



## EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

### INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT BATES

May 8, 2007  
Friendship, Maryland

#### **Interviewer**

Paul Martin

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TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT BATES

May 8, 2007

**Martin:** This is Paul Martin. I'm here with Mr. Robert Bates, who was a staffer for Senator Kennedy from 1969 to 1977. We're at his beautiful home in Friendship, Maryland. Why don't we start with how you started working for Senator Kennedy?

**Bates:** Paul, I came to work for Senator Kennedy as a result of being a fellow in the American Political Science Association Fellowship Program. At the time, I was an employee at the Office of Economic Opportunity, so I was selected from, and nominated by, the agency to be a fellow. I actually started with the Senator on the second day of January of 1969. Interestingly, that was the day that he was elected Whip, and it was high excitement and enthusiasm. My first day in the Senate was his first day as Whip. At that time, the plan was that federal employees would come to the Hill and work in the Senate for six months, then work in the House for six months. I started in the Senate with Ted Kennedy, and when the six months were up, I wanted to stay in the Senate.

So I made arrangements with Dick Cheney, who was a fellow in the same class. He was working on the House side for Congressman Bill Steiger from Wisconsin. He wanted to stay on the House side. I wanted to stay on the Senate side. So on paper we switched, but actually we both stayed where we were. That has made for a lot of fun since he has become who he is. In the few instances that I've run into him, he has talked about his so-called liberal credentials, where there allegedly is a record that shows that he worked for Ted Kennedy back in the 1960s. But of course he did not.

My years on the Senator's staff were just totally exciting, productive, and memorable. I went there at the time when Richard Nixon was President and worked there during those years when Nixon had to leave. It was also the time of the Vietnam War, and also, of course, this was right after the Senator's brother Robert Kennedy had been killed in Los Angeles and right after Dr. Martin Luther King had been killed in Memphis. So when I went there, Kennedy was like—I called him the Great White Hope, because at that point, in January of '69, there began this surge toward his being the new Democratic nominee for President.

**Martin:** For the '72 election?

**Bates:** For the 1972 election, right. That all came to a screeching halt in June of '69 when the Chappaquiddick episode occurred. But nevertheless Kennedy, in those years, continued to be a strong stalwart for all the things that I felt were very important.

**Martin:** Can we talk a little bit about your reception by the rest of the staff when you first started working? You'd mentioned before we started that you had been the first African American professional who worked for his staff. My understanding would be that you weren't the first African American who worked for him, but just the first professional.

**Bates:** I was given to understand that I was the first African American to work for him, period, in the Senate. I don't know what he did at home. But I meant in the Senate. And I was very well received. What I found interesting, of course, is that I wanted to be there, and I interviewed several Senators before I actually interviewed Kennedy's office. I learned how to interview, so that I think one of the things that helped me was having interviewed these other Senators and the fact that he had not hired a black person before. And the timing was such that all of this just fit right in.

The staff was just totally accommodating. I mean everybody was fabulous. I have since learned that the staff that was there in January of '69 had been there in June of '68, and they all had been through the trauma of Robert Kennedy's death. So they were extraordinarily sensitive to the kinds of things that Robert Kennedy was promoting—and, of course, Dr. King. So I think I just became a part of the fabric. I felt very good. The offices at that time were too crowded. We were all stacked on top of each other. I can remember sitting right outside the restroom—it was inside the suite of offices, but it was the restroom the Senator always used. So when people would ask me if I got to see the Senator or if I had a lot—I used to tell them that I was privy to everything that went on, because I sat so close to the john. It was just great. I never felt a need to have to build a relationship. It just fell in place. It was there.

Another interesting thing is, it was very sexist at that time, both in his office and throughout the Senate. So the women who worked there were all secretarial, administrative types, or what we call caseworkers. That's changed dramatically, because since then he's even had a woman Chief of Staff—several women, I think. But I can remember that I was to hire a secretary, who was assumed to be a woman. For me, I felt it was important to hire a black woman secretary. It didn't happen till later. I was initially assigned a person who was already there in the office, and was fine. I mean, she and I worked out terrifically. But I can remember the dynamics of this male-female relationship throughout the office and the extent to which I just went right along with this gender divide, if you will.

**Martin:** And while we're talking about that gender divide, did that change during the time that you were with the Senator?

**Bates:** Not much. Nancy Lyons was the nearest thing to an exception. Nancy was totally a professional and did substantive legislative work. But she was never as fully involved as the men were. That is, she didn't have her own secretary. She always had to go around and try to get her work done by somebody. And she did a lot of it herself—typing I'm talking about primarily. Nancy is a terrific woman and a terrific professional, and she since has gone to law school and is now engaged in her own law practice in Boston. But she was the only woman professional. This is not to say that the women were not effective and very much involved. They were. But there was also a clear demarcation of what was expected of them and what was expected of the men.

**Martin:** And you didn't see this as unique to Kennedy's office? This was the culture of the Senate at the time?

**Bates:** This was the culture of the United States of America at the time. This was a societal culture at the time. So I was sensitive to both the racial and the gender setup.

**Martin:** You said you interviewed with many different Senators and then wound up finally interviewing with Senator Kennedy. Do you remember anything from that interview?

**Bates:** Well, I didn't interview him. I interviewed David Burke, who was the chief of staff. I never saw Teddy during the whole time that I was interviewing. I went in and interviewed David Burke, who was just the most friendly and understanding, and we hit it off right off the bat. I got the job because of David Burke.

**Martin:** What was your portfolio to start with?

**Bates:** That's an interesting question. I don't know. And it's interesting as I think about it. It was never really delineated. I guess I assumed what I was supposed to do, and the office assumed what I was supposed to do.

One of the subjects that I picked up right away and pursued for the whole time I was there—never got any great success of it—was gun control. This was a very important matter for the Senator, both because of what happened to both of his brothers and then in 1968, also Dr. King. It was an unpopular issue. I remember we had two votes on the Senate floor over the years I was there. The first time there was a Senate vote was on a restriction on long guns. We got a total of four votes out of the 100 Senators for that one. And then the next time, which was about a year and a half later, we were doing handguns, and we doubled our output in votes and got eight.

But I felt this was tied also to the crime rate in America, as well as to the number of inner-city murders that were caused particularly by handguns. I think it solidified my place in the office. Nobody else in the office really wanted to do it. Everybody in the office realized it needed to be done, and I was either naïve enough or blind enough or whatever to just jump right into it. I had a great time. I was able to get all kinds of statistics and research information out of the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation]. Milton Eisenhower, the brother of the President, was on the faculty of Johns Hopkins, and I went over and visited him a couple times to get information about the history of guns in this country.

The Senator was always acceptable and ready to go. Of course we both knew what the reaction would be in the Senate. I loved doing it because it was and is a major societal concern.

**Martin:** So he himself was interested in this issue as well.

**Bates:** Oh, my gracious, yes.

**Martin:** So that was the first thing you worked on.

**Bates:** I think that was early on, yes—and because of '68. But I don't think we went to the floor until '70. I don't think it happened until '70.

