EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH CURRAN RACLIN

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Interviewer

University of Virginia

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TRANSCRIPT

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November 10, 2009

Young: This is November 10th, and an interview with Curran Raclin in Cambridge. Curran, do you want to begin at the beginning or in the middle or at the end and go back?

Raclin: I think the beginning is probably relative, because I wasn't entirely aware of the very beginning until the middle. The beginning, as I'm aware of it, was—I remember my parents' wedding, so I think that's probably the beginning.

Young: So you were a ring bearer.

Raclin: I was a ring bearer. I was a nervous ring bearer. I remember having the pillow that the ring was on. It had some embroidered flowers on it, and I remember ripping them all off during the course of the wedding, just in nerves, in terms of twisting them until they popped off. The parents' wedding is a nerve-wracking thing for a nine-year-old. I do have memories before the wedding, that I know distinctly are before the wedding. I'm sure that I have others, but with it being so long ago and my being so young, it's hard to differentiate exact times.

I have no recollection of a buildup into the role that Ted [Kennedy] played in my life. That role changed, as I would hope any parent's role changes in a child as they go from age nine to 20. It wasn't a buildup in terms of a stepparent's role. It wasn't that he—for me, he didn't slowly test the waters a little and say, "OK, now I'm going to do this and now I'm going to do this." It was like, there he was.

If there was a textbook for an ideal stepparent, he could write it. He was completely fair, he deferred to Mom when need be, and fortunately for me, overruled her on occasion, but at no point did he ever try to supplant my father. This is not something he would do. I think that's an important thing, especially at that age. There's a lot going on in an eight-year-old, nine-year-old, ten-year-old's head, and that was never an issue.

Young: He was much older than your father too.

Raclin: He was much older than my father, yes.

Young: So he's almost uncle.

Raclin: Right. I have a very good relationship with my mother's father, my grandfather, now, and he's about his age. It's closer. He's not that old, but closer to my grandfather's age than my father's age.

Young: Yes.

Raclin: Physically he was. Mentally, he was much younger, there's no doubt about that. He always had time. That's something I remember through going to college. I go to college, and it changes because I'm not home so much to see it firsthand. There was always time. You read his book, you hear stories, and you know he worked constantly. That's true, but he was home to have dinner almost every night, months in a row.

Young: And you're talking about from your—

Raclin: From when I was a child.

Young: From the first time—

Raclin: From the first time. I mean, he was at dinner—and I didn't realize this at the time because I went to bed shortly thereafter—but then he would go to his study, to his office, and work for two more hours. But he would always take time out to spend time with the family. He and I would play cards every night for an hour. I mean just the two of us would play cards. He'd play chess with my sister. He always had time for—it was just that kind of a thing. It was just oh, tonight I'm going to play cards with Ted. Every night; there was never a question. It's not like he didn't have other things to do, but he always took time at night to play, just to spend a little time, which was very nice.

Young: Even the earliest. Your mother has said even before, when they were dating, and he would come over for a dinner.

Raclin: Absolutely. See, when last we talked about those fuzzy memories, I have seen pictures and I remember it happening. You look at the date and it's before they were married. I don't remember it being before they were married, but I remember that happening. So it's that kind of thing.

Young: So it was the same after.

Raclin: It was the same thing.

Young: I see.

Raclin: It never changed. The games changed and the conversations changed, but the time.…

Young: You didn't start out with chess, did you?

Raclin: No. And it was just a lot of fun. It goes from card games to conversations about world policy, but he always had time. We'd have friends over for dinner and he wanted to include everyone, he made a point. When you have the kind of authority he does, he can literally stop a

conversation and go, "OK, Curran, what do you think?" And all of a sudden you're sitting there with ten people you've never met, about to make a statement of opinion, and you're 14 years old. It was like, I don't know what I think. I don't think my opinion is very important, to be honest. But it was just that it didn't matter. It didn't really matter if you had no opinion. He just wanted you to have a chance to talk, and he always made time for everybody.

Young: Would this be at the dinner table?

Raclin: At the dinner table and groups, and more recently, I can think of when we're sitting on the porch just having little hors d'oeuvres before dinner. People are sitting. We're in conversation in the living room, just talking in front of the fire. It's always just that conversation. He always makes an effort to include everyone, to have conversation topics. He'd change the conversation for Caroline. When Caroline was too young to be interested in politics and things like that, he would change the topic to something she might be interested in, so that she could feel like she participated. That's just the kind of person he is.

There are differences between his professional life and his personal life, in terms of the way he acted, of course, with everyone, but there are bridges—and this you know—that really caring about everyone, regardless of the situation. Whether you had the Prime Minister or the nine-year-old kid at the table, it didn't matter. He wanted to hear what you had to say. I think that was one of those things that not everyone has, because he actually cared. He wasn't doing it just to—there's no reason to patronize a nine-year-old kid; there's nothing in it for you. He really, genuinely cared. He really wanted you to feel good.

Young: Yes, and he wanted to get to know you through your talking.

Raclin: He wanted you to feel good about yourself.

Young: Yes, I think that's also… Have you heard any of the stories about when he was a child at the dinner table?

Raclin: I have. And reading the book and hearing the stories, you can see where some of these things might come from.

Young: When he was very young and the family was large, he couldn't sit at the table.

