

JACK KEMP
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

SYMPOSIUM

JACK KEMP AND THE REAGAN REVOLUTIONAIRES
IN THE HOUSE

March 6, 2012

PANEL 2

THE COLD WAR, IRAN-CONTRA,
THE POLITICS OF THE HOUSE,
AND THE 1988 CAMPAIGN

JACK KEMP FOUNDATION
WASHINGTON, DC

Kondracke: Welcome. This is the second of two panels on our Congressional Oral History Symposium entitled "Jack Kemp and the Reagan Revolutionaries in the House." It's co-sponsored by the Jack Kemp Foundation and the Kluge Center for Scholars at the Library of Congress. We're at the Whittall Pavilion at the Library of Congress. Today's March 6, 2012. I'm Morton Kondracke, holder of the Jack Kemp Chair in Political Economy at the [John W.] Kluge Center. The panel is— we've rearranged from the morning—[Rep. John V.] Vin Weber, who served with Jack Kemp from 1980-1989; [Sen. C.] Trent Lott, who was the House Majority Whip and served with Jack Kemp from 1972-1989; [Frederic W.] Fred Barnes, who covered him for the *Baltimore Sun*, the *New Republic* and the *Weekly Standard*; [Rep. Robert L.] Bob Livingston, who was with Jack from '77 to '89; [Sen. Cornelius H. M.] Connie Mack [III], as we remembered this morning, came to Congress in 1982, and [Albert R.] Al Hunt [Jr.], who, as I said, covered him for the *Wall Street Journal*. Trent Lott and Al Hunt were not here this morning, so I'm going to pose some questions to them that I've posed to everybody else. Let me ask Senator Lott, how would you characterize Jack Kemp's role in the Reagan Revolution, and what impact do you think he had on conservative thinking in the United States?

Trent Lott: Actually, he was the spiritual leader of what became the Reagan Revolution. A lot of people don't realize that it really began in the House, probably in the mid-seventies, maybe 1978, when Jack kept telling us, "Look, we've got to change our message. We're all talking about root canal politics, you've got to cut this, you've got to reduce that." And that sort of led to the language of opportunity and growth, the Kemp-Roth bill, supply-side economics. I have to say here

too that [Newton L.] Newt Gingrich was an important part of that. He was part of the word-smithing that we used. We changed our language. But Jack also, I'm sure it's been mentioned earlier, he was one of the people that said he believed in conservatism with a smile, not a growl, not a snarl. So it began in the seventies in the House. And of course then the Reagan Revolution continued that, but there's no doubt in my mind that a lot of the ideas that President Reagan used in his campaign in the late summer and the fall, came out of that House group. A lot of people, including then-Congressman Carroll [A.] Campbell [Jr.], going on to be governor of South Carolina, Henry [J.] Hyde, we had a group of about 30 of us, but Jack was really our spiritual leader. And then of course when President Reagan was elected then we started implementing it, but it didn't really culminate until we eventually won the Senate and the House and then of course in 2000, we won it all, the House, the Senate and at that point, the White House. Without Jack being prominently involved, one of the problems we got into is we kind of ran out of gas, once we achieved the Kemp-Reagan Revolution. But there's no question that it began with Jack in the House in the mid-seventies.

Kondracke: AI?

AI Hunt: Morton, I recently did a column on the fact that all the presidential candidates now, the one thing they will guarantee, will cite 17 times in a speech, will be Ronald Reagan. That's the one name that they invoke, it's like the Democrats used to be with FDR [Franklin D. Roosevelt]. So I called a bunch of Reagan people—[Louis] Lou Cannon, who wrote the book on Reagan and covered him for so long; [James A.] Jim Baker and others. One thing they all said was that the

member of Congress that Reagan probably either talked about the most, or most influenced him, was easily Jack Kemp. As a reporter in the late seventies, I came to believe in the early days, I came to believe that if supply-side economics, whatever its merits or not, if it had had a different face, it would have had a different outcome. It was Jack Kemp's optimism that Trent alluded to a minute ago, it became a can-do thing to lift all boats rather than a let's just cut taxes so rich people and business people can do well. I think no one conveyed that message as well as Jack did, and I remember covering Reagan in '76 and '77 and '78, and Reagan was certainly a conservative. He was not really a supply-sider, and I think Jack Kemp played a huge role in turning Reagan into a more devout supply-sider.

Kondracke: So when did you first meet Kemp?

Hunt: In the mid-seventies, probably '73 or '74. It was by the late seventies I had formed, I think, a pretty close friendship with him. I think I told you this story earlier. Jack used to love to go in front of groups, particularly if we're out in Vail, Colorado it would be a bunch of wealthy businessmen, and he'd say "I want you to meet Al Hunt because he thinks all the problems of the world would be solved if you just paid more taxes." So I think we developed a very good social relationship, but I loved to cover him because even when I disagreed with him, I found Jack such a compelling figure, and Jack was authentic. Jack didn't have as much discipline as some other people in the business, and there were some gaps, I'm sure, but I never met a more authentic person in politics than Jack Kemp.

Kondracke: Trent, when did you first get associated with him, and how, and then how did your relationship develop? Obviously you were very close.

Lott: I know we talked a lot about Jack and supply-side economics, but there are a lot of other sides of Jack that I think are just as interesting. He also had a sense of humor, and I used to razz him about his football playing, and I first started paying attention to him when he was playing for the Buffalo Bills, and I thought he was the slowest quarterback I'd ever seen. And he seemed to have big feet. So I'd tell him that, and he'd would respond, "Well, yes, you were a cheerleader." I'd say, "Yes, and a lot of time I spent more time on the field than you did playing quarterback." But we would banter back and forth like that and of course I met him, I guess when he first came to the House I guess in 1970, I was administrative assistant to a Democrat, chairman of the Rules Committee, [William M.] Bill Colmer, and by then I'd become a fan of Jack Kemp and [William R.] Bill Archer [Jr.] and [Philip M.] Phil Crane, and when time came to run for Congress I ran as a Republican, and then when I came in in 1973, Jack and Bill Archer kind of became my mentors, kind of took me under their wing and encouraged me and pushed me. Jack used to give me great lectures about how Republicans had to reach out to minorities and to labor unions, and he found out that my dad was a pipe fitter union member, he said, "You ought to work those members. You ought to go to the union halls. I actually did that. I'd actually go to the union halls like I know Bob Livingston did, take my COPE [AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education] rating, which was about 10 or zero, and I'd go down the list and ask the members in the union hall, I remember doing this at the Carpenters' Union Hall, "Would you vote

for that?" And the answer was no. But Jack pushed me to do that, and he pushed me to reach out to groups in my state of Mississippi that Republicans weren't expected to reach out to, and it made a huge difference in my life and in my politics too. But Jack also, we had a bond because of our faith. He was also a very committed Christian, and we had some times when we had difficulties and we would get together and discuss those difficulties in that vein.

Kondracke: I forgot to ask you all this morning, so everybody can answer, beginning with Vin. So what do you think were the outstanding personal characteristics of Jack Kemp?