The big thing that happened with me in '69 was the stadium. The baseball stadium in D.C. [District of Columbia] was named D.C. Stadium up until that time. As you know, this was the end of the LBJ [Lyndon Baines Johnson] Presidency. I want to say Stuart Udall was Secretary of Interior. Make sure I got the right date. But there were two brothers. Morris [Udall] was in Congress, and Stuart was Secretary of Interior. He made arrangements to rename the stadium the RFK [Robert Francis Kennedy] Stadium in 1968, just before he left the administration. Then in the summer of '69, there was a big celebration in the stadium commemorating the new name. So I was thrust into helping to coordinate that celebration with the city.

At that time, Walter Washington was the mayor, the first elected mayor, a black man. We involved the city public schools and the city government in the celebration in the stadium. The Kennedy family was able to attract all kinds of prominent athletes: Sonny Jurgensen from the Redskins; Frank Gifford for the New York Giants, and an Olympic decathlete, whose name I don't remember. Anyway, there were big shots like these. I can remember carrying a \$10,000 check from the office downtown to somebody to get support. And I got to meet Ethel [Kennedy] at this time and her family. So a good part of that first six months, I was engaged in helping to bring this thing off. As I recall, it happened in June of '68.

So it's interesting that you ask, what was my portfolio? I guess my portfolio began to develop out of that. I'm a native Washingtonian. I knew a lot of the people in the city government and the folks in town, so it was easy and natural for me to connect with them. I loved doing it, because there I was working for Ted Kennedy. They were doing this new thing on the stadium, and I was meeting all these people. So I think this established my bona fides both with the office and the Kennedy family, and with the city.

The other thing that happened right about that time—I'm not sure it was that year. It could have started in '69, but certainly by '70. Kennedy wanted to be more connected to the city. One of the things that Carey Parker initiated was to get the Senator to introduce legislation to provide voting representation for the citizens of the city of Washington. Rather than make D.C. a state, we were trying to enact legislation—not amend the Constitution—that would give two representatives in the House and possibly a Senator, one seat in the Senate.

So Kennedy had this great design to bring full citizenship and equality to the citizens of the nation's capital—the city was just totally in love with him. I don't know who suggested it, but I talked to him about his visiting high schools. He probably said to me, "You know, I ought to go out and visit. I'd like to go out to these high schools sometime and talk to kids." So I started doing that. I would go to the high schools one week, and I'd talk to the principal and some other folks and say, "I'd like to see if we could make arrangements for Senator Kennedy to come in and talk to the students at an assembly." Of course they loved it, and everybody said, "Sure, absolutely."

I couldn't schedule a day that he would come, I'd have to tell them at the time when I went to see them that, "I'll have to call you maybe a day before, two days before. And when I call you, I'd really appreciate it if you would not make the announcement of what's going to happen. Just assemble your students in the auditorium." So the very first one that we did, we got there at maybe 9:30 in the morning. The auditorium was full of kids and Kennedy walks in the room. You would have thought you were at a Democratic convention. I mean, the kids jumped up and screamed. At that point, everybody knew him.

**Martin:** Okay, I was going to ask, even at the high school level—

**Bates:** Oh, yes, everybody knew him. I mean, the name—because his brother had just been killed, and because of Dr. King, and because he was pushing this legislation for D.C. representation. So he was almost walking on water. I think that was another thing that solidified my association with him. He saw that as a great political picture, and everybody loves adulation. So that went over very well.

I'm a graduate of Dunbar High School in the city. In 1969 Spiro Agnew, as Vice President, he had made disparaging remarks about blacks and about black students. "Nattering nabobs of negativism" was one of his famous statements. So for the graduation of 1970, we made arrangements for Kennedy to be the speaker at Dunbar's graduation, which was in the stadium at the school. I think, in that case, we had to make it clear up front that he was going to be the speaker, so everybody, including the press, knew Kennedy would be there. And this time you had not only the students, you had their parents and the faculty present, and I think there even were some members of the city council present too. So that was another instance where the Senator received a tremendous reception from D.C. citizens. I was able to ingratiate myself, as it were, primarily through these events that I was able to pull off in the city.

**Martin:** You're in a good position to comment on Senator Kennedy's relationship with the city more generically in this period of time. It's one of the topics I don't think we've talked about with many people.

**Bates:** Oh, is that right?

**Martin:** We talk about health policy and civil rights policy, but Washington, D.C. itself was going through a lot of political changes during this period of time, heading toward home rule. I forget when home rule takes effect.

**Bates:** I think it was in '62. I'm not sure of that. But Walter Washington was the mayor at that point, and there was an elected city council. Marion Barry was on the city council, or the school board, I guess, at that point. He had been working with a group called Pride, which was—

[Interruption]

**Martin:** We were talking about Senator Kennedy's relationship with Washington, with the city itself. Any sense about how this relationship is developing? You said this is in early '70s. My guess is, at this point people are starting to see Washington as a laboratory for social experiments, different school bills going through, different funding mechanisms. What's Senator Kennedy's view of the city?

**Bates:** Well, it's interesting. What I learned is that both of his brothers had been involved with the city. There was something called the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, I think, PADC, where [Daniel Patrick] Moynihan, from New York, before he was in the Senate, was involved. He spearheaded a plan to redesign Pennsylvania Avenue. Now it looks quite a bit different than it did at that point. The buildings on the end closest to the Capitol are new, and then there's this plaza on Pennsylvania Avenue at 14th Street, which didn't exist before. The building that houses the local city government has been redone within the past seven, eight years. There was this quasi-government commission put in place to redesign the avenue, and apparently both of his brothers were involved in that. I don't know that President [John F.] Kennedy started it, but certainly they were involved in it.

Teddy followed up on that as well. But this also fit into his whole promotion of policies to help the needy and to combat racial discrimination. It fit right in with his concerns about health care, about improving education, and so forth. The city was available and easily accessible, and it was certainly receptive—to say nothing of the fact that it was 98 percent Democratic. So it worked out very comfortably for him.

**Martin:** What was his relationship like with black political leaders in the city?

**Bates:** Everybody loved him. When were you born?

**Martin:** Seventy-one.

**Bates:** Well, you missed it [*laughs*]. There's nothing like it now. He could walk on water almost. What I was going to say is, you've heard the history of Marion Barry, who was the mayor. You never heard of Marion Barry?

**Martin:** No.

**Bates:** Marion Barry was the mayor twice. He eventually, as mayor, became a drug addict.

**Martin:** Yes, I knew that part.

**Bates:** Okay, and you know about his going to jail and all that.

**Martin:** Yes.

**Bates:** And then he got out of jail, and he ran again, and he managed to be elected to the city council and then elected mayor again.

**Martin:** I thought it was city council.

**Bates:** Well, now he's on the city council, all right, but after he got out of jail, he was reelected mayor. Then when that term was over, when Anthony Williams came in, that's when he went off, then he got elected to the city council. He's on the city council now. He's now a sick man, unfortunately.

But at that time, he was head of this organization called Pride. Its purpose was to help ex-cons get back on their feet. He had a building at 16th and U Northwest, so I went out one day and talked to Marion about having Kennedy come up to talk to these ex-cons. Marion, of course, loved it. "Yes, hey, bring him right up in here," because we were going to try to offer some legislation to get education projects and work assistance for ex-cons. We made the deal, and I got the Senator to come up there and talk to them.

