Reagan wing of the Party, Kemp was in fact uncontrollable. Those are not the virtues of the Bushes.

Kondracke: Right, which is orderliness.

Gingrich: Orderly, loyalty, boredom. Calm, methodical execution.

Kondracke: So he gets offered HUD. Did he ask your advice about taking HUD?

Gingrich: No. And in some ways it was a good gamble, and I think even on George H.W. Bush's part it was a good gamble, because you're giving a guy a shot at an area Republicans normally don't do much in, to take a bunch of his own ideas and go out and see if he can get them to work. And I think Jack saw it that way. I think HUD was

a much bigger management problem for him than he thought it would be, and tested things he didn't have strength at, and I think that was a huge part of the challenge he had at HUD. It's a nightmare if you're a good manager, and almost no one is. And so HUD's a very badly run agency as a general rule. I think that mired Jack down a lot. But I think on the other hand, he came closer to break through on both including African-Americans and developing interesting new policies to help the poor than anybody else has.

Kondracke: So what do you think his successes and failures were there?

Gingrich: I think they began implementing some programs that involved real experimentation and real empowerment. I think on the other hand there were some very significant, as I remember it, significant management breakdowns that were embarrassing and that didn't affect Jack directly, except that he was Secretary, so he had to bear responsibility.

Kondracke: This is the period when the Amigos get going, right? Which restaurant was it exactly?

Gingrich: There's a Mexican restaurant over on the Massachusetts [Avenue] side, which I don't think exists anymore.

Kondracke: You don't remember the name of it? Because nobody seems to remember what the name of it was.

Gingrich: No, I'm sorry.

Kondracke: How often would you meet?

Gingrich: I would guess every six or eight weeks. And you had Connie Mack, Kemp, Walker, Weber, and myself was sort of the core group.

Kondracke: Did you talk mainly about what his stuff was, or your stuff was? Was it a Congressional—

Gingrich: I think it was a genuine mix, but again you get sucked up into the larger political issues of where are we going, what are we doing, what's happening?

Kondracke: So did he talk about his frustrations with the Bush White House?

Gingrich: Not that I remember as being a major—

Kondracke: Darman, Baker, [John H.] Sununu?

Gingrich: Not that I remember being a major thing.

Kondracke: What about your activities? This is the time when you're becoming whip, and you're challenging [Robert H.] Bob Michel, and all of that. Did he have advice for you on that?

Gingrich: No.

Kondracke: Because?

Gingrich: I don't think Jack thought like a legislative politician. Jack thought about big, expansive ideas, and about constant innovation, and that's what attracted him, that's what got him excited, and that's what he was good at.

Kondracke: When Bush broke his no new taxes pledge, there was some press speculation or talk that people were urging him to challenge Bush, which he probably never was going to do and didn't do, but did you know anything about that? Did you do it?

Gingrich: No. It never would have struck me that it was plausible. I'm enough of an institutionalist that trying to take on an incumbent president, unless you have dramatically bigger problems, is just hopeless. It's just one of those suicide missions.

Kondracke: So did you ever have any fundamental disagreements with him?

Gingrich: I don't remember where Jack was on South Africa. And Walker and Weber and I played a key role in getting [Ronald V.] Ron Dellums' bill [Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986] through, and really unhinging the Reagan Administration on South Africa, and that was part of a very conscious commitment to freedom across the whole planet. I just honestly don't remember. We concocted and did it on our own, so I have no idea where Jack would have been on that, but my sense is he'd have been more of a Cold Warrior, be very cautious, you know.

Kondracke: He took no end of heat from [Robert D.S. "Bob"] Novak over wavering on the issue. He voted for the bill, and then voted with Reagan on the override, and then I think it came up again and he voted with you all, if I remember correctly.