Raclin: I remember hearing about that quite a bit as I was growing up too. If you would give him a hard time, he would go, "Would you like to sit at the small table?" But I think that was that inclusiveness. There are two ways to respond to some of the things, some of the tragedies he's had to endure, but some of the small things, like being forced to sit at the kids' table, there are two ways to go with that, and he seems to go—he's always endured, he's always persevered, he's always come back. He's not going to take this as a reason to give in, to be upset. He's going to say, "OK, when I have a table, no one's sitting at the small table. We're going to bring everyone in." That says a lot about him.

Young: Did you ever go on camping trips or outings with him?

Raclin: I don't think I did the overnight thing. I'm sure I came up with an excuse on one or two and I couldn't. But we did the outing thing; specifically I remember doing the Civil War ones. I know I've heard other people's stories—I think he might have at one point, where in hindsight it was a much better experience than it was when we were doing it.

Young: Well, tell me about it. As it was when you were doing it.

Raclin: We're there with Shelby Foote, of course, the Civil War historian, so he knows—at that age, I'm 12, I think. I have no idea who this man is. He's just this old man with a thick accent, who's talking about the Civil War. I hear that he knows what he's talking about, but that means nothing to me. Now I'm looking back thinking, *I can't believe I got a tour from Shelby Foote*. But at the time it was irrelevant; you were with a bunch of cousins that I still—

Young: Who all was with you?

Raclin: I know Kathleen's [Kennedy Townsend] kids were there. I think the [Robert] Penders might have been there. There was an assortment of one person from each of the families.

Young: So it was a large group.

Raclin: It was a large group, spread out across the—when you think about the Kennedy family on the whole, the reason why it's so big is because on a grandparent level, the generations have stayed together. It's not—if you look at my family structure, I have a big family. I've got four parents and some of them have multiple parents, so I have a lot of grandparents. This is the only family where the grandparents, those families still get together. So Ted's family gets together with Eunice's [Kennedy Shriver] family, who gets together with Jean's [Kennedy Smith] family. That doesn't happen in a lot of places. Usually it's that, on occasion, you see that one great-grand—my mother's aunt, her kids, I haven't seen in ten years. I see my mother's aunt, but I haven't seen her kids in ten years. But I see Eunice's kids all the time and I see Aunt Jean's kids all the time, so I think that's why the family is so big, because that generation has stayed together, which I think is an interesting thing.

But in any event, there are a lot of people and you're on a bus. You're with people that you know you're related to, but you don't know particularly well. Everyone's got different last names anyway, so you're not even really sure what the association is.

Young: Strangers. You were a stranger.

Raclin: Oh, absolutely.

Young: But did they know each other?

Raclin: To some extent, but at that point I'm not—when you're 11 or 12, I've kind of made inroads. I have some friends. I've been to Hyannis for a couple of summers, so they know. The other advantage is, if you come into the Kennedy family with a name other than one of the six names that's repeated 30 times in the family, you have a distinct advantage of getting remembered. Curran, fortunately, is unique. My sister Caroline [Raclin] is not as fortunate. I'm

the only Curran, so I have that advantage. I think that makes it a little easier to remember. So not a total stranger, but it's still a little. . .

I don't see these people. I see them for two weeks a year, so it's that weird thing. It's like a school trip. It's just the same thing that goes with a school trip. You've got the tour, and when is lunch, and where's the bathroom? It's the same kind of hot thing, but looking back on it, you see it's part of this bigger picture. We did it a couple of times and you learned a lot, and it was kind of a fun thing, looking back on it. I've seen the pictures and I can't remember—I can't believe I was that skinny to begin with, but you look back at the pictures and it's fun just to remember that whole thing. I think what it meant, that pulled it together, the reason he did this was to continue this kind of thing, which I think is neat too.

Young: Was he asking any questions himself? Was he lecturing you? Was he conversing for the benefit of all concerned?

Raclin: Absolutely.

Young: Was he quizzing Shelby Foote, testing his knowledge?

Raclin: Well, this is what he does. He will quiz you on things that don't necessarily exist. It's a trick quiz that he does. I can talk about that later, but he does that. He will ask questions of everyone. The conversation will never end as long as he's involved in some fashion. Ask questions. He would quiz later saying, "Curran, what did you think about this?" It was, "So where was the battle?" You have to know, because you have to listen, this kind of thing. And then he does the typical thing—and I can hear him doing it now, it always will make me laugh—you make one little mistake and he goes, "Well, if you're not going to listen, I don't know why we're going to come out on the bus. You've just got to pay attention." You know, just totally has to give everyone a hard time, in a completely joking manner. It's 95 degrees and I'm hungry. But no, he'd tell Shelby, give them the lecture.

My favorite part about the whole thing though is when you get the park rangers, the tour guides for the park that were there, to walk up and you've got Shelby Foote and Ted Kennedy coming off this bus. It was like these park rangers have died and gone to heaven. Oh, my God, that's Ted Kennedy! Oh, my God, Shelby Foote! It's not often that Ted is the second most famous person to come off the bus, but for them Shelby Foote absolutely was. That's Mr. Foote. Oh, my God. It's funny.

But no, he absolutely kept everything going. He doesn't just keep the conversation going, he keeps it lively. He always keeps an upbeat tempo.

Young: Well, he's enjoying it too.

Raclin: Every second of it, always.

Young: So, how long would these last? Was this one where you went to Virginia? Did you go to Richmond?

Raclin: I forget which one I did. I remember Antietam and I think I did one overnight one. I know I did one overnight one at some point, because some people from Ethel's [Kennedy Skakel] family were there. I remember, because I had never met any of the Skakels before, and I did that one time. I think Ted actually talks about that in his book, where it was the night where he decided to go to—he didn't want to camp, so we went to a hotel. I think that was that night actually, but I don't remember. I know we went to Antietam one time. It was 15 years ago, so I forget exactly where it was, but it was two or three different times. I think I went to—I just forget exactly where it was, unfortunately. I know Antietam. I remember Antietam very clearly. That might have been the first one I did.