Now, we had a roomful. The room was at least as big as this floor, and it was full of guys. But when the Senator walked in, there was nobody in the room, because they didn't believe that he would actually show up. See, when I went up there, I talked to Marion, but Marion also let me talk to the guys.

**Martin:** The ex-cons.

**Bates:** Right. And I was telling them, "Senator Kennedy is coming up," and da da da. And of course, "Bullshit. That motherfucker's not coming. Bullshit." Then, the day—maybe a week later or whenever it was—I actually brought him up there, and they presumably had been told that they were going to meet with Kennedy at, say, 2:30 in the afternoon, they were there in the building, but they didn't believe he would appear. They eventually came into the room slowly. I'm saying this by way of trying to describe the aura that the Kennedy name evoked. There was a sense that this guy, Kennedy, that is, could do whatever needed to be done. So people loved him. There was never any complaint about him here.

When I started dealing with folks in Massachusetts, the black folks, that's when it just blew my mind, because they complained about him. Well, it's like any family. Your brothers and sisters are much more likely to complain about you than your colleagues. You know what I mean?

**Martin:** Yes.

**Bates:** So that's what it was. He was theirs. They felt they owned him, and therefore they could complain about him. This is not to say they didn't like him. Sure, they liked him. But I had never heard any group of black people complain about him.

**Martin:** In Washington.

**Bates:** In Washington or anywhere else. But when I got up to Boston and started dealing with his constituents, that's when I started hearing complaints—the schools were poor; the sewers didn't work; the crime rate was up; the girls were getting pregnant. "And if he's so great, then why doesn't he fix it? If Senator Kennedy is so good, why is it that I can't get a job? Why is it that



I'm on welfare? Why can't I get my son out of jail? Why can't—" You might call it the real practical stuff. "Why the hell can't he do it?" So that began the real political awakening of Bob Bates—that while I thought this guy was a little more than human, this made me realize, Hey, he puts his pants on one leg at a time just like everybody else. There's only so much he can do, and he's got his failings, as we all know.

**Martin:** When did you start working on the Boston or the Massachusetts constituency?

**Bates:** I know I did it for the '70 election. He was elected for the first full term in '70, isn't that right? His brother was elected to the Presidency in '60, and he left in—so his brother must have been elected in '58 to the Senate?

**Martin:** Yes, he wins the special election in '62.

**Bates:** Teddy filled out his brother's term. His brother left the Senate in '60. And so Ted Kennedy couldn't run in 1960 because he wasn't 30.

**Martin:** I think we might be off by two years. Because Kennedy starts in the Senate in '62. I think that that's the special election.

**Bates:** Yes, right, so he had to run in '64 for a full term, and that meant that he ran in '70.

**Martin:** That must be right.

**Bates:** Okay, so that's when I started. I started in '69 to get ready for the '70 election. That's when I started dealing with Boston, and that's when he made it clear to me that he wanted me to be the contact with the black constituents in Boston and in Massachusetts.

**Martin:** With you being the first black professional, or perhaps black office worker for Kennedy, what was his relationship like with the black community before you started working for him? Do you get any sense that there's a significant change here?

**Bates:** Well, you know who you ought to talk to? You ought to talk to people like Andy Young, because what I know from reading and listening to people is that President Kennedy was not all that favored by blacks until Dr. King was arrested and put in jail. The President didn't want to do anything to get him out, and then Bobby encouraged him to do it, and so that was the change.

Interestingly, there was a thing recently. We saw the film on RFK, and Roger Wilkins was one of the people who was interviewed. In that film, they were showing how Bobby changed once he became Attorney General. Bobby changed his attitude toward race and poverty in particular. Roger's comment was, "Well, what do you expect? He was this very wealthy, highly educated, white Catholic who grew up in Massachusetts in an environment where he was not exposed to black people. Why should he have an understanding for the plight of blacks?"

So that's true of Teddy. But of course, by the time Teddy was in the position he was in, his brothers had been killed; we had all these riots; we had all this explosion of the need to do

something about civil rights. So it seems to me it must have been easier for Teddy to blend into it. But he certainly didn't grow up with it and neither did his brothers. And the times were different. Had it not been for the assassination of JFK [John Fitzgerald Kennedy], who knows? LBJ would never have been able to get civil rights bills through, maybe, and the War on Poverty. All of that led into making it easier for Teddy to do what he did.

So my guess is that prior to my coming there, he gave only lip service to what was going on, but he had no direct connection. And I'm not trying to take credit for the connection. It was just a matter of the times and his use of his staff. Imagine Teddy saying, "Okay, I got you in here, now, damn it, do something; be useful." So I remember one year Dr. King's son, Marty Junior [Martin Luther King III], was a page for Kennedy. And the Senator also developed contacts with Mrs. King, with Coretta [King]. And I mentioned Andy Young. When Andy Young ran for the House for the first time, Ethel Kennedy held a fundraiser for him out at Hickory Hill.

And Jesse Jackson, as he was moving through, Teddy would be in contact with Jesse. I can remember one time he had lunch in his office with Jesse. The Senate cafeteria prepared the lunch. The dessert that day was watermelon, so they brought the whole meal up to the office for Teddy just before Jesse got there. When the Senator saw the watermelon, he told them to take it back. He said, "Because that could be offensive to Jesse." I just thought that was magnificent. How many white men would have an idea that something like that could be offensive to a black person?

**Martin:** Any sense what the timeframe is with this meeting?

**Bates:** Somewhere between 1969 and 1977. *[laughter]*

**Martin:** One of the reasons why I press on that is because I think one of the things that's fascinating is that prior to the death of, especially, Robert Kennedy, Senator Edward Kennedy doesn't seem to have a great track record or relationship—

**Bates:** No, he didn't. Like Roger said, he had no reason to.

**Martin:** But by the time you're finished, he is solidly credentialed as—

**Bates:** Well, it's the times, though. Remember now, his brother had been killed; Dr. King had been killed; the war in Vietnam was raging, and so you had all these demonstrations in the street. That was the way of the world at that period. If you didn't like something, you got on the street, and you started raising hell. You had all these riots as a result of the King assassination.

*[Interruption]*

**Martin:** Why don't we pick up with that 1970 campaign where you're working—

**Bates:** With his reelection.

**Martin:** Yes, in Massachusetts. One of the things that I'm curious about is, you have Ed Brooke as the other Senator at this period. And you were mentioning that the black community in Massachusetts was more critical of Kennedy than the black community in Washington. Was there any reflection on Brooke versus Kennedy as the first elected black Senator versus great white hope?

**Bates:** I don't think so. As I remember, I don't think there was really—that's interesting, because Brooke was in a category all by himself. They loved him and he was unique. Of course his wife was white. He was married to an Italian. So I think, for blacks, there was some of a standoffishness because of that. Also he was not a native of Massachusetts; he's a native of D.C.