Gingrich: Yes, well we represented his long-term, natural biases, but he was a very strong Cold Warrior. There's a great meeting. I had been very active in developing the Military Reform Caucus, with Cheney and [Samuel A. "Sam"] Nunn and [Paul S.] Trible [Jr.] and Gary [W.] Hart and [George W.] Bill Whitehurst, starting in '81, on the grounds that we were all for the Reagan buildup, but by the way if you're going to spend that much money, you ought to really overhaul the building. The liberation of Grenada had been so incompetent that it really undermined the military's ability to defend, not reforming. We had two very senior retired military, [David C.] Davy Jones had been chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and [Edward C.] Shy Meyer had been chief of staff of the army, who were willing to actively testify that we needed jointness, which now everybody takes for granted. So I was the third person to testify at the Goldwater-Nichols bill [Department of Defense Reorganizaion Act of 1986], after Jones and Meyer, and we get down to the point where it gets through the House, gets through the Senate, comes out of conference, we're ready for the big vote. Reagan's opposed, [Caspar W. "Cap"] Weinberger's opposed. Every current serving senior military is opposed. Kemp's opposed, because he represents that wing, and we had a meeting in Lott's office.

Kondracke: What year?

Gingrich: This would have been '86. Lott was the whip. So we had a meeting in the Capitol in Lott's office. [Barry M.] Goldwater comes over, he had a cane at that time, he was limping. And we're sitting there, and Jack is explaining, he's with Weinberger, not going to undermine the military. And finally there's this great moment where Barry leans forward and taps Kemp on the knee. He says, "Jack, the fucking system doesn't work." [laughs] And Kemp just stares at him, doesn't know what to say, he doesn't have any answers, and votes with Weinberger and the minority. We ran over them by a huge margin. But it gave you the flavor of Jack, who had no idea how to do it with Goldwater when Goldwater was being earthy. And at the same time Jack actually didn't know what he was talking about but he knew what his biases were, and he knew who his allies were.

Kondracke: So in that sense he was a traditionalist and not a reformer.

Gingrich: He was a traditionalist in defense, very much so.

Kondracke: He was a kind of reformer as the ranking Republican on Foreign Ops [Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations]. I mean he was against World Bank appropriations and thought the World Bank was doing—

Gingrich: But that gets you back in economics, where Jack had real knowledge, and had a particular value system that made it pretty easy to critique the I.M.F. [International Monetary Fund] and the World Bank. He didn't have the same level of information in the Pentagon. I

don't think he tried to form independent judgment; I think he tried to stick pretty close to the President and the Secretary of Defense.

Kondracke: So did you have any other disagreements with him that you can think of?

Gingrich: I don't remember off hand, but I'd have to think about it for a while. I'm sure there were occasions.

Kondracke: When he was at Empower America, did he get involved in your activities in the House at all?

Gingrich: I don't know if he did personally. I know Empower America did, so whether that was Jack or Jeane or Bill I don't remember.

Kondracke: What about the '94 campaign?

Gingrich: I don't remember him playing a significant role in '94.

Kondracke: Contract with America?

Gingrich: No. At that point I think Jack was making speeches and earning a living and having a pretty good time, and I think he was not directly engaged with us in trying to change the House.

Kondracke: I read somewhere that there were two items in the Contract with America that he was at odds with you about. One was the balanced budget.

Gingrich: Balanced budget for sure.

Kondracke: So what was his attitude toward balanced budgets?

Gingrich: Well he didn't like them because he thought they led to tax increases, and they were violative of his idea that in effect you could cut taxes as a down payment on future growth.

Kondracke: And he was not one of the starve the beasts tax cutters.

Gingrich: No.

Kondracke: In other words, that if you cut taxes enough, they won't have enough money to pay for things.

Gingrich: No, and to some extent he was a forerunner of George W. Bush's big government conservatism.

Kondracke: Dick Darman does write in his book that the two guys, the two conservatives in the Cabinet, Bennett and Kemp, are the ones who are always asking for money.

Gingrich: Yes, that wouldn't surprise me. They were probably also the two most activist guys in the Cabinet.

Kondracke: Do you remember any Empower America influence on policy during your time?

Gingrich: No, except to the degree that we would have shaped with them, for example, the capital gains tax cut, we would have worked with both them and with Heritage [Foundation] on that sort of thing.

Kondracke: Since the Amigos were meeting, did he talk to you about how to deal with Clinton? Did he have any particular attitude toward Clinton?

Gingrich: No.

Kondracke: And the government shutdown and all of that stuff?

Gingrich: No, I don't remember him ever intervening.

Kondracke: When the Monica [S.] Lewinsky thing happened did he have any particular attitudes on that?