Vin Weber: High energy, relentless optimism, intellectual curiosity, boy, I guess I could go on and on, but that's what I'd say most comes to mind, just this incredible energy and intellectual curiosity and never was heard a discouraging word. I want to just make another point. We talk about supply-side economics a lot as if Jack became a national leader because of supply-side economics. I remember the first time I met Jack Kemp. I was a staffer here after the 1974 elections, and there weren't very many Republican staffers who came out with newly elected members then, so we were all kind of hanging together. And I remember standing in the Cannon Caucus Room, 1975, not the Caucus Room, by the elevator, we were talking to three or four Republican staffers, and the elevator came open and out came Jack surrounded by all sorts of people. I didn't know who he was. So I said to these other people, "Who's that?" They said, "That's our leader after Reagan." This was young Republican staffers in 1975 before we'd ever heard of supply-side economics. I'm not going to dwell on it but I wanted to make that point. Jack was seen, maybe we didn't have supply-side

economics, but by a whole generation of Republicans, he was seen as the next leader.

Kondracke: These were Members?

Weber: These were staffers, young staffers.

Kondracke: Fred?

Lott: Jack was also consistent and I remember he got me in trouble with Reagan one time because on this tax policy, he did not like the 1986 tax reform package. He thought it was a tax increase, and I kind of agreed with him, and made it known that as a whip I was not going to support it, and I wound up in the Oval Office with President Reagan saying, "Well Trent, if I can't count on the whip, who can I count on?" And I was thinking at the time, I'll never forget it, "Jack Kemp got me into this." But I remember having to work him some time to get him to vote on some issues. He had such an effervescent personality and I do think that intellectual curiosity is a good term too. He was always exploring ideas. He was an ideas man, no question about it, and that's something I think Republicans need to return to. We need to come up with some more ideas about how we preserve this great, young republic and how we go into the future promising the people we're going to make a difference for them.

Kondracke: Fred?

Fred Barnes: Well, he did have a dynamic personality, and it was overpowering in so many cases, but he also had something else. It

wasn't just that he had intellectual curiosity, which he did, but he had mastered the subject matter of economics, of tax cuts and all the ramifications of that. He had great people working for him, John [D.] Mueller's here; he was one. But he had mastered it, so he could answer all the questions.

Kondracke: Bob?

Livingston: Something Trent said about his sense of humor. Despite all of his great attributes he didn't take himself too seriously. He had fun, and I can remember after we were all gone, there was a gathering of us, and I think it was Vin and Newt, [Daniel E.] Dan Lungren and I believe Trent. And Jack walks in, looks at the gathering and says, "My goodness." This was only about eight years ago. He says, "What a group of has-beens."

Kondracke: Connie Mack?

Connie Mack: The first thing I wrote down was presence. When he walked in, there was something about the guy that just drew you to him. Charisma, however you want to define it. When you have that, it gives you opportunities to do other things. He clearly was a leader. He was an educator. How many times would he come up to each of you and say, "Have you read this? Did you read that book?" I did catch him one time. There was a book called *Microcosm*, George [F.] Gilder had written. And so Jack had said, "Have you read this book?" And I hadn't read it, so I went out immediately and bought it. I read the whole damn thing, and it was the most boring, dry, book. Except, I believe the introduction was the most optimistic, challenging of

things. This was down at HUD [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development] [unand I went down to be with him for a few minutes, he'd just gotten in. You talk about a fellow who looked like he was absolutely lost, he was the only person on that top floor, a couple people around him, and nobody else. And I started a conversation about this book *Microcosm*, and I kept getting these blank looks about these various things I'd read in there, and then it dawned on me, the only thing that he'd read was the introduction. [laughter]

Hunt: Did he write the introduction?

M: But he constantly was encouraging to read. He was a person who was driven by ideas, and as we've all kind of implied, we need to get back to that. He was very inclusive, and as Vin said, I probably could go on and on, but those are the kind of things that come to my mind.

Kondracke: AI?

Hunt: Well, I would agree with what everyone has said, and I would add when I think of Jack Kemp I also think of race. I have never met anyone who was as committed as Jack Kemp was to racial equality, you know the old line, and I forget who was the first, several people get credit for it, but Jack has showered with more African Americans than some politicians have met. But it was such a genuine commitment. When I was at the *Wall Street Journal* we had a wonderful reporter in Chicago named Alex Kotlowitz. He wrote a great book called *There Are No Children Here*, about the horrible life and the tenants out there, and what a mother went through with her children.

Right as the book came out I got a call from Jack one day. He was HUD secretary then. He said, "Give me Alex Kotlowitz's phone number. And I said, "Well, I'll get it for you" and I started to ask questions and he said, "No, I want to talk to Alex Kotlowitz. What's his phone number? I don't want to talk to you." And he immediately got in touch with him. It was so genuine. He cared so passionately about it, and it was an issue that I think he made a big difference in.

Kondracke: I asked everybody what their standout moment experience with Jack Kemp was. What was yours?

Hunt: Well there are so many, I wouldn't know. Even a few I can tell. Let me tell one story that never has been told before, because it was very revealing about Jack. When Jack was running for president in 1987, I belonged to this political writers' group, it was hack political writers is what we really were. We were people who really, we couldn't get through, we didn't even spell George Gilder much less how to read the book. But we covered campaigns, and we had a theory that you could have off-the-record dinners with candidates, because you got to see them a lot more than now, and so therefore this was Jack [W.] Germond and John [W.] Chancellor and [Robert L.] Bob Healy and the like. We had Jack, and he brought [Edward J.] Ed Rollins, who was his campaign manager, and this was in the aftermath of Iran-Contra and it was off the record. I'm going to violate that now but I figure after 25 years even Jack wouldn't mind if I did that. And at one point Jack said, "Look, I can understand why Reagan did that. I mean there's a humanitarian issue here and—" And Ed Rollins said, "No you can't." And Jack said, "Oh, yes I can." And Rollins, "No you can't, no you can't." And they really argued for about two or three

minutes. It showed a couple things. I mentioned earlier there sometimes was a lack of discipline with Jack, and that was an issue if it ever had come out publicly in 1987 it would have been the end of his campaign, probably, because, I mean Reagan apologized for it. But it also showed his real genuine humanitarian side. He wasn't saying he wouldn't have done it. He said, "Look, if there are people who are in terrible trouble, I can see why you would do things like that." It was a wonderful

Kondracke: Namely the Contras.

Hunt: Yes.

Kondracke: He could understand why you would sell arms to the Iranians in order to help the Contras.

Hunt: Well, this was in order to get the prisoners out, the people who were being held hostage over there. Remember that was the issue, the Reagan swap arms in order to get hostages out. Again, I want to be fair to Jack. He never said he would have done that. He just said "I can really understand," which was not a politically correct answer at the time if you're running for the Republican presidential nomination, but it was him. But the fact that his campaign manager kept saying "No, that's not what you think" and he said, "Yes, that is what I think."

Kondracke: Trent, what's your outstanding personal memory?

Lott: You know, I don't know that there was an event that I remember specifically, but one of the things I was thinking about Jack

too is just the number and the variety of friends he had, and how loyal he was to them. He stayed in touch with his friends over the years, and he and Joanne [Kemp] and [Patricia T. Lott] Trish and I went to, as I recall, maybe a couple of Super Bowls, and I'd run into people that he played football with in San Diego and Buffalo, and watching their attitude toward him and how he kept those friendships over all the years, even though he hadn't played football since the sixties. But also, Jack did have an awareness of what his limitations were. I remember in the House, Jack was chairman of the Conference, but when there was an effort to get him to run for whip or maybe even leader at some point, he wasn't interested in that. He was more interested in the ideas of the legislation rather than trying to count votes or to get out there and be on point every day. He was a very critical part of our leadership, but he had a higher agenda, frankly, than just the leadership in the House.