**Martin:** Oh, I didn't realize that.

**Bates:** He and I went to the same high school, interestingly. But I think they just accepted him because he was unique, so they didn't have the same expectations of him that they had of Kennedy.

**Martin:** Because of the Kennedy name or credential?

**Bates:** Because of the Kennedy name, right. They still liked Brooke, but he was just in a totally different category. Kennedy was supposed to be able to part the waters. His brother had been President, his other brother had been Attorney General, he had all this money, and he was all-powerful. "So then deliver. We're still living down here in poverty. We still got problems getting decent housing. We can't get our kids in decent schools. And why don't you straighten that out? We read all your speeches where you're down there talking about education and decent health care and all that, and we're still sitting up here struggling."

**Martin:** How much time did he spend in black communities when he was campaigning?

**Bates:** Very little. But you know what he did? He would say to me, "You need to get some of the brothers to do fundraisers. Because you know I'm going to do the right thing, but I've got to be able to show why I'm doing it. And so if you can get some fundraisers going, then that makes the connection." Because he's traveling all over the state attending these fundraisers everybody else is doing for him. So it's just logical. So I jumped at that one and loved it, and we were able to have several fundraisers. I can remember the '76 election. We had many more than we did in '70. And when I say many, we probably didn't have more than four or five in '76, and we maybe had two in '70. I always see him as the consummate politician. He always knew exactly what buttons to push in order to make connections that he ought to make.

**Martin:** Well, it strikes me that he has, especially when busing starts to happen and basically the riots in South Boston, it seems like a very difficult biracial coalition to thread for him. Maybe not with the rest of the state, but in Boston in particular, it strikes me that lower-income white voters are going to revolt if he appears too strongly connected with the African American community.

**Bates:** But I never had the sense that he felt there might be a revolt by whites. He probably was apprehensive, but he never demonstrated to me anything that made him feel he should back off or back down. It had to be tough for him. But then again, he was what they called “lace curtain Irish.”

**Martin:** Completely missing the reference.

**Bates:** Elite. He didn’t work in Fenway Park selling hot dogs. He grew up with all the wealth and sophistication and what that all goes with. So I don’t know that he had much connection with the poor Irish at all. I don’t know. I’m not saying he didn’t have it. I’m just saying I don’t know. But I would imagine that because of his social status, he didn’t.

**Martin:** Yes, that’d probably be right.

**Bates:** And they always had people working for them. The people who were working for them were from a lower socio-economic background, and I imagine many of them were Irish. I don’t know who worked for them. But I just will always remember Roger Wilkins’s comment on that film about RFK, that here’s a guy who did not grow up with people who were poor and struggling. So his coming to an understanding of what needed to be done was a result of his experiences as an adult and his experiences in public life.

His brother had gone out to Cesar Chavez out in California. And because of Chavez, I guess a lot of Mexicans voted for RFK in the primary. Teddy took up that campaign as well once his brother had been assassinated. He certainly didn’t have any connection with the Mexicans. So you have the Mexican piece. And I remember all the talk about Cesar Chavez—and the same thing with blacks. They came up on this as a result of basic decency once they saw what was happening.

**Martin:** It’s almost as though he was ready, but the right connections hadn’t been made for him.

**Bates:** I don’t even know that he was ready. He may have been ready but not knowing that he was ready. You see, I don’t attribute that to him. I just give him credit for seeing what was happening and for realizing that he could and should do something about it.

**Martin:** One of the first things from our record is that in late 1969, you traveled with Senator Kennedy to Memphis.

**Bates:** That was on the anniversary of the assassination of Dr. King.

**Martin:** Want to talk about that?

**Bates:** Yes, that was tough. But again, the Lord looks after babies and fools, and I was no longer a baby. I got down there. I think he was coming up from Florida, because it was around Easter time. And I was the advance person.

**Martin:** So you’d have been on his staff for three months?

**Bates:** I joined the staff in January, and this was April.

**Martin:** Yes, okay, so you were a rookie.

**Bates:** Yes. And so I went down there. I went from home. I think he was in Florida, and Dave Burke was with him. I get to Memphis, all alone. My job was to be in touch with the chief of police and the city officials. The Senator was coming in on a private plane, and I was supposed to be in contact and let him know when to come into downtown Memphis. There were street demonstrations. Kennedy's address was outdoors, in the street, and so there were folks out in the street waiting for his appearance. I get this phone call, and he's at the airport. I'm in the street with the crowds, and there are gunshots. Folks start shooting. I don't know who was shooting or who were the targets. Not only that, there was a black person who took me around, and this person introduced me to the chief of police. The chief refused to shake my hand. I thought to myself, *Wow, this is a nice how-do-you-do.*

**Martin:** Was he a white chief?

**Bates:** White chief of police, right. But there was so much energy and so much electricity and so much excitement that I didn't have time to be afraid. I just had to go along with what was going on. And it was my job to let the Senator know when to come in town. "You should be here now," or "They're expecting you at such-and-such time, and so come on in," or, "I think you should—" So there I am trying to make these judgments in the midst of this chaotic stuff that was going on. But I finally said, "Hey, look, come on; bring it on. If we're going to do this, if you're here, let's do it." And he came in. The big concern, of course, once Dave Burke and the other guys showed up, was his safety, having heard these gunshots. Who the hell had guns? Here we are dealing with a police force that wasn't happy about having this thing going on anyway. Would they do their job in trying to protect him?

Of course, as it happened he gave a rousing speech. The crowd was overwhelmed. They just loved him. It was terrific, and everybody loved it. He got through, we left, and we got on the airplane and came back home.

**Martin:** So no significant events on the negative side.

**Bates:** No, nothing that affected him, nothing. Yes, that was in April of 1969, exactly one year after Dr. King's assassination.

**Martin:** This is an inference, but that timing suggests that you were well trusted very quickly.

**Bates:** One of the things that I really appreciated about working for him was, if you screwed up, it wasn't a matter of being punished; it was a matter of, "Okay, what do we do to make it right?" That's the way he always treated me, and that's the way I observed that he treated other folk as well. I can't remember anything significant that I did between January and April. But you'd need to get a better sense of that by talking to David Burke.

**Martin:** Sure. He's on the list to be interviewed many times.

**Bates:** You've got to talk to David. Because for me, I was learning to do whatever it was I was being asked to do. I was enjoying the authority that came from being connected with Ted Kennedy.

**Martin:** Sure. You get to call people up and say—

**Bates:** You get to call people up and say, "I'm calling from Senator Kennedy's office." "Well, what can I do for you?" *[laughter]*

**Martin:** That's great fun.

**Bates:** It was terrific. I just adapted very easily to this new level of operating. Then on top of all that, I'm in the Senate of the United States, where laws were being passed. This was a Democratic-controlled Senate. And he was chair of several committees or subcommittees. He was the Democratic whip, and we enjoyed a certain aura of respect among our Senate staff colleagues.