Young: So that's the Civil War.

Raclin: Right. We did the Civil War ones with Shelby Foote. The other ones that weren't related to the Civil War, I don't know whether the sleepover one was the Civil War or not, if that was just the camping one. My memory is not so great.

Young: But was that up in Massachusetts?

Raclin: It might have been up here, yes. That must have been what it was.

Young: They went to western Massachusetts for some.

Raclin: Yes, it might have been out to western Mass, up here. I feel bad; it was just so—my memory is not so great from that long ago.

Young: Well, it wasn't all that much fun.

Raclin: I'm just trying to block out the memory.

Young: Yes.

Raclin: No, unfortunately, I don't remember too much about that one camping thing. I do remember the Civil War ones though.

Young: Did you sail with him?

Raclin: He always gave me a hard time for the sailing thing. I get so seasick. I always tried it and it always ended up poorly for me. I could never really get into it, and he'd always try to sell me on it. "It's like glass out there, it's just like glass. There's no wind, we're going to be sitting there. It's going to be great." And it never ended up well. I've tried every concoction of any seasickness medicine, and the bracelets and the patches, and it just never worked out well. When we did the video for the convention, I was on the boat for that, and that was probably the only time in the last three or four years that I got on a boat, just because it's—I was miserable. I always wanted to and I always felt bad about it, but I could just never—I figured that it would be more fun for everybody if I was not getting sick on the boat, so I could never bring myself to do it.

Young: A moment ago you said you'd come back to the way he talked or the way he teased.

Raclin: In general, he always kept a sense of humor about everything, but I think I was talking about how he balanced out my mother, whom I adore. There has never been a more perfect pairing of people in the history of the world. It's kind of weird, because you look at this and it's just amazing. It's this great balance of everything. I always knew that when Mom was going to act like a mother and give me a hard time about whatever it was—my hair was too long, my clothes weren't great, the things that every mother is required by law to do—he was always on my side for everything.

I remember coming home from school once. I think I flew to [Washington] D.C., just for a couple of days, maybe four of five days, for something. And I walked in right about dinnertime, and we're going to sit down to dinner and my mom goes, "You need to get a haircut. Are you going let your hair grow out? You look ridiculous. And the clothes, what is going on?" I just remember he goes, "Hey, hey, let's just let him eat dinner and then we'll bite his head off afterwards, OK?" And I'm like, thank you. That was my little defense attorney; I appreciate that. He was always an advocate.

Mom had told me this story too about one point where he just—I think I was much younger and my bedtime was 8:00, and I was arguing for it to be 9:00. He just told Mom, "You know what? Bedtime is going to be 9:00." But it never ended. He was always supportive. If you ever had any questions or any trouble, whatever it was, you always go to Ted first because he's the person to go to. He could talk to Mom in a way that no one else could. He could—he just had a way with words in general, but he had a way of delivering.

Young: Did he give you any counsel?

Raclin: Always.

Young: Or advice?

Raclin: Like I say, I have four parents and they all give me advice. I go to my father for advice, as a father/son thing as well. I think it's good to have that relationship. Ted and I had that too. But with Ted, unlike a lot of people, it wasn't like take-or-leave-it advice, it wasn't take-it advice. It wasn't like, here's what I think you should do. It was like, "This is what you're going to do," and it wasn't said in a bad way and it wasn't said like he was saying, I'm telling you what to do and you're going to do it. It was like, "I know what I'm talking about and you should trust me." And you did. Whatever he suggested you do, you did. Whenever he said, "You really should do this." OK. And it wasn't like you felt like you had to. It was like you wanted to because he knows what he's talking about. So, whenever I had trouble or issues or something less than perfect, when I'd talk to him he'd say, "All right, this is what you're going to do," and I'd say OK. There was never a doubt, there was never an argument, but not because I didn't feel like I could argue with him.

Young: Would this be when you were down or whether you didn't know what to do, whether to do this, or in general?

Raclin: Just in general, in any situation. When he'd give you advice, it was always—especially when I was younger; as I got older, it became a little different—but when I was younger it was

always interesting to me how someone so much older than I could provide me advice that was so applicable to me.

Young: Yes.

Raclin: I'm like, how do you know what I'm talking about? How can you give me, because there's a generation gap? Now, we're talking about a man who refers to anything using electricity as "that machine," so there's a generation gap here. And yet, whenever he gave advice, it was spot on. Like oh, that really would work, that's perfect, that's exactly what I should say. How did he know that? How does he know what I should tell my high school teacher? You know what I mean?

Young: Yes.

Raclin: He hasn't talked to a high school teacher in 45 years. It was always amazing, but he always knew the right thing to say. He knew what to do.

Young: He was a very observant person, and a very good judge of people.

Raclin: Absolutely.

Young: I've heard him in interaction over the phone for quite a while, with Teddy's [Edward Kennedy, Jr.] son, and that can go way into the dinner hour sometimes, but it's kept up.

Raclin: Absolutely.

Young: Is that just a gift of his or is it something you think he learned?