Kondracke: I said that this was not going to be entirely hero worship, so what would you say were his foibles or his flaws? Vin?

Weber: Well, I'll talk about the 1988 presidential campaign a little bit. I don't know if this is a flaw. It's a flaw in a candidate, let's say that. Jack had a real intense aversion to being controlled by anybody else, and I've worked with a lot of presidential candidates, as most of us at this table have, and it's always a little hard, because you turn yourself over to a group of other people and they tell you go here, go there, say this, say that. But Jack had more trouble with that than anybody I ever knew. I mean he really, really resisted having anybody else take control of his schedule or his life in any way. And at one level I suppose that can sound like hero worship too, because we all like to be

independent, but as a candidate for president it was a flaw. It made it difficult, and I think that it showed in the lack of debate prep, because he wasn't going to be told how he was going to prepare for the debates, and in some other things around—

Kondracke: It was 1996

Weber: Yes, you're right, '96. Eighty-eight was when I had actually more involvement with him.

Hunt: Same thing was true in '88.

Weber: Same thing was true in '88 pretty much. In '88 I just remembered—again, this is a criticism, but in a way I admire it—we were basically out of the race and we had to go down for the South Carolina primary, one last stand. At that time they'd officially abandoned the goal of the 600-ship navy that Reagan had articulated when he first ran, and Ed Rollins and I and a bunch of us said to Jack, "Look, we're in tough shape." We were really out of the race but we didn't know it. "Go in and make the South Carolina primary all about maintaining the 600-ship navy goal, because it's the biggest naval state in the country. Make it a single-issue campaign, sort of like Reagan did the Panama Canal in North Carolina in 1976," and Jack said, "Yeah, yeah." So he went down to South Carolina and gave speeches about SDI [Strategic Defense Initiative], but in his mind SDI was what really mattered, and the notion that we had to win the damn primary in South Carolina was not what went through his mind. He knew what he thought was important, and that's what he was going to talk about, and nobody was going to tell him otherwise.

Kondracke: Trent?

Lott: I just have to agree with that. There was a certain amount of lack of discipline sometimes. And also I think sometimes he got out on issues from a political standpoint that could be damaging, but yet he believed so passionately, actually it was a tremendous asset, and it would make it very attractive. I hate to bring up a particular issue but I'm sure Jack would not like where we are positioned now on immigration, for instance. And I remember him giving some speeches about all these are God's children, and that's the most valuable resource you can have, is human resources. That's what made Jack so lovable and so inspirational. It was also sometimes a problem for the leadership politically.

Kondracke: I heard a story by the way that concerns you. See if it's true or not. That he was going to go to Mississippi, and you said, "Now Jack, talk about anything you like, but let's not talk about how we want to have blacks big time in the Republican Party." So Jack goes down there, makes the speech, and that's exactly what he talks about.

Lott: Absolutely. [laughter]

Kondracke: What was the event?

Lott: Oh, I don't know. I probably had him come in and speak to I don't know, it could have been a state JC [Junior Chamber of Commerce] meeting or it could have been a state Party meeting, but

he got rave reviews, and nobody else could have said what he said and gotten the reaction that he got.

Kondracke: So your fears were not—

Lott: No, you know look, it was still difficult in some states in those days to say what he was saying and thinking, but he said it in such a way that it just made so much good sense. So much of a fairness content to it that not only did it not cause a ripple, it was well-received.

Kondracke: Fred, foibles?

Barnes: You know after covering Jack Kemp so much and sitting through so many speeches, Al's probably the only person here who's sat through as many Jack Kemp speeches, and they did go on, at length. You could always spot the perfect end point. You know, you can spot it with preachers on Sunday when they ought to end, and they frequently don't end either. But you'd get pretty weary. Maybe running for president was a mistake, although it was the logical next step, politically for Jack Kemp, it is something, you know Ronald Reagan let handlers do a whole lot and that was one of the secrets to his success. He cared about the speeches and they were all a certain length. But you really do have to be disciplined, and that kind of discipline for Jack Kemp, who believed so strongly in so many things and he wanted to talk about all of them in one speech or another and sometimes all in one speech, that wasn't a recipe for getting to the White House.

Livingston: And that played out in the debate when he was running for vice president with [Robert J.] Bob Dole. He was on *Meet the Press*, and had specific questions, gave specific answers, and hit it over the fence that Sunday, and the debate against Al Gore was that Tuesday. It was just like night and day. He could generalize and get away with it on *Meet the Press*, but in the debate against Gore it did not work. He tried to resort to his rhetoric about the gold standard and supply-side economics, but the questions were far more specific and targeted to other areas beyond his field of expertise, and as Trent and Vin pointed out, he wasn't going to be controlled about what he could say and it ended up showing up in that debate.

Kondracke: Supposedly he didn't prepare. I've heard that he played tennis all day.

Livingston: I don't know for a fact, but it appeared that way in the debate.

Mack: I think that Judd [A.] Greg was his debate partner in '88, so they did some of it—

Kondracke: No, this was '96, we're talking about

Mack: '96, I'm sorry, '96. They did.

Livingston: But I'd just like to re-characterize this business about discipline. Jack was disciplined. He knew what he wanted to talk about and he talked about it. It just sometimes didn't coincide with the hour of the day.

Lott: Let me jump in again. You know you don't want this to just be a total admiration society, but I don't think I've known anybody else in Washington that by the sheer force of his personality, his will, and his ideas, moved as many people around politically from positions they had held, or not having any positions, to become disciples of Jack Kemp. I mean he really had a huge impact on a whole of us that served with him.

Kondracke: Al, any foibles?

Hunt: Oh, yeah. [laughter] I had sat through a lot of those speeches and I still thought, and I'll tell a story about this, I still thought Jack Kemp had a real shot in '88. I thought he really was so much more of the future than either Bush or Dole, and I was dumb enough to, when the *Washingtonian Magazine* called once to say what will be the ticket in '88, to predict Jack Kemp. And I was later with my wife and child at the Final Four basketball thing in Dallas and George W. Bush, who was still drinking in those days, came up and let me know in no uncertain terms about what a dumb son-of-a-bitch I was, and I was, but I remember, Fred, at one New Hampshire event in 1988 where Jack said, "You know they all tell me, I'm not going to talk about the gold standard because they all tell me that's crazy." And then he spent 35 minutes talking about the gold standard, [laughter] and nobody had the slightest idea what he was talking about, they didn't have the slightest idea, except Jack. I went, Mort, after that we had dinner two or three years after that campaign—I guess he was HUD secretary—it was out in Vail. And I said, "Jack, do you have regrets about that?" No, it was actually later than that, and I said "Do you have regrets

about it?" And he said, "Regrets, why?" And I said, "Well, it didn't turn out terribly well." And he said, "You know, I don't know if Judith [Kemp] is still here. When my boys were growing up I went to all their football games" and he did. Jack Kemp never missed one of their games. He said, "We spent a lot of time together in that. I loved my daughters just as much but I didn't spend as much time, and I spent so much time with my daughters in that campaign, how can you possibly regret it?" And I thought, "What a wonderful human story that is, rather than how he finished." And just a final sequel to the Al Gore thing, it was awful, it was a terrible debate, and we were again at Vail that Christmas, and we had a bunch of people over, and Gore was there, so we invited Gore. And Jack came and Gore came, and everybody there was stunned, because there was this incredibly warm, they were chatting, they were even arguing and bantering, and I assure you it wasn't Gore that initiated that kind of a banter. That was Jack.