Gingrich: No.

Kondracke: So Bennett says that he and Kemp went to [Joseph I.] Joe Lieberman and tried to talk Joe Lieberman into going down to the White House and getting Clinton to resign. You have any recollection of that, or—

Gingrich: No. I wouldn't have been involved in that.

Kondracke: Or impeachment or the '98 campaign when you sort of ran against Clinton on the Lewinsky issue?

Gingrich: No.

Kondracke: In 1995 he decides he's not going to run for president. Did you encourage him to run for president? Did you hope he would run for president again in '96?

Gingrich: No. Actually it was interesting. Jack I think ends up supporting [Malcolm S. "Steve"] Forbes [Jr.].

Kondracke: Yes. You were flabbergasted, you said.

Gingrich: Yes. I just didn't, it's a little bit like suggesting that he run against Bush in '92. I mean Forbes did not strike me as a guy who had much of a chance of getting there, and in fact I did have one conversation where I tried to get him to get Forbes out of the race, and he was not willing to do so. But we had probably, in some ways, changed roles a little bit in that by late '95, I'm an institutionalist, and I really think that our only two practical nominees are [Andrew L.] Lamar Alexander [Jr.] and Dole.

Kondracke: Who were you for?

Gingrich: I was not for anybody, but functionally I was probably for Dole, but I've known Lamar for years and I like him a lot, so I wasn't endorsing anybody. Dole had been very good to us as Senate leader, and we had tried to be helpful to him in return.

Kondracke: Even though he was "the tax collector of the welfare state."

Gingrich: Actually that was one of the funniest moments, you know I did that, and he promptly replaces Howard [H.] Baker [Jr.], and I remember I was somewhere, and I get this phone call from some reporter that says, "So how do you feel about the tax collector of the welfare state becoming the Senate leader?" And I thought, "This is going to be a long day." [laughter]

Kondracke: What was Jack's attitude toward Dole?

Gingrich: Oh, I think probably that he was the tax collector of the welfare state. I think Jack may have been as surprised as anybody when they approached him about being the vice presidential nominee.

Kondracke: Were you?

Gingrich: Yes, I was happy, because I liked Kemp, and I thought he would bring energy and excitement to a ticket that needed energy and excitement. And I do think for a brief period he did. It was almost a little bit of the Sarah [L.] Palin effect. You have this initial burst of optimism and enthusiasm, and in that sense it was a reasonable gamble.

Kondracke: What memories do you have of the debate with [Albert A. "Al"] Gore [Jr.]?

Gingrich: I was in New York doing something and I saw it. The most painful debate I've ever watched, because I mean I love Jack and he's

a good friend, and I really thought he so totally underperformed that he did an enormous disservice to his own legacy.

Kondracke: Why do you think he underperformed?

Gingrich: I suspect he didn't practice, he didn't pay attention and he thought he could go out and wing it.

Kondracke: Is that in character?

Gingrich: Yes, pretty much. And it works at a lot of levels. And Jack was dramatically better than most of the people he was measured against in the seventies, so it wasn't hard for him to learn that he was a better speaker, he was more dynamic, he was more interesting, he had more ideas, he knew more.

Kondracke: So it's 'I can handle this'?

Gingrich: But going up against a sitting vice president who's a professional requires a different standard.

Kondracke: After your speakership is over and you're doing your thing and he's doing his business kind of thing, what was your continuing relationship with him?

Gingrich: We'd see each other occasionally, particularly if I was in Colorado and he was out there. We'd have dinner and talk. It was more general. He would opine on the planet and explain his views of things. He seemed to be doing very well financially. And I think that

was about all. I think for both of us it was sort of like we were now in a different world.

Kondracke: There are Reagan Republicans and Taft Republicans and Rockefeller Republicans, of which you once one, are there Kemp Republicans? Should there be Kemp Republicans?

Gingrich: I think Kemp was enormously important in both developing the idea of economic opportunity and lower rates and more growth-oriented dynamism and in developing ideas about genuinely rethinking how we try to help the poor and how we try to help neighborhoods and areas that are poor. So in that sense I think he's extraordinarily important, and I think it's unfortunate, I think, that had the influence of Kemp been decisive, we would probably today be an overwhelmingly dominant governing party, because I think he brought the pieces the Party doesn't have. But I also think it's fair to say that that waned, which is unfortunate.