Raclin: I don't think you can learn what—part of it's learning the nuances and everything, but he's got a gift. I don't think there's a question about that. He definitely has—I mean, he just knew. He has experience in knowing how to handle situations and how to talk and what to say, and just the ability to speak and have conversations on whatever the situation is, but knowing how to apply that experience is an entirely different thing, I think. So it's half and half, at least. Without one, you couldn't do the other, I suppose, but he could make do without the experience, even if he had just the gift. He really had something. He could talk to you about things he'd never—he didn't know about, intelligently. That's a gift. He could talk to you about things he didn't know, because it was my—

Young: Give an example.

Raclin: Well, like relationships that I have with people, and saying here's a situation I've got going on with this friend of mine. What do I tell this guy in this situation? He goes, "Oh, well, talk about this." And I'm thinking, *Why didn't I think of that?* Wait a second, I'm 22; I'm in college. This guy's an idiot and I live with him now. How does Ted know what I should tell him? He hasn't been in college for a while. He doesn't remember what it's like to have a roommate, he doesn't know this guy, but he's exactly right. He just knew. So I think that he had that gift for understanding. He knew me very well, and I think that was a part of it. I think that was a big part of it, but it's definitely a gift.

Young: You said earlier that the relationship between Ted and your mother was extraordinary, unique maybe.

Raclin: Yes.

Young: I'd like you to talk a little bit more about that. Were they—it looks to me, and not a few other people have noticed, that it's a romance of the century. It was that romantic relationship. There's much more to it than that, didn't you think?

Raclin: There is. I think why it's unique is because there are so many pieces to their relationship, and everyone else who has been in a relationship has one or some of those pieces, hopefully, at least one of those pieces, and they had all of them. That's why it's unique. They have the romance, and that's an important piece, but that's a bigger piece of it too. You can break that down more. There is an age difference there, but that was part of it. Ted's younger than his age, do you know what I mean? He was younger than his age. I think that had he been with someone his own age, there would have been issues, so that doesn't work. He needs someone closer to Mom's age. Intellectually, they had to be paired up and they are. In terms of their likes and dislikes, generally, they are. So they have the same kind of—the whole finish each others' sentences and thoughts and know what each other wants kind of thing, that's what it is. But the fact that there was that trust that they had for each other, which was good. I don't necessarily think that that trust came easily to either of them, for their own various reasons, but they had it for each other, I think that's important.

But they weren't just husband and wife and had this incredible romantic relationship, they were best friends. They could just hang out all the time and spend time together for days at a time, alone. For their anniversary, they've gone on a ten-day sail by themselves. That is a recipe for divorce for most people. Sailing alone for ten days when the main boom breaks, when the lightning hits your boat. That could be a marriage ender.

Young: And especially that boat.

Raclin: That boat. That's when you see people at their worst, and it wasn't. It's just, all they do is tease each other about how they reacted, and that's it. That takes a special kind of thing, and I don't know that either of them would have reacted that way with someone else. I think it was—you talk about chemistry, and we overuse the term. This was that. It took a very specific pairing to get the reaction that you get out of both of them. I think that's why it's so special. And I think that Ted's treatment of Caroline and me is a testament to that.

When you have kids, your default is to take care of them. You have to make a decision to leave them. Our parents took care of us. Even though they're divorced, they took care of us. I have a relationship with my father. But Ted did not have to take care of us. He had to make a decision to do that, and he did beyond anything that he should have been responsible for. I think that's a testament to that. There's no reason he had to do anything for that; that's a decision. When you have your own kids, you're responsible for them, that's your responsibility, but we weren't his kids. I was seven or eight years old; Caroline was four or five, six. That's a whole other package. Not that I wasn't lovely at that age, but it's still a lot of responsibility. I think that taking on that responsibility and this burden, which is essentially what—we're not good conversation pieces, so

that's what we are at five and six years old, eight and nine years old. It is a big testament to his love for Mom and his love for Caroline and me.

Young: Don't you think he's just interested in kids?

Raclin: I think so, in general, because he wants people—he does love kids, but he wants to be happy. I think that he played a good role of the spoiling uncle, because he would do that. He's the person giving candy when you're not supposed to have candy, you know what I mean? That's what he wants to do, because he really just wants to have a good time. He just wants to have fun. I think that's definitely a part of it. I think it goes—he enjoys it though.

Young: He enjoys it because he can be a kid himself. Don't you think?

Raclin: Absolutely.

Young: He can talk the talk.

Raclin: Exactly. No, it's absolutely true. One of my very clear memories of when I was younger, when I was—I don't really know how old I was, 12, 13, 14. We were in our yard, in our house in McLean, in Virginia, and he was teaching me how to run routes in football. I remember this like it was yesterday, like he's sitting up there and he's teaching me how to plant my foot, to square in, and he's throwing me the ball. We were there for hours, multiple times. It's one of those clear memories I have, where he's just taking the time and he's like, "All right, we're going to get this right," and he's explaining to me everything. Obviously, he knows what he's doing when it comes to this. The fundamentals haven't changed since he played; it's the same thing. He's taking the time, but he really enjoyed it. He was giving me a hard time for dropping the ball, he likes the ribbing, but it was like, that was great. That was a lot of fun for everybody, just to have that kind of time.

Young: So you didn't feel intimidated.

Raclin: No, never. Even in tennis. He's not the hyper-competitive person you think he would be, too, when it comes to that kind of thing. When he played tennis with me, or I'd play tennis with myself and my friends, he doesn't have to beat us. When he would teach me tennis, he would just hit the ball back. Every point I lost, I lost because I hit in the net or I hit it out. He never beat me; I lost everything. And he'd say, "All right, let's try it again." He was not out there to win.

Young: No, but he had an advantage over you.