Kondracke: Okay, Trent Lott, so in the early days when you were there and Jack was pushing tax cuts not on the Ways and Means Committee, I asked this this morning and had others answer it, he was not only criticized by Democrats, I mean [Daniel Patrick] Pat Moynihan said it was quackery, Kemp-Roth, but also Republicans didn't like what he was doing. Tell me about that.

Lott: Well, it was a new and a different approach, and he was very aggressive about it, and Jack had, you know there were no areas where he was off-limits. He would get in everybody else's territory, he'd get in their turf. And you know, you're right, he was not on Ways and Means Committee, and he'd get over into the budget area, and, of

course, he did develop some expertise in the defense area, as has been mentioned. But yes, there was some real jealousy.

Kondracke: Are you in Chowder and Marching?

Lott: I'm in Chowder and Marching, in fact I'm in there because of Jack Kemp and Bill Archer, I mentioned both of them, and we used to have some pretty raucous sessions there too.

Kondracke: Tell me about that. What happened?

Lott: Well, I'm not sure how much we're supposed to talk about that, but what you really do is talk about what's going on legislatively and politically, and Jack would always get things kind of stirred up, and in a little bit of an uproar, which he royally loved. When the debate would really get going and get heated, he was just having a grand old time. But I do know that sometimes the senior Republicans on Ways and Means or the leadership felt like Jack was causing problems by getting into areas where he really wasn't supposed to, based on his committee assignments and his expertise.

Kondracke: Did you cover Ways and Means, Al?

Hunt: I covered Ways and Means, and one of the senior Republicans on the Ways and Means Committee was Barber [B.] Conable [Jr.] from upstate New York, a district close to Jack, and Jack would sometimes talk about Kemp-Roth and say, "The problem with you is you're just a Conable sycophant, you believe everything." And he'd go on and talk

about how Barber Conable was yesterday, and then at the end he might ask me, "Why doesn't Barber like me?" [laughter]

Kondracke: Did Barber not like him?

Hunt: I don't think Barber Conable disliked him. I think he considered him a bit of a nuisance on that stuff because he wasn't on the Committee and that was the way the House worked.

Lott: Another area like on budget, Jack made it clear, I mentioned it earlier, you had referred to it as root canal politics is all Republicans would talk about in the early seventies was how important the balanced budget was, which it was, and that was one area where I used to disagree with him. But he'd get the hair of the budgeteers too. I think that some of the things that have been happening in Washington in the last couple of years in the budget area he would not have liked the idea of taking hostages.

[unclear]: He was not an advocate of cutting spending. He wanted to cut tax breaks.

Lott: No, he wanted it to be gentle, he was not an advocate of cutting spending. But he gave me a hard time and called me the Al D'Amato of the South because I was always getting earmarks thanks to Bob Livingston and others for road projects and so forth in Mississippi and he royally enjoyed harassing me about it, which I was delighted, because I was so proud of the earmarks that I got for my poor state.
[laughter]

Kondracke: So I'm a little unclear still from this morning about the Amigos. You were one of the Amigos. When did the Amigos start?

Lott: You know, I guess it would have been in the nineties.

Kondracke: So it was after

Weber: It was when he was HUD secretary.

Kondracke: Oh really? Okay.

Lott: We met at, where was that place we met?

Weber: The Mexican restaurant.

Lott: The Mexican restaurant right there on the Hill.

Weber: We're rehashing.

Kondracke: It's a 1990s thing, okay, I get it. And you weren't in the Conservative Opportunity Society either.

Lott: I was kind of on the fringes in that.

Weber: You were chicken.

Lott: No, I was whip, and while I felt close to everybody in the Conservative Opportunity Society, Vin and Newt and Connie and [Robert S.] Bob Walker, I was close to all of them, but I also felt a

need to sort of be a go-between between that group and [Robert H.] Bob Michel and the Republican leadership, so that was kind of a role that I assumed, I don't know that anybody told me to do it, but I thought that I was attracted to what they were doing, the name, they were all my closest friends, I felt close to the revolutionaries. But I also felt it was very important that we not undermine the leadership, even if you didn't agree with the leadership. And quite frankly that's one reason I decided in 1988 that it was time for me to make a move, because I'd been whip for eight years and it was getting to be very uncomfortable in that role, and I figured it was time to make a move one way or the other.

Kondracke: So was Newt going after the leadership already in the late eighties?

Lott: I think he was giving the leadership a little bit of a hard time already, but I don't know that he had plans or a vision that he was going to be in the leadership. Between him and leadership was [Richard B.] Dick Cheney and Trent Lott in the leadership, but then when I left as whip, Dick Cheney took my place, and tells me to this day "Hey, I was a better whip than you were. I never lost a vote." Of course it was because a month later he was secretary of Defense. But then, of course, Newt did take his place, that would have been in '89, and won by one vote.

Weber: Because he had a good vote counter.

Lott: Were you the vote counter? But then I do think that he did see then the opportunity to perhaps be the minority leader and the speaker.

Weber: Remember that Newt took credit, you would know if this is accurate or not, Newt took credit for driving John [J.] Rhodes [Jr.] out of the leadership. He told all of us that. I wasn't here when Rhodes was leader, but he took credit for having done things that convinced Rhodes that he should step down as leader, so he—

Kondracke: What year would that have been?

Weber: He didn't run for leader again. John Rhodes was still in the Congress in 1980 but didn't run for leader again.

Lott: Yes, and I think there was some accuracy to that. But Kemp was not, was Kemp in the Conservative Opportunity Society?

Kondracke: No.

Mack: No, he played a role quite similar to yours.

Kondracke: How would characterize, Newt Gingrich is obviously busy. We'll interview Newt at some point, but what was the relationship like between Jack and Newt?

Mack: I think there was tension between the two of them.

Kondracke: Why?

Mack: Tension because they were both idea men, both very strong personalities, both capable leaders, and so there was that constant tension. That would be my—

Lott: Actually I felt like we needed them both at the time. Jack was the guy that had, I thought, the ideas that we needed we go with and the vision. Newt was the teacher. He was the revolutionary but he was also the professor. He was the one that started getting us to use different language and Kemp developed the actual words we used. But still, the spiritual leader was Jack.

Weber: I think it would be fair to say Jack probably saw Newt as too tactical, and too divisive. And that's not who he was. I can even defend being tactical and divisive as a practical politician, but it was not Jack Kemp. He didn't want to divide the country and he didn't want to focus on narrow tactics. He wanted a big vision that would unite the country and move the Party forward and he didn't see Newt in that way. I have to say, having said all that, Newt was always a Kemp for President guy. There was not courting that had to go on, he didn't have to be persuaded of it. He understood that the guy that could lead us to the promised land was Jack Kemp.

Hunt: Mort, the other thing that I, just from my perspective, Jack did not like negative politics. One of the reasons he was so poor in those debates was because people who do well in debates are people who not only can frame their own arguments but know how to undercut the other person's. That's just the history of debates. And Jack was terrible at that, and he didn't like it. He didn't like people who, it

wasn't that he was St. Francis of Assisi all the time, but he didn't like people who he thought trafficked in that and I think he felt that to some extent Newt trafficked in that.