I was involved in helping to organize the first group of black Senate staffers. The black cafeteria employees went on strike because they wanted more money, and they didn't get it. So I went over there and talked to the guy who was in charge. I took on the responsibility of organizing them against the Senate administration. Here he is, the whip, and I'm over there dealing with these folks. He often went to eat in the Senators' Dining Room, and he always treated staff well. So of course I got along well with the staff, the kitchen workers. And he knew what I was doing. We lost, of course. The workers did not get a raise. But it was a battle, and it was like gun control. It was a battle that we knew was going to be very tough to win, but he gave me all his support in being engaged in it.

**Martin:** So when the cafeteria workers strike, would you have had to have crossed a picket line to go to the cafeterias?

**Bates:** No, they just weren't there. There wasn't anybody to serve. Well, I take that back. They did what they had to do. But at the end of the day, that's when—this was a feudal system: they had no rights; they had no power to address any grievances that they felt they were suffering. It all involved, I think, a guy getting a promotion and their wanting to get higher pay. So they submitted a request for more pay, and they were told, "Buzz off." Then somebody came over to our office and asked whether Senator Kennedy would help.

Now, this was an interesting feature of my being in the office. Whenever a black person came in the office and the staffer on the front desk didn't know who it was, they'd call me. I can even remember one time we got some correspondence on black lung disease. And they sent that to me. So you were asking about the way I was accepted in the office. Anything that had to do with blacks, anything that had the word "black" in it, it would come to me.

Anyway, the workers came over and asked if they could get some help from the Senator. So, of course, the receptionist called me. I went up and talked to them, and that's how I got involved. I

made it clear to the Senator what I was doing. He said, "Fine, you keep on doing it." But we lost. What happened, the guy who was the chief of the dining room staff was fired. He was fired because he demanded a pay raise. I think they did make some accommodation. They probably raised the salary for his successor. I think they were paid hourly. So they probably got a quarter more an hour or something as a result.

**Martin:** One thing that strikes me about the position that you were in is that I guess you could see this as you had quite a bit of power or influence because Senator Kennedy was trying to build on working on black issues, or racial issues, at the time. But your story about the black lung case coming to you suggests also that you were probably being asked to speak for black people in the office, which probably is an awkward position to be in.

**Bates:** Well, I never thought of it as being awkward. I just thought of it as the price for being able to do the other things. It wasn't necessarily awkward. It was just, this is what you had to do in order to get the other stuff done. You know what I mean?

There's a woman now in the Congress, from Oakland. What is her name?

**Martin:** Barbara Lee?

**Bates:** Barbara Lee. She was an intern one summer with Ron Dellums, when Ron was the Congressman from Oakland. There was some gathering of interns that summer where Kennedy spoke, and when the gathering was over, she and another woman who was an intern came over to Kennedy's office demanding to see him because of something he said when he addressed them. I don't remember what it was he said. When they came to the office, he wasn't there at the time. The receptionist called me to meet with these two black women. So I go trotting out there, and the first thing they said to me when I got there was, "We don't want to see Kennedy's nigger. We want to see Senator Kennedy." And I said, "Hey! Come on in." So I brought them into his office. And we sat down. We talked at least an hour and we became very good friends.

So it worked all kinds of ways, you see? It worked not just with white folks; it worked with black folks as well. They really were reacting to the receptionist having referred them to me, and they felt this was a putdown for them, that they were not being respected. And I think that had I been less stalwart, I could have melted with that, but that wasn't an issue for me. I saw it as an opportunity to get close to Ron Dellums, who I had never met. And also I felt, hey, let's put this in a different perspective, and we ought to be able to work things out for our mutual benefit. Anyway, we got to be good friends after that. So that's another example of what it meant to be the only black. Even with black folks, it had its unusual moments.

**Martin:** I imagine.

**Bates:** But I can remember one time—I mentioned Nancy Lyons. Nancy one day said to me—I had been there two or three years by this time, and I guess she and I had come in the building together as we were coming to work. Anyway, at some point during the day, she had a conversation with one of the Capitol police officers. The police officer said to her, "Why are you with that black guy?" She said, "Well, I work with him. He's a friend." And the guy made some

comment about, “Well, you know, I could take this thing and just pick him off,” speaking of his side arm. Then the Senator told me one time that Strom Thurmond or some other southern Senator had asked him why he was supporting issues that affected black people. And he said he told him, “Because it’s the right thing to do.” So even he got it.

**Martin:** He would get pushback directly, personally, from other Senators.

**Bates:** Yes. James Eastland was the chairman of the Judiciary Committee, from Mississippi—old line. And Teddy was a member of the Judiciary Committee. Whenever Teddy wanted anything, he’d have to go down and have a drink with Big Jim.

First time I went to Africa, I was, at that time, on the payroll of the Judiciary Committee. I was physically in the Senator’s office, but my pay came through the Judiciary Committee. So in order for me to get authorization to take this trip to Africa, he had to get Eastland’s authorization. So I had this piece of paper that was signed by James O. Eastland for me to go to Africa. I always thought that was ironic. My first trip to Africa was signed by a segregationist Senator from Mississippi.

**Martin:** We interviewed Mike Espy just recently.

**Bates:** Oh, did you?

**Martin:** And his office is right next to the James Eastland Federal Courthouse.

**Bates:** *[laughs]* Life is—you live long enough and you see a lot of things.

**Martin:** Let’s come back to those trips to Africa. You said that there were several that you went to—

**Bates:** I did three, in ’72, ’73, and ’76. The first one was with Congressman Charles Diggs from Detroit. He was chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa. The purpose of the trip—we were dealing with the matters of starvation in the Sahel. The Sahel is the southernmost part of the Sahara. The countries up there are just totally nothing—no trees, no nothing, just desert, sand—and there was a lot of starvation because they hadn’t had rain. I remember they were saying there hadn’t been rain for seven years. I could never believe there was no rain for seven years. The cattle were dying out, and the people were dying out. So Diggs was making a case to get foreign aid for those countries: Niger, Upper Volta—which is now called Burkina Faso—Senegal, those countries in West and North Africa.

We went to Africa through Brazil. We went through Rio and Brasilia. So Diggs arranged for us to meet with the black indigenous citizen groups of Brazil. Then from Brazil we went to Senegal, from Senegal we went to South Africa. We got to South Africa, and they would not let us in the country. We were stopped at the airport and forced to register in the Marriott Hotel at the airport. We could not leave the hotel. We stayed there about a day or two. Then we went up the east coast of Africa through Tanzania and Kenya and Ethiopia. It was a hell of a trip.



**Martin:** Sounds like it.

**Bates:** We visited about ten countries in almost two weeks.

**Martin:** So you went with Diggs, but you were a Judiciary Committee staffer at the time.

**Bates:** Well, I was representing Ted Kennedy. I was being paid by the Judiciary Committee, but I was representing Ted Kennedy. My job was to get information that could be used to support legislation authorizing foreign aid for needy African citizens. Diggs did the thing in the House for the appropriations for foreign aid, and I was gathering information for Teddy to do the same thing in the Senate for foreign aid. And we did it; we got it.