Raclin: Well, he was substantially better. He's much better than I am.

Young: He could have socked it.

Raclin: Exactly, but he just wanted to help, he wanted to teach, that's what he was interested in, that was the win for him, just teaching me to play. He got happier when I got better. So that's all it was, it was let's get a rally going. It's the repetitiveness, and that's all it was. I think that's what really mattered.

Young: My impression is he likes to see people bloom or blossom or get better.

Raclin: When you talk about sports, and this is used a lot in basketball, but when you're talking about sports, the best players are those who make the players around them better. That's why he was so good, because he does that in the Senate, he did that personally. Whatever he was, he wanted the people around him to get better. The credit was really not important to him.

Young: He would bring out the best.

Raclin: In everybody, and it was not about getting the credit. He just wanted people to do well, and that's what was important to him. I think that's the most important lesson that I've taken from him.

Young: But your mother and he were also partners, weren't they, in politics?

Raclin: They were. When you get into the 1994 election and you start getting into that, that's when I think—

Young: Do you remember that well?

Raclin: I remember the '94 election. I don't remember the intricacies, just because I wasn't privy to how that was going, but I remember the election night very well. I remember the whole thing. I remember the lead-up to it and everything. It was stressful and it was Mom—Mom is unbelievably intelligent. If she wants to do something, she'll do it well; that's not an issue. But she enjoyed this, and working with Ted, she enjoyed it more.

Young: She becomes an advisor, a partner.

Raclin: Absolutely. Very valuable in terms of insight in terms of "What do you think of this?"

Young: And a perspective. She has a perspective that he may not.

Raclin: A perspective that he wasn't getting, I think. So that kind of diversity was a good thing.

Young: There are many accounts of how she became evermore a part of his political—

Raclin: Well, she's writing—

Young: That's been evident to me.

Raclin: No, it's very true. It started from just, whether it's how to run an ad campaign in 1994, and then eventually getting into policy and the campaigning and writing speeches and doing everything else, that it became much more. She was definitely the chief advisor for him. At the end, the last several years, she's been with him all the time. It's just how it works out. She knew everybody on the staff and they knew her. I think it was easier for the staff to accept her, because she's not just the wife who is talking, she knows what she's doing. So it's easier for people who have been there for awhile to say OK, because it's not just some dummy who is coming up with

crazy ideas. She actually is very intelligent and knows what she's talking about, and they appeared to have worked, so that probably helps.

Young: Do you have any stories about him?

Raclin: I have a few.

Young: We hear so much about Ted at work and we know Ted at play, at this and that, but not so much about—he tells more stories about others than others tell about him, and I'm trying to fill that out.

Raclin: I don't know how many I could actually be able to tell without conferring with the people who would be implicated in the stories.

Young: Well, if you misspeak, you can take it out. You'll get the transcript and you can—so you can reflect on it.

Raclin: All right, if I can take something out. My favorite story with him involves—the most helpful he was ever to me was when I got in trouble, when I did something foolish in college. But the funniest story I ever had was when my sister did something foolish and got in trouble. That night she was home and she said, "What do you think I should do?" And I said, "What do you think you should do?" And she said, "Well, I guess talk to Ted." I said, "Yes, you talk to Ted before you talk to Mom. Are your crazy?" She said OK. I said, "In the morning, I'll distract Mom and you pull Ted aside." She had gone out with some friends she wasn't supposed to go out with.

It was the night before Easter, going into Easter morning the next morning. We go to my Aunt Ethel's house for the big Easter thing at her house. So the next morning, Caroline talks to Ted and he goes, "All right, I'll talk to your mother. She'll talk to you later but I'll talk to her first. Just don't say anything until she talks to you or I talk to you." So, we're going to the thing and Ted goes, "We're going to take two cars. Mom's going to be late, so Mom's going to come later." So we're in the car going out there and Ted's like, "OK, I talked to her. She's pretty upset, but I've calmed her down mostly. She's a little stressed out because she's late, and she's probably going to get upset with you on the way back, but don't worry about it, it will be OK. Everything's going to be fine. She's going to be upset, but you know your mother, she gets upset. Don't worry about it."

So we do the Easter thing at Aunt Ethel's house and we're heading back to the car and my Mom goes, "Caroline, come with me. Curran, go in the van with Teddy." So Caroline goes with Mom in the car and we get into the van. Ted gets behind the driver's wheel and I lock the door and he goes, "Curran, my boy, there are few places and a few times in your life that you will be happier than you are right now, to be in this car, instead of that one." I said, "Boy, you said it, man." [*laughter*] "Thank you for pointing that out." He goes, "Just remember this. When you think that it's always bad, it's not always bad. You're in the van today." I said thank you.

He was always calming. He was always able to put a spin on things. I got into a little bit of trouble one evening in college, about 2:00 in the morning, and I called the house and explained to my mother the situation and she said, "Well, [*sighs*] here's Teddy." I can't tell you how

relieved I was to hear those—I mean, talking to Mom, I love her but she can be frightening. She's the only person in the world who scares me.

And he said, "All right, what's going on?" And I told him and he said, "OK, sit down, don't move. I'm calling you in six minutes." He called me back in six minutes and said, "All right, here's what you're going to do, this, this, this. Good luck, have a good night. I'm going back to bed." I said thank you. And for some reason, it's just the way he explains things. He's always like, oh, it's going to be all right. You trust him, he's relaxed, that's always the way it is. So every time anything happened, he was always relaxed, he knew what to say. Part of the advantage of that is that you feel like he's got experience. Whatever you're going through, he's been through that and worse.