Weber: Yes, I have to relate an anecdote. This is from '96, I know we're not supposed to go there but I mentioned it to a couple of people.

Kondracke: No, we're going to go to '96. [laughs]

Weber: One of my more painful conversations ever was toward the end of the '96 campaign, and [Mary E.A.H.] Elizabeth Dole called me up, and Mrs. Dole said, "We're getting killed out there, Vin. No one is attacking Clinton. The vice presidential candidate is supposed to be the attack dog and people tell me that you, Vin Weber, are the guy that can convince Jack Kemp to go on the attack against Clinton." And I had to say, "Mrs. Dole, it is just not in his constitution to do that." I said, "Even if I could talk him into doing it strategically, he won't pull it off because it's just not who he is."

Kondracke: This is something that I cannot quite get my head around. Here he is, professional quarterback, football player, in the most violent sport in America, and he's a competitor, he likes to win. And yet when it comes to hitting somebody he won't hit. How do you explain that?

Lott: He was a quarterback.

[unclear: He was a quarterback. [laughter]

[unclear]: They don't hit anybody.

Lott: They inspire the team, they hand the ball off to the running-back, they throw to the big tight end. That was Jack's politics, was the same as his football.

Mack: It was somebody else's responsibility to do the blocking and tackling.

Lott: Yes, that's right.

Kondracke: He was a quarterback, he was a team rallier, all the characteristics of a quarterback is who Jack Kemp was.

Lott: I was just thinking about a conversation I had with Vin earlier, that I thought Jack did not vote for the 1986 tax reform package, but Vin says when he came back from conference he did. And I think I remember why. We did something which I did not agree with and argued passionately with him over it. We exempted I think it was 10 million people from paying income taxes, and of course now that number is up to forty-something percent. I thought everybody should have to pay some. Jack, again, typically of Jack wanting to think about the low-income and minorities, the burden that the income taxes had on them. I think that was one of the things that may have caused him to come around.

Weber: I remember you talking about that.

Lott: I did not like that at all, but he prevailed.

Kondracke: You recalled one incident when Kemp, although a leader, was operating against Reagan on '82 and '83 tax increases and he also called for [Paul A.] Volcker [Jr.] not to be reappointed to the Fed [Federal Reserve Board], and as Fred recalls, in the Reagan diaries he's regarded as unreasonable and there's a whole lot of stuff, of clips, on how he was being ragged on by the White House staff for disloyalty and stuff like that. Do you remember that?

Lott: Oh, yes, and not only that, he influenced some of the rest of us to join him and then we wound up getting in the wood shed at the White House. I did more than once. Jim Baker used to get on my case, and usually it was because Jack had me take up one of his causes. I don't think he ever met a tax increase that he thought was the right thing to do, and always thought it was wrong. I don't remember how he voted on when [Andrew L.] Drew Lewis [Jr.], secretary of Transportation showed up and convinced us to vote for an increase in gas fees, not taxes. I can't remember how he voted on that, but I wouldn't be surprised if he voted against that too. [laughs]

Kondracke: Do you remember any of that stuff? [Edwin] Ed Meese [III] says it was Jim Baker who was leaking the nasty stuff against Jack Kemp because Jack Kemp was off the reservation.

Hunt: Oh, I think, Jack, yes, there was some of that to be sure, and I think there was a—love-hate is a cliché—but I think Jack was both what I said earlier, a very formidable figure within the Reagan White House when they looked at Congress and also he was a pain in the

neck sometimes, and I think Jim Baker loved things to be tidy, and loved things to work and Jack didn't do tidy. I think those coexisted. I don't think the White House, I don't think Reagan or that White House viewed Jack as an enemy, they just viewed him as sometimes a burr that wouldn't go along.

Kondracke: I have to ask you what was the relationship like between—I know the answer—Jack Kemp and [Robert J.] Bob Dole. Hedrick Smith writes in *The Power Game* that they hated each other. Is that fair?

Lott: You're asking Vin that question. [laughter]

Kondracke: No, I'm asking you too.

Lott: I'm trying to remember. I remember one time—

Weber: It was vicious for a while, but I don't think permanently.

Lott: I remember I was over messing around on the Senate side for something, maybe it was a conference, and as I recall, Tom [C.] Korologos, who was very close to Bob Dole, referred to something like "the menace from the House," and I said, "Yes, they're small fish, but they're piranhas." There were some shots fired back and forth from Bob and from the Senate over to the House. Sometimes merited, by the way.

Kondracke: It was largely about deficits, right? Or was it personal?

Weber: This is just my opinion, I can't prove it. I think that the problem with Dole and Kemp in those days was that with Kemp it was a very serious ideological argument, and Dole didn't quite get that it wasn't personal, because everything is very personal to Bob Dole. But it wasn't personal with Jack. I don't think he hated Dole. He certainly liked him in 1996, got along very well, but he was passionate about the issues and Dole was standing in the way of us on taxes and that's what Jack cared about. But it wasn't personal on his part, I don't think. I never heard him say anything bad about Bob Dole personally, ever.

Barnes: Don't confuse Jack Kemp with Newt Gingrich, who referred to Dole as the tax collector for the welfare state.

Hunt: Can you guys think of anyone that Jack Kemp hated? I can think of a lot of people that I hated. [laughter] I can think of a lot of people most people hate. I can't think of anyone that Jack Kemp really hated.

Kondracke: Let's go to foreign policy. Would you regard Kemp as a neo-conservative?

Hunt: Are you turning to me?

Kondracke: Yes.

Weber: I'll respond from a little different perspective, because one of my post-Congressional things was I chaired the National Endowment for Democracy for eight years, and when we authorized the National

Endowment for Democracy in 1983 it was divisive on the Republican side. A lot of good friends like Judd Greg and [George H.] Hank Brown and others on the right were against it at that time, and I didn't know what I thought, but Jack was passionate about supporting it because he believed spreading the American idea was part of what we should be all about. That would today be kind of described as neo-conish [neoconservatism]. After the fall of the Berlin Wall basically, Jack became very non-interventionist in terms of his approach to military spending and military interventions, some almost thought he became a pacifist, which was not true, but—

Kondracke: When was this now?

Weber: After the fall of the Berlin Wall. Others may know more but I know he didn't like anything we were doing in the Middle East. He really didn't want to see us doing a lot of military interventions, but when it came to the notion of spreading the idea of democracy, of democratic capitalism, he really believed it was a universal idea and that we should be doing what we can to spread it as a country.

Mack: Yes, it wasn't just in the Middle East, it was in Kosovo. He was opposed to that. What's the message we're sending to all the Muslims of the world? We're bombing them? Is that our response? Is that our attitude? Is that our approach? He was pretty consistent.

Hunt: I had dinner one night with [Robert D.S.] Bob Novak and Jack Kemp and a couple others, and Novak became really, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, too became, Bob almost was a pacifist. He'd hate that term, but he was opposed to almost all military action, and he and

Jack were remarkably close on that. At the same time they were totally apart on the question of Israel. Jack was a really quite sincere, devout supporter of Israel and one of the other hallmarks of the neocon movement was to promote in a very aggressive way democracy, and it's been said there was no greater advocate. So he couldn't be categorized as simply as a neocon or non-neocon.