Kondracke: The moment that he might have made that kind of difference was '80 as veep, or '88 as veep, or how? How could it have happened? Of if he'd won the nomination, obviously?

Gingrich: Short of winning the nomination I don't know how you do it. Maybe veep in '88. I think whether a Reagan-Kemp ticket could have won in '80 is an interesting question, because it would have given the moderates no reason to support the ticket. I think Reagan was very vividly aware of what happened to Goldwater, and of the danger that if you don't find some reason for moderates to by in, that you could lose. So it's easy to go back. But I think that a Kemp influence on the Party

would have vastly healthier than a Bush influence on the Party, because Bush really is a regular, and all the things that that implies. The other challenge, and I spent a lot of time on this after I stepped down in '99, if you think of Kemp and I as sort of generally in the same direction, and Reagan, it's interesting that Thatcher and Reagan changed the world, but neither of them changes the culture of their party. I changed the entire trajectory of the House Republican Party, and I couldn't change the culture. The very people we elevated as chairman were the people who didn't have a clue why they became chairmen. So Kemp is part of that same picture. [Maximilian K.E. "Max"] Weber says at one point that the bureaucratic politician will always beat the charismatic politician. I think there's a fair amount to that because the bureaucratic politician accumulates the instruments of power, and they're there institutionally, after the charisma.

Kondracke: It almost seems romantic, his attitude that the party of Lincoln can come back, that minorities can find their natural home in the Republican Party. Is it realistic that it could ever happen?

Gingrich: Oh, sure. I mean Kemp was dealing with the great challenge of the last 40 years, which is that liberalism has failed the poor at levels that are unimaginable, and that nobody has been able to articulate, because it is such heresy. And so when Jack was on the edge of something enormous—my prediction is that it will sink in in the next four years that this has been the most destructive president for African-American poor people probably since the Great Depression. And when we look at the real costs, they're going to be horrendous. It's a little bit like Detroit. Detroit's survival is going to be like cutting itself in half. That's an astonishing failure. I'm going to go back to

the charismatic-bureaucratic model. Kemp never figured out how to have two or three good bureaucrats around him who could build mechanisms, and in the absence of mechanisms, you don't get the scale of change you need. We'll see. I am very deeply shaped by Kemp. Of the people I've known personally who've really affected me, he would be right after Reagan in terms of genuinely getting me to think differently and to approach things differently.

Kondracke: Sum up how.

Gingrich: Oh, I'm much more passionate about a solution-oriented, opportunity-oriented, empowerment-oriented inclusive party that aggressively takes responsibility for helping people solve their problems than I think I would have been had I entered—if you imagine the House Republican Party after Watergate without Kemp, it is a desert. Kemp was literally the one-eyed man in the land of the blind. He was the only symbol of energy, enthusiasm, optimism. Stockman wasn't. Stockman's just a smart guy, a clever manipulator. But he wasn't charismatic. And Jack is a genuinely charismatic leader. He spoke from the heart, he spoke from within, he marched to his own drummer, and as a result the vibrancy he gave—I'm sure that Vin has a similar sense, that here was a guy who created a zone within which you could flourish, and there wasn't anybody else in the House Republican Party.

Kondracke: Final question, unless you have something to add. What does Kemp have to teach the contemporary political environment, and specifically Republicans?

Gingrich: Ideas matter, courage matters, persistence matters, energy matters. I think the phrase 'cheerful persistence,' which we developed at C.O.S., in many ways comes from Kemp. That's why he's the closest thing to Theodore Roosevelt. The ebullient, constant— somebody once said of Teddy Roosevelt that every stone he found on the beach was new. Jack had that ability. "Sun rose this morning." It was an extraordinary moment. And you had that sense of engagement. Jack brought, and this will sound goofy, in a very real sense, Jack brought love into the Party. He loved people, he loved life, he made you happy. I'm going to get teary-eyed. You just had this sense of, he was a genuine comrade, you were companions on a quest. It's a rare talent.

Kondracke: Thanks.

[end of interview]