Young: And worse, but a lot worse.

Raclin: And you can talk to him and he can tell you, "Listen, you're going to come out of this." He's inspirational. I always tell people, don't compare yourself to other people because you'll only end up getting depressed, because you're going to find people that you can't live up to. I follow that advice with everyone except him. But I sit there and think, *Oh, my back hurts today; I don't know if I can do this*. And I think about things that he's done and I think, *Oh, gosh, if he could do that, I've got to shut up and get out of here.* He's so unbelievable, and some things that he's done, it's unreal. Some of the things he's accomplished and some of the personal, physical and mental, pain he's persevered through, that it's just, how can you not think, *If he could do it, I can do it*?

And he's always a friend. He was always somebody you could talk to, which is not always easy for a parent, but also not always easy for someone his age. I'm 18 or 19 years old and he's 70. It's not always easy to have—what do you have in common? It's not always easy to have a conversation, but it was.. . .

Young: Maybe it's easier if you've got a big gap?

Raclin: Yes, and it was just—

Young: You called him a friend.

Raclin: He's a friend and we'd always talk. He could put everyone at ease, whether it's by teasing people and making them smile. That was a gift, and I think that part of the reason that it gets to be difficult is because you get used to that calming feature, and when it's not there, you start thinking, *OK, now what?* because you rely on it too much.

Young: Did you ever, when you were trying to decide what you wanted to be, what you wanted to do, what ever age that those thoughts begin to occur to you, did you ever talk politics with him or ask him about—was that ever an option that interested you?

Raclin: I did. I thought about it a lot. It's still in the back of my head. I don't think I have the makeup for it, but I thought about it a lot. He and I talked about that a lot when I was younger. Originally, when I started school, I had a major in political science. It was something I was

interested in. I finished off a degree in theology, so a little bit of a deviation, but he liked that too actually.

Young: Yes.

Raclin: I do remember, I was with a couple of friends of mine and he was telling us why we should all be Senators, and he was starting to sell it. He goes, "It's great. The pay's not bad, you only work nine months a year, and once you get elected, you don't have to do anything for six years if you don't want to get reelected. It's fantastic. I think you should all be Senators." He's trying to sell it.

Young: It's a six-year job.

Raclin: It's a six-year job. He said you're guaranteed for six years, the pay is not bad, and you only have to work nine months a year. It's fantastic. I talked about it but I just don't—I don't know. It's hard to follow. I mean, how do you—talk about not comparing yourself to other people, but if I do anything else, it's not a direct comparison to me personally. I would never be compared to him, but how do you not compare yourself personally to him? How could you not do that?

Young: Is it more so like that with Ted than with other members of your family?

Raclin: It is to a point. All four of my parents have law degrees. My mother practiced law, my father is in corporate law, my stepmother is now a law professor, but they all were lawyers at some point. My grandfather was the youngest elected judge in U.S. history, so there's something there. There are a couple of people in my family that are like, I can never do that. But it's him, above all of the others, just because he's this towering—you see it everywhere, and I think that that's part of it. And I saw it happen. My great-grandfather did amazing things when he immigrated here, but I didn't watch him rise from a poor immigrant to a successful businessman.

Young: Yes.

Raclin: But I saw Ted come home and work constantly. I saw bills, I saw the news. I was able to watch that. I saw speeches, I saw him win elections. So, because I have seen it, I think that it carries a little bit more weight. Even with my own parents, my father is successful but I don't see it. I'm not there to actually watch what he's doing. So that carries more weight, because I have watched it happen, whether it's personally or on television, just because of the nature of it. But yes, I think it carries a little bit more on that, but if it was going into that role, how could you not? It's a lot.

Young: Well, some people have observed that for his children's generation and his sisters' and brothers' children's generation, it was just—it's something they couldn't—it would be very difficult to achieve what their parents did.

Raclin: Right.

Young: It can be discouraging.

Raclin: How do you start the Special Olympics again? It can be discouraging.

Young: How can you surpass or reach the level of John Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy?

Raclin: How can you—it's hard to reach the President, it's hard to start the Special Olympics again, the Peace Corps again, you know?

Young: Yes.

Raclin: It's just that these are difficult things to do, when it's been done. It's not an easy thing to start again.

Young: Right.

Raclin: So yes, I think it's a huge burden to bear and everyone's got to do their small part. If you want to do whatever work you're doing, I think that's a great thing, but to think that you can live up, it's unreal to think about.

Young: So you have to do something else.

Raclin: You've got to, because that's what you're holding yourself up to. Aside from the Supreme Court, there's not much left to do. So it's just—I think mentally, it's a huge burden, because you feel like you have to do something because of what your last name is. But what else is there to do, because if you do something, it's not enough, and then that gets called out. And if you do nothing, maybe there's not—then it's just pushed by the wayside. Sometimes the safer thing is to feel like I'm not going to do anything, because if I do something and fail, it will get more attention.

Young: But you're not a Kennedy.

Raclin: No, I'm not, and I don't think that, publicly, I would have that same kind of thing, because I'm not. But personally, it's a lot to live up to.

Young: But wouldn't it be hard if you were a Kennedy?

Raclin: I think it would be harder, absolutely. My brothers and sister, I think it's got to be harder for them.