Lott: Fred just reminded me of another experience that I had with Jack, but another area, first, where he influenced my thinking and probably a lot of other people too, when I came to Washington from a small blue-collar community. My dad had been a shipyard worker, I was, I guess, a basic protectionist. Jack was an avid free-trader. And over the years we went round and round and round about that, with me losing ground to him every time, and he finally came up with a line. He put free trade in the same category as free enterprise and freedom, and really caused me to do some reading and thinking about it. Eventually when I went to the Senate I voted for every free-trade agreement we had, every one of them.

Weber: And politically in his district he could easily have gone the other way.

Lott: Yes. I remember, this is what Fred reminded me of, in 1984, the platform at the convention, we had a lot of fun. Jack was involved and we had a pretty good little tussle with people like Carroll [A.] Campbell [Jr.], who didn't like the textile issue. It was important that it say free and fair trade. Well it was a pretty good little tussle over that, but the best part of it was the White House had set it up to make sure that platform had said what they wanted to say. And Jim Baker

had sent in John [R.] Bolton and Drew Lewis to make sure that platform said what they wanted it to say. Well in the end it said every word that Jack Kemp wanted it to say except for that word free and fair trade, including even inserting a very carefully placed comma that changed the whole content of the platform with regard to tax policy. And then we put a bow on it and handed it to Drew Lewis to give to the White House.

Kondracke: The comma, it said, "We oppose tax increases, comma, which will diminish economic growth."

Weber: But that's not what they wanted. They didn't want the comma.

Lott: Right, and the comma became the story. Jack had a blast on it. Were you on that platform?

Weber: I was on the platform committee. We threatened to take that comma to the floor of the convention. [laughter] I don't know if we really would have, but it was a lot of fun.

Lott: But Jack also had some great staff. That's where I got to know [J. David] Dave Hoppe that wound up being my chief of staff when I was the leader, and somebody mentioned John Mueller. He was a magnet for talented people both when he was in the House, and at HUD, everywhere he went. He inspired people and he attracted very capable people to help him get his job done.

Barnes: On the matter of the comma, you had not told the White House that this was what you were going to do, and it was a shock to them.

Lott: It was just a little grammatical thing there.

Barnes: Yes, but it changed the whole meaning, of course.

Lott: Yes it did.

Barnes: Surprised the White House.

Mack: Mort, back to the foreign policy aspect, the other thing that he did, and I mentioned this this morning, is he would really kind of seek out the new members that had come in, that hadn't really been exposed to a lot of these different issues like the Endowment, and convince them that this was the right thing to do. Again, he had the stature to do it, that people, particularly new members coming in, they had great respect for Jack and his ideas. I can remember many times when he would come up to me as a new member of the Congress and say "What are you thinking about this?" And of course my first reaction was "Well, I'm not sure I want to tell you because I'm not sure I want to hear what you have to say," but he would force it on you, and I thought he was incredibly helpful, he was a great mentor.

Kondracke: Is it Reagan's influence on him or did he have influence on Reagan on issues like SDI and defense spending and the Contras and opposition to the Soviet Union and the Reagan Doctrine, all of that? What was the byplay between him and Ronald Reagan?

Lott: Well in the first instance I think Jack had an influence on him to make that one of the three big issues in the '80 campaign, to make defense, remember we felt like defense had been gutted. I think that was one of his three big issues, and again, there was a group that pushed that, but Jack clearly was the one that did that. But I think as you went on into the years on things like Iran-Contra and some of the others, he probably was influenced by the Reagan team, even though he probably was not hard to convince, but I don't think he was pushing on them. I think they were convinced of the rightness of what they were trying to do and he was supportive.

Weber: Let's revisit for just a second, though, one of the issues we raised this morning, and that was the impact that Jack had on the Reagan Administration, on the emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union, because that was not a foregone conclusion. I was involved in some of those meetings where we had to talk George [P.] Shultz and others into taking a more aggressive stance on that issue. Max [M.] Kampelman told me a couple of years ago that he believed that the Reagan Administration's efforts in that area saved a million lives, and Jack Kemp is a big part of that.

Kondracke: He was in favor of funding SDI. He wanted, at one point he said he wanted SDI deployed by 1996, and was constantly pushing increases in the appropriation. Do you remember any of that?

Livingston: I just remember it was a joint effort. There were several of us that were pushing SDI. Dr. Teller had come down and given a speech to us, Newt was heavily involved in that and Jack was as well.

But the Republicans, particularly the younger Republicans on the Appropriations Committee, were very pro-defense. We kind of acted as a team, both within the committee and on the Intelligence Committee, which I served on for six years, we were constantly pushing the envelope for SDI, for Brilliant Pebbles [warheads], for all of the accouterments that the system offered, and, of course, it ultimately became the catalyst for the collapse of the Soviet Union, so in retrospect it was the right thing to do.

Barnes: Yes, the idea of missile defense, though, Reagan had written about it in his radio talks in the late seventies, so I think he initiated it.

Kondracke: On the areas where he differed with Reagan, one of them was AWACS [Airborne Warning and Control aircraft], for example, to Saudi Arabia. How did the White House react to that kind of opposition on the foreign policy front? Remember any of that?

Hunt: I remember AWACS very well, but it was such a Senate fight.

Lott: Yes, that was strictly in the Senate.

Hunt: And I don't remember Jack playing a role in that or the White House reacting to Jack, because it was all Senate.

Kondracke: There's other issues that he disagreed, especially with George Shultz on, funding for Solidarity [Polish democratic movement]. Anybody involved in that one? Funding for the Angola rebels.

Mack: What was Jack's position? He was opposed to that.

Kondracke: He was for funding [Jonas M.] Savimbi and Shultz was not.

Hunt: There weren't many things Jack wasn't for funding.

Barnes: And they ultimately funded.

Kondracke: Yes, I think they ultimately did. So in 1986 he says in an interview that Shultz should be replaced by Jeane [J.] Kirkpatrick, and then in 1987 he actually in a CPAC [Conservative Political Action Conference of the American Conservative Union] speech called for Shultz's resignation. I don't know whether this was part of the campaign, the lead-up to the campaign, that he wanted to distinguish himself from George [H.W.] Bush, or what.

[unclear]: I don't have any insight on it.

Weber: We had a lot of arguments with Shultz about funding it was just Angola, but we were trying to get funding in Cambodia, and Afghanistan and Angola and a couple of other places too, Shultz was resistant on that. We were insistent that every time we negotiated anything with the Soviet Union we'd bring up Jewish immigration. Shultz didn't like the restrictions that that put on him. I think in retrospect we were way too tough on George Shultz, who I think was a great secretary of State. But we had these arguments with him and Jeane was our heroine.

Lott: We were the course with Jack on Volcker. A lot of us felt like Volcker was driving us over the cliff, and I probably was one of the ones that joined Jack in calling for his removal, and I remember when

Kondracke: Because tight money was creating a recession.

Lott: Absolutely.

Kondracke: But if Jack, we haven't gotten into gold at all, but if there had been a gold standard in 1980-81, you would have had a contraction, you would have had a recession, wouldn't you? Because there would have been tight money instead of loose money, and we'd have the same. That's what Stockman—

[general chatter and laughter]

Kondracke: We'll get John [Mueller] to come up here. We'll talk about it later.