**Martin:** And then you went again in '73, so just a year later you go back.

**Bates:** I went again in '73 because, by this time, the Black Caucus was a little bit bigger. Andy Young went; Diggs went; Dellums, too. [Cardiss] Collins from Chicago also took that trip. Anyway, it was what they call a CODEL, a congressional delegation, with about five or six members of the Congressional Black Caucus. Randy Robinson, who worked for Diggs, also made the trip. After leaving Diggs' office Randy founded TransAfrica, the first lobbying organization for Africa. So we did some good stuff on that trip. This was before [Nelson] Mandela was released, of course. But we met with [Desmond] Tutu, the Episcopal Bishop of South Africa.

**Martin:** So you were let in South Africa this time.

**Bates:** Oh, yes, this time we got in. And I also went on a trip with Bob Hunter, who was Kennedy's foreign policy guy. He and I went on a trip, just the two of us, to South Africa. We were met at the airport, and we had a little press conference. I was the militant one. Bob was scholarly and diplomatic. I was going to change apartheid. He was educated at the London School of Economics, Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy], very erudite, a very smooth guy. After this interview, he said, "Now, Bob, when you're in a host country, you must be courteous. You don't go into a country and talk about their policies like that. You have to recognize—" So we were there maybe four days. When we got ready to leave, they had another press conference at the airport. I had to tone *him* down. After having been there for four days and his seeing what the conditions actually were, he became the militant one. He said he had been to Russia and had seen conditions there, and he complained that South Africa was much worse than Russia.

**Martin:** Kennedy writes here, "Okay, but don't get lynched." [*laughter*]

**Bates:** Yes, that's exactly what he wrote. That to me is just a sample of the extent to which a comfortable rapport developed between him and me.

**Martin:** Okay, and this is a memo from you—

**Bates:** Yes, this is my note to Kennedy suggesting what we ought to do and saying this is what I wanted to do. And so he's saying, "Okay, but don't get lynched." He's making a joke of it.

Another time, [Mangosuthu] Gatsha Buthelezi was the South African King of the Zulus who was visiting in the U.S. [United States]. We wanted to have a dinner for him at the Senator's house, so I wrote Kennedy urging him to have Gatsha Buthelezi for dinner." He writes back, "I don't eat African chiefs." [laughter]

**Martin:** That's good to see he maintained his humor.

**Bates:** Yes, well, hell, that's the only thing he had going, when you think about it. That was the only thing to keep him sane because there was a hell of a lot of pressure on him. When did this happen? I'm just thinking about when he got Secret Service protection.

**Martin:** I think right after his brother Bobby was killed.

**Bates:** Right after his brother was killed, yes. And so when I came there, we had all these guys trailing Kennedy. There would often be two or three of us with him when we'd be going from the Senate Office Building over to the Capitol. And we, among ourselves, would always laugh and joke about—each one of us would have a sign with an arrow pointing at him.

**Martin:** Don't shoot the staffer.

**Bates:** Yes, right. That's the guy you want.

At that time there was a demand to have more formal dress. I'm appalled at how people go to work today. But we always wore suits and ties. There would often be several of us trailing along behind him when he's going from one hearing to another, or going from his office over to the Capitol or whatever. He would either say it or he'd write it somewhere, "TMBS—" too many blue suits— "I don't need this."

**Martin:** Was it a concern that it looked like a security detail or too many minders?

**Bates:** Too many minders, yes. This was when there wasn't security around. TMBS was a big deal, too many blue suits.

**Martin:** So if you wore a gray suit, you'd be fine?

**Bates:** No, the point was, "There are too many of you. And I'm a big boy. I can handle it by myself. I don't need all you guys." We all wanted a piece of him, you see? And he was so busy.

**Martin:** So whenever you got a chance to—the point you were making about, you wanted to be on the House side rather than the Senate side because you figured you'd have more—well, you're right. But the flip side of that is that a Senator is engaged in so many different issues that there's an opportunity for more people to be involved. You might just have to have that conversation on the way, in the hallway.

**Bates:** Yes, right, but see, he was involved in issues all across the board. He was doing foreign affairs; he was doing judiciary stuff; he was doing health; he was doing education; he was doing civil rights; he was doing D.C.; and of course he's got his political stuff. So you got at least one person for each one of those issues. And stuff is always popping up, and that's why there would be so many of us swarming around him.

**Martin:** Let me go back to your initial portfolio, because it's interesting how you developed which issues you start working on. Is it that if you had an idea, you could just write it up and bring it to him and he would let you be that entrepreneurial?

**Bates:** Yes, that's about the way it was. Rhodesian chrome. You ever heard of Rhodesian chrome?

**Martin:** Never.

**Bates:** Neither had I. Somebody sent me a note one day, I don't even remember where it came from. It said, "Bob, you need to get the Senator involved in the Rhodesian chrome issue." My response was, "What is Rhodesian chrome?" It turns out most of the chrome used on American cars at the time came from mines in Rhodesia. This was before Southern Rhodesia became Zimbabwe. I think the issue was taxes. The U.S. was importing chrome at a very low tariff rate. This group wanted a higher tariff rate because of the way the black miners were being treated by the head of the white government.

**Martin:** So this was a way of doing sanctions.

**Bates:** So this was a way of putting sanctions on it, right. Whoever did this gave me some background data. I followed up on it, and I read up on it, did the research and then suggested to the Senator that we offer an amendment. And he did.

**Martin:** It passed?

**Bates:** It passed. Yes, and we did it.

Somebody one day wrote and told me that sickle cell anemia was a big deal—Kennedy was chairman of the Health Subcommittee—and we ought to be doing something about sickle cell anemia. I had no idea what it was. It's a blood disease that primarily affects black folks. The woman who called had sickle cell, interestingly. Anyway, again I went out and learned as much as I could about it and wrote it up. And as a result, Kennedy got legislation passed to provide money for research and for treatment. The legislation resulted in getting a center established at Howard University. A program emerged at NIH [National Institutes of Health] for research and treatment. Howard University eventually launched a major treatment center.

Somebody else one time wrote and told me about lead-based paint poisoning. I used the same process: learned as much as I could about it; suggested that we do something about it; and the Senator introduced legislation to treat and prevent poisoning. Lead-based paint poisoning is a big deal now. There's lots of money in HHS [Health and Human Services] to fight lead-based paint

poisoning. The irony of it was that one of the things I learned was that kids got it because of peeling paint—they would chew on it, and the paint was sweet, and they liked it. So in writing up his statement for introduction of the bill on the floor, he had me put in a part about his nephews in Hyannis Port who would chew on the paint on the banisters around the Kennedy compound in Hyannis Port. I know damn well none of his nephews had lead-based paint poisoning. But that was a personal example that he could use. So yes, you used the word entrepreneurial. I guess that's what it was. At least from my perspective, that's what it was.

**Martin:** What about the big issues that were known to be coming down the pike, like the voting rights reauthorization? How would those get divvied up?

**Bates:** I'm not a lawyer. I always deferred to the guys on the staff who had the technical and professional preparation to deal with these areas. But a big issue like that, Carey Parker and Jim Flug on the Judiciary Committee took the lead on those initiatives.