Young: Tell me about your relations with your stepbrothers and stepsister. They had already flown the nest by the time—so it wasn't—

Raclin: No, we didn't grow up together. They were already—Patrick [Kennedy] was in the State House when I came into the family. Teddy junior is actually my confirmation sponsor, so we had a relationship back to that age. Kara [Kennedy Allen], I've always had a little closer relationship with her, just if for no other reason than geographically. She lives in the D.C. area, so I see her way more often, because she's miles away, as opposed to living in Rhode Island or Connecticut. Teddy and I have a fine relationship. He's my brother, but I don't see him very often, just at

certain events. I don't talk to him on very frequent occasions, just being in Connecticut and he's got his family and everything. Patrick is the same thing. I know he's very busy with—

Young: Do you have any close personal relationships with all of the cousins? Do you have your own friends?

Raclin: Probably the person I'm closest to on any side of the family in that family is my Aunt Jean, who might be my favorite person in the world. She's great. I think I was closer with some of the cousins when I was younger, when I went up to Hyannis every summer, and then when I stopped doing that as I got older, I probably drifted apart. That's just the reality of time. It's a big thing, to try and keep in touch with everyone. You see people, everybody knows everybody else, and I see people. Jean's daughter, Amanda Smith, I know. She lives close to my mother, and I know certain people, some people. It's a lot of people, to be sure, but I don't think I have—

Young: And they're all doing different things.

Raclin: Everybody's doing different things, in different parts of the country.

Young: So, was the final chapter in his life very difficult for you?

Raclin: Yes, it was.

Young: Or was it grand in a way, the way he.…

Raclin: Well, it was difficult, because the decline at the very end was so quick. The lead-up to that was not. You'd talk to him and he can't remember a name. Well, names haven't always been his strong suit, so it's hard to remember he's sick. It's hard to accept that there was a problem because he used pronouns with no antecedents, but he's been doing that since I've known him. It was never his strongpoint. So that was a little difficult, but there were times that he had a bad day and it was really difficult. I didn't want to see him like that.

Young: Soon after the diagnosis, though, he really started doing a lot of work on this book, on *True Compass*.

Raclin: Yes.

Young: That became one of his priority projects.

Raclin: Well, the man's got dedication. Except for health care, I think he accomplished everything he wanted to do. I mean, everything he did. But yes, I'm really glad that he finished the book. I wish he had been able to see it, but I'm really glad he finished it.

Young: So I meant up to that time, here he is dying, in effect. He's not giving up, he's got at least two things he wants to do.

Raclin: He definitely was keeping busy. He was at the house, but he's making calls, he's doing work, he's got the videoconference set up, so committee meetings by videoconference, this giant camera in the room. His work ethic is ridiculous. I really don't understand how he could work so

much, take so much time for family, and still sleep. I don't know where he got the hours. It doesn't make any sense to me.

It was hard, just because you're talking about a guy who doesn't complain ever and never shows pain. Just by watching him walk, you could know he has pain, his back is a mess. To see him struggle, it must have been really something. So I think that was difficult.

Young: Yes, I'm sure. Well, I really wasn't referring to the period of sudden decline.

Raclin: No, I know, just in general. But I'm glad that he was able to do what he wanted to do, which is the important thing. He certainly put a lot of time into it.

Young: The oral history is going to have a very long shelf life, in perpetuity, in fact, and if you think about the next generation, the generation after you, people who have not had a chance to know him personally, but they will listen to people talking about him and get a sense, and they'll listen to him talk in the oral history. He gave many hours to this. So, what would be your message to people way down the pipe, from your own experience, about what kind of man he was or what he meant to you or how he touched your life?

Raclin: That's a tough thing to answer.

Young: What could they learn? What did you learn from him that they might be able to learn through you? Does that make it easier?

Raclin: I think the important thing, or maybe there are a few things, because there are a lot of things you see and hear about him, both good and bad, and I don't think that either gives you a necessarily accurate portrayal of him. I think there are some things that you hear that are positive, that seem unrealistic, and they're not. When you hear certain things about his dedication or his perseverance, it seems superhuman, that he could take onto his shoulders his entire family, and just keep taking more, and it's not. He did. I've seen, I've met, I've talked to, I've spent time with the family that relies on him, and they all absolutely do. They all look to him as a father. He just wants to give, that's all it is. He just wants to give of himself, and professionally, he does that in the Senate. He does that with his social justice and his health care, supporting immigrants, the poor, that's what he does there, just giving what he can give, in the Senate.

Personally, it's to those around him. It's to his family. I guess the one thing you can't get over is—and you don't believe it until you actually see it yourself, and it's unfortunate because I didn't even believe it until I saw it myself—is that everybody has a Ted Kennedy story, where he did something for them individually, to the point of almost absurdity. I can't tell you how many people I've met at random events. Last week, I was in Washington for a UN [United Nations] event, and this random person says, "Oh, he wrote me a letter when my mother died." What? "Oh, yes, he sent me a card when my brother died." These are just random people, they just guessed because they are supporters of refugee reform. Everyone has something, he wrote me a letter or he gave me a call. It's unreal.

No one does that; that's not the norm. People will call certain people, but he called everyone, and he really cared. He didn't do it because he had to. He could not have made those calls and gotten

reelected in 2000, with 80 percent of the vote or whatever it was. It was not a make or break. He did not do this to win. He did it because he cares. And he has this genuine concern for people, and that's all it is. I think that it's important to see that he does not tell people about those, because he never cared about the credit.

Young: He's not seeking credit.