Hunt: Jack by the way, he wanted Volcker replaced. He wasn't terribly pleased with the replacement. He was not a huge [Alan] Greenspan fan.

Kondracke: I want to ask Bob Livingston something, because you were on Foreign Ops [Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations] with him. Tell me about the fights with David [R.] Obey, that later became chairman, over the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and the World Bank and that sort of thing.

Livingston: Obey wanted to take the money and give it to the UN and to the IMF and to all the international banks, and Jack was dead set against it. I didn't know when I came on the committee, I didn't know anything about those organizations. I learned at Jack's knee. I listened to enough of his speeches and I became absolutely convinced he was right. But Obey to the time he retired was pushing those institutions, no matter how much proof we gave to him that they didn't work and that they were wasting money.

Lott: And destroying economies.

Livingston: And destroying economies. IMF to this day has a terrible record of saving economies. But it was the multilateral banks versus keeping the money in America and doing bilateral transactions with countries. And Jack was consistent from the day that I got on the committee to the time that he got off

Weber: It was also an extension of his basic economic theory. Remember, one of his big arguments, particularly with the IMF, was they would go in to save a country and impose higher taxes and austerity measures, and he thought it was ridiculous to punish poor people for being poor people. So it was really of one cloth with what he believed about economics in this country. He was not a person that wanted to punish people, to force people to make sacrifices or their lives more difficult. He wanted everybody to get richer.

Livingston: And he took that attitude to his role as secretary of HUD, of Housing and Urban Development, and brought out the HOPE [public

housing] program and the other programs to promote poor people to have houses. One of the unrelated but related nonetheless, was a debate between [Alphonso M.] Mike Espy, who had been totally convinced by Jack Kemp to empower poor people to buy houses, to own them and to make something of themselves in their own independent right, and Maxine Waters, who clearly didn't buy that line of thought. So Mike Espy was championing Jack Kemp's HOPE program on the floor of the House, and Maxine Waters was debating him and crucifying him, and if you go back to the debate, I'm sure you can find it in the *Congressional Record*, where Mike puts out all the reasons why poor people should own their own homes, and Maxine responds, "But if they have their own homes, when the roof breaks, who's going to repair it?" And Espy says, "Well, they are!" [laughs]

Lott: I can vouch for the fact that Mike Espy, of Mississippi, a congressman, was a huge fan of Jack's, and I can also vouch for the fact that HOPE 6 program worked magnificently. I was familiar with two of them in my own state, Biloxi and Meridian, and they were fantastic projects and they empowered some people and gave them a decent place to live. It's a great program.

Kondracke: Let's go to 1988. When did the planning start for Jack to run for president in 1988?

[unclear]: Not yet. [laughter]

[unclear]: Planning, what?

[unclear]: Who are we talking about?

Kondracke: You know what I mean. Vin?

Weber: Boy, I don't know the answer to that, Morton. A group of us had assumed this was going to happen probably for eight years, but Jack didn't confirm that to all. He didn't say "I'm going to run for president after Reagan's done," but a bunch of us just assumed, it's like I told you this group of staffers back in 1975, they said, "That's our leader after Reagan." I just always assumed that Jack was going to run for president after Reagan left office, but when the planning actually began I'm not quite sure.

Mack: So Mort, 1984 convention, Dallas or New Orleans?

Kondracke: Dallas.

Mack: 1984, I'd been in politics two years, Bryant [C.] Gumbel is interviewing me at the convention with Paul [S.] Tribble [Jr.], and the last question he asked us was "Who are you going to support for president in 1988?" Mind you this is the 1984 convention. Paul Tribble of course having been around for a while, he said, "We're so fortunately as a party to have so many good, qualified leaders that blah blah blah blah. Of course he turns to me and asked me and I said "Jack Kemp." So I don't know when the planning started, but as far as I was concerned in 1984 at the convention, I believed Jack Kemp was going to be running for president and I was going to support him.

Kondracke: There were polls at that convention, straw polls, that indicated I think Kemp was second to Bush? Right? And Dole was in there someplace.

[unclear]: I don't remember.

Kondracke: So what are your outstanding memories of that campaign?

[laughter]

Weber: Pat Robertson is an outstanding memory of that campaign. One of my most outstanding memories really was at the end of the campaign. Jack really wanted to go back, you guys were probably all there, but I had to organize an event in the Cannon [House Office Building] Caucus Room, because he wanted to get out of the race in front of his House colleagues that had been through the whole campaign with him, and I just thought, of the campaign itself too, of course, I have a lot of memories too, but I remember that very much at the end. That Jack was, as other people have said here, very loyal to his friends, he had a sense which we all tried to convince him was not true, that he had let us down, which he didn't. But he was very sensitive to that and he wanted to go out in speaking to people in the House of Representatives about it.

Kondracke: How many House members did he have with him? I read somewhere two dozen.

Weber: Oh, it would have to have been more than that.

Kondracke: More?

Mack: I would think so, sure. I was the campaign chairman for Florida. You asked about the planning. We just never got organized. There just was no sense of direction and it just never caught on, and I'm not quite sure why that was the case. Maybe because there wasn't any real organization.

Lott: The main thing I remember is the Bush family always remembered.

[unclear]: Boy, did they. [laughter]

Kondracke: Tell us about that.

Lott: I remember I got a call from the vice president expressing his um, disappointment, very plainly, that I had endorsed Jack, and I think I even got along the way I had a few discussions with George W. too, but of course he finally got over it, I think. But it was a case, look, there wasn't any choice. I mean, there are some things you do for a person that you've admired and believe in, that you're close to. It wasn't that I was against anybody, I was just for Jack. And that would have been the way Jack would have wanted it.

Mack: So in my case, again, having announced to the world in 1984 that I was supporting Jack Kemp for president in 1988, I still got this call from Bush to come down and have breakfast with him, and I frankly was surprised that he raised it because I'd already come out,

and he said "I want your support in the '88 race," and I had to say to him, "Look at, I've already announced for Jack Kemp." And as people have said, they don't forget that. I remember having won the race in 1988 for the Senate, and the first time that the Bush team, President Bush, was in the state of Florida, I was left standing out with the cars waiting for them to come out in some event in Orlando. I mean they eventually came and rescued me, but it was a pretty good shot.

Livingston: I was running for governor in 1987, and at that point George H.W. Bush was running, but so was Bob Dole, vying for the nomination. And I had early in the campaign had come out for Jack Kemp, and both those guys came into Louisiana to campaign, but they were more interested in drawing money out for their presidential campaigns than they were for raising money for my gubernatorial race, and they both came down pretty hard on me. Both of them I think at the time made only one appearance in Louisiana that year.

Kondracke: Was the campaign disorganized at the top level—the [Charles R.] Charlie Black [Jr.], Ed Rollins level, or why didn't it congeal?

Lott: Maybe Vin could respond better to that than I can. I was not involved at that level. I suspect it was because it was hard to get Jack to organize and plan in the way that you have to when you're running a presidential campaign. It's a big leap from being even a leader in the House, but from being a congressman to running for president—the amount of money, the amount of planning and organization is just so overwhelming. We see what's going on now.

Livingston: Ask the folks who've been in this race.

Mack: And Mort, again, from my perspective in Florida, there just wasn't any communication, so I don't think you can blame that on Jack. The organization did not communicate to the people on the ground what we were supposed to be doing, at least that's my memory of it anyway.