My participation would be to be sure we got the right players involved if we had to get somebody from the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] or the National Urban League or Howard University Law School or some professional out of Harvard or Boston or UCLA [University of California Los Angeles] or wherever. My role was to be sure we had the right characters lined up for the hearings that Kennedy conducted. I got involved in making the contact. And it's not just making the contact. I took the role of making sure that they had the right contacts, that you didn't always just have a panel of white folk testifying, because there are sufficient numbers of black professionals at different schools and institutions around the nation who know just as much about this stuff, and they deserve to be involved. So I took on a responsibility to be sure that the staff was reaching out to the right kind of folk. And that fit my way of functioning and of operating.

But I remember on the voting rights legislation, I wound up with a huge notebook, about six inches thick, that had been prepared by a black lawyer who's an expert—and I wound up on the Senate floor with the Senator with this damn notebook, just me and him. And I managed to do what had to be done, but I was somewhat awed and intimidated.

**Martin:** So you were his assistant on the floor?

**Bates:** I was his assistant on the floor on that particular day. It went on for several days, but on this particular day, I wound up being *the* guy, the go-to person. But I had the information right there. So there wasn't any excuse for not being ready. I remember specifically on that one. I also remember welfare legislation. Again, being in Kennedy's office, not only could you get the information you needed, you could get too much information. Everybody wants to be feeding stuff to Kennedy, so there was never a problem of getting the background. You could always get that. Your problem was, after the day was over and you'd spent all your time on the phone talking to people, you had to spend a good part of the evening learning what it is you had dug up and then be prepared to present it to him in a way that he could use it and be forceful and direct.

**Martin:** This is where the infamous bag comes in.

**Bates:** Oh, man, tell me about it. That's what this is. That's what this stuff was all about. This would go in the bag. You had to get the bag ready by whatever time. Angelique [Voutselas Lee], have you heard of Angelique?

**Martin:** I don't know.

**Bates:** Angelique Voutselas. She got married, so her name's not Voutselas. She's on that list, I think. She was his secretary at the time, and she was the one who was responsible for the bag. So she would tell you—usually he's there until five or six o'clock, but sometimes he'd leave early. So she'd let you know early enough in the day.

**Martin:** When the bag was leaving?

**Bates:** When the bag was leaving so that you could get all this stuff in to him. And he would always do his homework. Every time you put stuff in it, the next day you'd get it right back. And that's how it would come back.

I pulled out some of these. Here's the thing.

**Martin:** So your memos to him would be pretty short.

**Bates:** Yes, because he—maybe I gave him just one, but if everybody gives him one—here's the one I was telling you about, about the Zulu chief. See his comment?

**Martin:** "Let's have him for dinner at the house." "I don't eat South African Zulu chiefs."

**Bates:** "And I suggest you don't either."

**Martin:** That's great.

**Bates:** And then, see, here's another one. Walter Fauntroy was, at that time in the Congress. Fauntroy was the D.C. Representative in the Congress at the time, before Eleanor Holmes Norton, who is there now.

**Martin:** So even on detailed notes, he would just simply write on the top, "Agree," and that would give you your green light to go.

**Bates:** Here's another one where I'm trying to get him to do an interview with *Harper's Magazine*, and so this is my note to him. He sent it to Eddie Martin, who at that time was the chief of staff. Eddie has since died, I understand, last fall maybe. But that's another example of his reaction.

**Martin:** Would he take much prodding or need to be persuaded, like, for example, when you wanted him to do something on the Rhodesian chromium?

**Bates:** Here's the Rhodesian chrome thing.

**Martin:** Interesting.

**Bates:** Here's another one. This is an appointment. Something must have happened. I don't remember the background on that now, but somebody must have screwed up. I must have done something wrong and found it necessary to explain myself to him. See, I start off—here's an explanation of all that I did. So I must have done something somewhere where I ruffled somebody's feathers or something happened.

**Martin:** So you explained in this memo what you've done, and he returns—

**Bates:** Right. And his response is "Peace."

**Martin:** Meaning, you're forgiven.

**Bates:** Right, or it's fine, whatever. "Peace."

**Martin:** Everything's back to normal.

**Bates:** Yes, but see, that was the point I was making: if you screw up, it's not a matter of getting taken to the woodshed, which may happen. But the most important thing is, straighten it out.

**Martin:** And you were empowered to do that, to fix the things that might have gone wrong.

**Bates:** Yes, he wanted you to be on the offensive rather than to be on the defensive. He wanted you doing stuff rather than not doing stuff. So if you're doing stuff, you're going to make mistakes at times, but that's what Kennedy wants you to do: he want you to be out there beating the bushes rather than sitting back waiting for stuff to come to you.

**Martin:** What about something that goes quite wrong? Not necessarily that you were responsible for, but you were with him, was it in 1974, during the ROAR [Restore Our Alienated Rights] rally, antibusing rally, in Boston, where he gets pelted and booed off the stage?

**Bates:** Oh, yes, the guy who took the American flag, and aimed the pointed metal tip on the end of it and tried to jab this black guy with it.

**Martin:** I didn't know that part of it.

**Bates:** Yes, those were the pictures, of this guy charging him in the Federal Square.

**Martin:** Trying to stab him with it.

**Bates:** Trying to stab him with the flag. Teddy had gone back up into his office, which was at the top of the building. But that's the shot that was seen around the world, of this guy with the flag. Well, in a case like that, though, none of us had any control over it. He was just part of the scenario.

**Martin:** But somebody had to advise him that he should go to this meeting. Or my sense is that it was [Mike] Barnicle.

**Bates:** Well, I think, in that case, it wasn't a matter of advising him. It was a foregone conclusion that he was going to go. The issue was, what time would he get there? What do you say when you get there? Who are you going to meet with? Who are you going to talk to? Some of this stuff you don't have to convince him to do. It is just figuring out, "We know you're going to do it, so this is how it's going to be done." This is not to say that there weren't instances where you had to convince him. But I'm saying, with something like that, he had to be there because he was involved with the busing.

I don't know how many weeks I spent up there on the busing stuff. The day that school opened, I was on vacation in Cape Cod, in fact, with my family, and I had to bring them back here to D.C. and then fly right back up there, because Eddie Martin called and told me that the Senator wanted me to be there when school opened. So I had to go down to Roxbury early in the morning, get on the damn bus with the kids that would be bused down to South Boston, and ride down there with them. We rode down there on the bus. Whites stoned the buses with students arriving in South Boston. People threw stones and tried to rock the buses and overturn the buses.

**Martin:** What are the kids doing at this point?

**Bates:** They're scared to death.

**Martin:** Yes, I imagine.

**Bates:** And I had the damndest thought. I was thinking to myself, *Well, shit, these aren't even my children*. But still, the point is that this is what you've got to do. This is worth doing, you have to do it. So we went down there in the morning, and then when we let the kids out, the adults stayed on the bus. But there were one or two of us on each bus. We stayed on the bus and came back into Roxbury. Then that afternoon when school let out, we got back on the bus and went back to South Boston to pick up the kids. I did that for two or three days.

Then I come back to the Senate. When I come back to the office, I say, "Senator, they were throwing stones at us in Boston." His response was, "Bates got stoned in Boston." Stoned. So I think he felt good that he had somebody able to participate somewhat as his proxy in this kind of stuff. I felt good about it because I was working for this guy who was committed to a cause that was extraordinarily important to me as a black man.