Raclin: It's not about the credit; it's not about the glory. It's just about doing the right thing to help other people, and the rest will work itself out. That's really what it was. He didn't care about other people knowing, that's not why he did these things. You know how many things he did that were never—the press wasn't invited or they didn't tell anybody, because he didn't want people to know. Meeting with wounded veterans or whatever it was, he doesn't want the press there because it's uncomfortable for the vets. He doesn't care about a photo opportunity. He's gotten his picture taken a hundred times, he doesn't care about that. So I think that's the important thing to care about, he was not about the credit or about getting press. He was all about just doing what he felt was the right thing to do.

Young: Helping people.

Raclin: Helping people the way he thought was best to help, and helping individuals.

Young: None of this is in the legislative record.

Raclin: Because you can't legislate individuals. You can't say, "We're passing SR-1001 to help Bill, because his dad couldn't get insurance." You know? There are no bills like that. That's constituent care, but that's him taking care of everyone he can, and that's really important.

Young: And it's not just for people in Massachusetts.

Raclin: No, it's everywhere. It's just whatever he can do to help. That was the right thing to do and he wasn't going to limit himself. He did the broad scheme in the Senate. He knew that on broad strokes, he could help large groups—minimum wage laws, for example. He could help large groups of people, but specifically, he knew he could do other things for individuals, and he probably only would wish that he could help more, but physically, you run out of time. But that's really what he did, and that's the important thing about it; all he did was give of himself.

I will tell you a story though. I thought of this just now because I was talking about giving. When I was in high school, I went to the Senate almost every day during the summer, and I loved it. I could just watch the Senate in session all day. But I used to walk around the Capitol sometimes too, and I used to go down and get lunch with him on occasion. One time he said, "Curran, come on. I'm going to give you a tour." I said OK. So we go around the Capitol and he starts giving me a tour of the Capitol.

The man knows more history than any tour guide. He has more knowledge. He's forgotten more than I will ever know. So pretty soon, we've got other people noticing that Ted Kennedy is walking around the Capitol talking, so they start following. By the end of the 30 minutes we're walking around, we've got 30 people following us. He's giving a tour to everyone, answering questions. I've taken a picture of him and everyone, but it's hilarious to watch him walk around

the Capitol, pointing up at the paintings, talking about them, the walls, with this entire tour group behind him. You'd have security, going places you normally don't go. They'd go, "Oh, Senator, sure come on in," you know, a little restricted access. But he loved that, there's nothing that made him happier.

He had patience, I can tell you. He got stopped in the airport for his photograph, whatever it was, thousands of times. Multiple times, every time he used to go to the airport. I've taken more pictures of him with every model of camera, with more strangers, than any other person in life. My uncle is a photographer, and I've taken more pictures than he has. It's ridiculous. He always said, "Curran knows how to work that machine. Curran, come take this picture." So I'd always take the picture. He never got tired, "Sure, we've got time." Whatever it was, he would say, "Of course we've got time." He's never going to say no; he's just like, "No, we've got time, come on. Come over here, you take the picture. Curran, take the picture, you come over here too." He always wanted to get other people.

Young: He wanted you to get in the picture.

Raclin: Exactly, everybody come in. He was like, "Give me a pen, I'll sign something." He always wanted to give something else. He knew what it meant. Somebody came up to him in the airport once, this little old lady goes, "Has anyone ever told you that you look like Ted Kennedy?" And he said, "Yes, I've heard that before." But no, he really just enjoyed it, like he really—it made him happy. He didn't even want the thanks. That wasn't why he was doing it. He felt it was his duty to help other people. It was his responsibility to help other people, because he felt he had been so fortunate, he was supposed to help other people, and he liked it. He did it because he felt it was his duty, but he liked it.

Young: Well, you used a word a minute ago that I think is telling. You said it gave him joy to do this. It made him happy. It made him feel that he was doing something for people.

Raclin: Right.

Young: Because he was. There are a number of commentaries on him that picture him as a person who is driven, almost to the limit of endurance, sort of in an effort to ban some demons or for some kind of redemption, or some kind of compulsion. Did you see that in him at all?

Raclin: No, I don't. I can't speak to whether that was it, but I never saw that. It really didn't seem like he felt like he was trying to right wrongs, or he was trying to redeem anything. That's never an implication. It was always just he felt like—I don't think he felt that he could ever make up for the mistakes he'd made, so I don't think that he was trying. I don't think he was going to forgive himself. I don't want to speculate on that, but I really don't think that's what drove him. I think what drove him was that he felt that, as I said before, it was his duty to help other people. And I think if he hadn't made mistakes, these well-documented mistakes in the past, he would be exactly the same in that aspect. He would still be that same kind of driven-to-help-other-people kind of person.

Young: But it was not just duty in the Calvinist sense.

Raclin: No, I don't think so. He felt he should, but it pleased him. He enjoyed it.

Young: That's what I mean, the joy.

Raclin: Exactly, it made him happy, but he felt like—

Young: There was fulfillment.

Raclin: Exactly, but it wasn't even—just helping people. If someone was grumpy and he helped them and they were still upset but their lives have been improved, that would make him happy. He wasn't looking for a thank you. He wasn't looking for a favor back. I think he got happiness out of it, but he also felt that he owed it to society, to people, to help them, because he had been fortunate growing up as well, and he knew it. He was spoiled as a child, as I certainly was, but I think that he felt that he had to make up for that, and maybe if there is any kind of redeeming for that, it might have been in that sense. He said, "Well, I've been very fortunate, but not everyone has been. I need to help them." So I think that's part of it.

Young: Yes. Is that it?

Raclin: I think so.

Young: It's up to you.

Raclin: I can't think of anything offhand right now anyway. It's a lot.

Young: OK. I'll turn this off.

Raclin: Thank you for the opportunity.