Kondracke: Al, what do you remember from that campaign?

Hunt: First of all it taught me a lot about presidential politics, because I really thought Jack, I guess I thought he would be the nominee but at least I thought he had a heck of a shot, because I thought after eight years of Reagan, you couldn't just say we want four more years after eight years. You can do that for a second term. And I thought Jack was enough of a link to Reagan, but also a fresh, different face and so interesting and compelling that it made a great deal of sense. And I thought neither Bush nor Dole had that. But what I should have known by then because I covered enough, but I learned is that, boy, it is a) as people said, a tough business, and b) you've got to be disciplined. And Jack just had no discipline whatsoever. Connie, it may be that they didn't, I mean Charlie Black and Ed know the business, they know how to communicate. My guess is that they were so busy trying to manage that free-wheeling candidate that there wasn't time for anything else, and there wasn't, Jack didn't attack anybody, he just went and did his own thing. And I thought he did it, I always thought it was interesting and compelling, but you know what? If you were a voter in New Hampshire and Iowa, Jack just didn't connect.

Kondracke: Jeff, did you—

Jeff Kemp [off mike]: Mort, if you've covered all of your questions, I was curious if you had one about turning to the future. Which of the American idea principles that Jack campaigned for and championed make the most sense today and how would you guys frame them for going forward? Is that a topic you might—

—

Kondracke: That is where I was going to finish up.

Jeff: I'll let you restate it in your own time but I was just curious—

Lott: Maybe it's because of disorganization, but I sense there is a Kemp renaissance underway. I think there are a lot of, when I look at what's happening in Washington now and the paralysis, without being critical of any individual, because I know how tough it is to be in those leadership slots, I see the next generation, a lot of people that would be very attractive to the Kemp mold. And I am talking about John [R.] Thune and John [A.] Barrasso [III] and Sen. [Roy D.] Blunt and Kevin—

[interruption: TV light explodes]

Lott: —McCarthy in the House of Representatives. I think there's a whole, and you talked about Paul [D.] Ryan. But I think there's a whole number of them, House and Senate Republicans, who I see a lot of Kemp-type potential in them, and I think that their approach to

leadership when their turn comes will be very different from what you see now.

Kondracke: What of the themes that Jack Kemp enunciated are resonant today and should be resonant today in the Republican Party?

Lott: The optimism and the power of ideas. I know that there's a discussion going on now. I've argued for years with House members, "Don't wait till you have a party nominee." We didn't wait when Reagan was running. We had some ideas that we conveyed to him, he took those ideas, adopted, made them his own, improved on them. I think they ought to have a positive message and [be] developing ideas right now so that the Republican nominee can take advantage of them rather than waiting all the way until September to develop a positive message. I also think, this is a personal thing, I'm getting on my own soapbox here, but just to be against the president, Obama, is not enough. I guarantee Kemp would say that's not enough. You can't run against somebody unless you're running for something. And I think there is a generation that's beginning to stir that and want to do that, and I think it's needed, not only for their political benefit, but for the good of our country. I'm not happy as an American right now with the way I see the legislative process or the political leadership working, across the board.

Livingston: You used a word that's been abandoned, process. Jack believed in the power of debate, the power of ideas and the power of persuasion, but he was willing to work through the process, and the process is broken right now.

Mack: I think that the message that Jack expressed all through his career, that President Reagan campaigned on, and his philosophy of government worked then and it would work now. Yes, there are some things that are different, but the ideas that they came out with they were able to communicate that they would change the lives of all Americans. And I think that again one of Jack's strengths was because he came from a district in Buffalo where he saw what it was like for people to have lost their jobs, and to see industries decaying and no opportunity. Our message, and Jack was always after me for the budget issue, he was always talking about cutting too much, and I think we have failed to see the other side of the equation here. Yes, we need to control spending, but we've got to do something on the tax side to stimulate growth. Growth will work. If Jack were here today I'll guarantee you that he'd be talking about growth, growth, growth. What do you have to do? Lower capital gains tax rates, lower marginal rates, but we have got to find a way to say that to people that they can understand their lives are going to improve as a result of doing that.

Kondracke: Would American politics be as polarized as it is right now if Jack Kemp were around?

Livingston: It takes two people to unpolarize them, and I'm not sure we have people on either side that are willing to go back to the more positive era of debating and then going out for a drink afterwards or at least getting to be social. Not that Jack went out for a drink with anybody, but he wasn't opposed to being social and getting along with people regardless of their temperament or their philosophical persuasions. The whole era needs to be transformed, and I think

leaders of both parties today have to recognize that, and if we don't get sufficient recognition so that we start working like we did together, and to come together under the Constitution, then we need new leadership.

Mack: The other thought that I had is, I don't know about you all when you watch these debates, these presidential debates that are underway, and a question will come up, "What is your plan for creating jobs?" My reaction is pretty much most of those guys look like a deer in a headlight. They know there are some words they should say, but I don't think they have a clue about how to do it, and somebody better get a clue between now and November.

Lott: I don't know how much impact he'd have, but he would be expounding passionately against the atmosphere that we see now. And maybe you two gentlemen, you're a journalist and historians in a way too, I don't know who coined the phrase "a rising tide lifts all boats." I will forever associate it with Jack Kemp.

Hunt: It was actually John F. Kennedy, but I think nobody picked it up more than Jack Kemp. I think you all describe him. He was about can-do optimism, he was about hope, he was about opportunity, he was about civility, while being passionate. I know we're not supposed to talk about Saint Jack here, but I really believe--I don't know how long it's going to take us to get through what we're going through now--I really believe my grandchildren some day will read about Jack Kemp and he will be an important figure, because he did personify things that not many people are able to personify, and he did it in such an extraordinary way, his shortcomings and all.

Barnes: You know Mort, there are things he couldn't change. He couldn't change the sorting out of voters so you have an ideologically conservative party and an ideologically liberal party. That was going to happen anyway. But I think Senator Mack had the right idea. You know what Jack Kemp had was one big idea. I think Ronald Reagan had one big idea. More than the economy, it was about winning the Cold War. That was his big idea. Jack had economic growth was his big idea. It was good for everybody in America, it was good for everybody in the world. And I love Paul Ryan, but he has many ideas and growth is only one of them, and he's the Budget Committee chairman and that's all about doing something about entitlements and it's not about growth, and he has to go out of his way, Paul Ryan does, to give speeches about economic growth because they don't come naturally to the Budget Committee chairman. Jack Kemp didn't have that problem. He could give speeches about that every day, and did, but that empowers you when you have this one big idea that really drives you

Mack: But also it gave people a sense of hope. There was a belief that was communicated that the world will be different if we do as I suggest. There will be jobs created.

Kondracke: This is the last question. On that point I want to see if you all agree with what Allan Ryskind said this morning, that "between Reagan and Kemp they changed the world. That if it hadn't been for Jack Kemp, Reagan might not have been a supply-sider. If the economy might not have grown, the defense budget might not have been increased to the extent that it did, the Soviet Union might not

have fallen when it did, and that between Kemp and Reagan, history got made.”

Lott: Absolutely. No question about it.

Barnes: He was right on both counts.

Kondracke: Anybody want to expound on that?

[chatter]

Kondracke: Thank you very much. This has been a wonderful day.

[end of interview]