**Martin:** The busing in that period must have caused divisions even within the staff. I mean, it's split left and right even.

**Bates:** The staff would say to me, "How can you encourage Kennedy to support school desegregation, public schools, when he doesn't even send his own kids to public school?" And my response was that, "The reason he doesn't send his kids to public schools is because he can afford not to, and that's fine with me. What's important to me is that he believes that it is an

issue that he ought to put his weight behind.” So that’s how I deal with this, the fact that here is this guy who doesn’t have to do this, but he is doing it. That’s what I like about him. Some of the staff members did make comments—but by the same token, the staff was also dealing with the threats on his life from a whole lot of people around the country, around the world.

**Martin:** And there’s so many different issues that could inflame staff or—you get Vietnam at the same time, or just before finishing up. My own experience is that there are plenty of issues that everybody’s on board with, and that the staff is cohesive, and everybody’s in favor of a single policy. But then there were other issues that would come up that were more contentious. And even amongst the staff, there was a lot of discussion and disagreement.

**Bates:** Sure. Did I mention Mark Schneider?

**Martin:** Yes.

**Bates:** Mark is a Jewish guy from New Jersey who was in the Peace Corps. I think he spent his time in one of the South American countries—fluent in Spanish, very good in Spanish, so he was the Spanish guy. He was promoting all the issues that dealt with Spanish-speaking countries, [Salvador] Allende even, and there was oftentimes resentment, reactions to the things that he was trying to get the Senator to do. But I think that Mark had just as much success as I did. And I know the staff used to bitch and moan about what he was trying to get the Senator to do.

**Martin:** Stuff helping Salvador Allende or making connections.

**Bates:** Exactly. I want to come back to Africa one more time, but before I do that—so I remember that was more contentious. The other thing about the staff was that I probably was treated somewhat with kid gloves because the staff didn’t have contact with black people either. There was this public image of his being empathetic and concerned and all, but the staff didn’t have contact either. They didn’t have it any more than he had it. Some of the staff themselves were wealthy people. The guys, at least, had all been to top-notch schools. That was another thing we enjoyed—we enjoyed a reputation of being an exceptionally well trained professional staff.

**Martin:** The Harvard brain trust.

**Bates:** Yes, right, and that’s because they were. So I don’t think that much of this stuff came to them lightly either. The glue that held it all together was Kennedy. It’s your loyalty to him. It is the feedback that you get from your colleagues, from the public, from your family by being involved with this very positive guy. It’s the history of his brothers and the family and so forth. So I think the staff had to come around as well.

The reason you’re here right now is because I attended his 75th birthday party back in February on the Hill. He had a party for all the staff. It was really great. You should have been there. And what they did was, they categorized us by decade. As you mentioned, he was elected in ’62. So they had nametags set up for the ’60s, ’70s, ’80s, ’90s, and then current staff. Then we were all invited to come up on the stage based on when we were there. We had song sheets. We all sang



these customized verses based on the years we served. But what happened, I guess, is that Carey, having seen me at that event, decided to ask Beatriz to contact me for this oral history project.

**Martin:** Beatriz [Swerdlow].

**Bates:** Yes, she was the one who told me. Because I asked her, “What made you think of me?” And she said Carey had recommended me.

**Martin:** Yes, he’d given us a list of people who had been critical staff in different areas.

**Bates:** So if Carey had not been there, you and I may never have met, because there’s nobody there now who knew me. The other interesting thing is that I don’t know that he’s ever had more than one black person on the staff at a time—that’s not true. I know he’s had at least two, because when I left, a couple guys came in. But there’ve never been more than two or three at any given time.

**Martin:** So your entire tenure there, you were the only black man there?

**Bates:** I came in January of ’69. A guy came from Yale in February of ’69, and he was gone by June. He came from Yale Law School, and he went back to Yale Law School, I think. I don’t even remember his name, but I remember very clearly that he was there for a very short time. Then there was Steve Keith, who is an M.D. [Doctor of Medicine]. Steve came toward the end of my tenure. He’s now over here in Howard County in Maryland. He’s got his own medical health firm. But Steve and I were there, overlapped toward the end. But there were no others.

Well, my sister wound up working for Teddy after I left, as a secretary. She worked for [George] McGovern on the Nutrition Committee. And then when McGovern’s Presidential plan went up in flames, she wound up working part-time for Teddy. I eventually hired two black women secretaries, not at the same time, who worked with me.

What I was going to say about Africa—

**Martin:** Yes, you were going to come back to that.

**Bates:** In 1975, the Portuguese colonies—Cape Verde, Angola, Mozambique—in Africa were overthrown. The Portuguese were kicked out, and the colonies earned independence from Portugal. Cape Verde is an archipelago out in the Atlantic Ocean, 300 miles west of the coast of Africa. There is a very large Cape Verdean population in New England, Rhode Island, southern Massachusetts, parts of Connecticut. The history, as I understand it, is that they were whalers, so they were the crews on the whaling ships that came across the Atlantic, and many of them ended up in Massachusetts. Interestingly there’s a significant number of them in San Diego, because that was another one of the routes whales took in their migratory journeys.

**Martin:** Another port, yes.

**Bates:** Where the whalers would go.

At any rate, when the Portuguese colonies earned their independence, I went to Cape Verde for the Senator, because many of the families in Massachusetts had families back in Cape Verde who were employees of the Portuguese Government. There was a rebel group that had been fighting for many years, and when the rebel group won, all these folk who were in Cape Verde had to leave and seek asylum. Some of them even came here, came to the U.S. So we wanted to get some legislation that would provide refugee assistance for these folk who had to leave their homeland because of independence. I went to Cape Verde and spent several days traveling around the islands getting information, talking about what they needed. And of course Kennedy did get legislation passed to provide the foreign aid for Cape Verdean refugees.

I went to Massachusetts to report to the folks up there. They almost kicked me out of the meeting room. Because while I was in Cape Verde, see, I was meeting with the guys who won. But the Cape Verdean relatives in Massachusetts were kin to people on the losing side in Cape Verde. These Massachusetts folk were related to those who had been pushed out. So this audience that I was meeting with—I was talking very favorably about the guys that I met in Cape Verde. But the folk in Massachusetts were not happy about my having met with their relatives' adversaries..

**Martin:** The rebels.

**Bates:** Yes, I was talking about the rebels.

And Cape Verdeans are a mixture of Portuguese and African blood—they're mulattoes, if you want to use that term. Portugal is a poor country. They colonized the African nations over 500 years ago. And over the 500-year period, there'd been a hell of a lot of intermarriage. So the people are a mixture in color, in body shape, and the women are gorgeous. But then there were the traditional dark-skinned Africans who lived in Cape Verde as well. Not surprisingly, there was a split between the darker ones and the lighter ones. So that was another issue that was involved, and that was another element involved in the reaction when I went up there. Because the guys who were the rebels were darker-skinned, and most of the people who were forced to leave for Portugal were lighter-skinned, and they had been educated and held the jobs that the Government supported. So there was that feature.

I came back all full of excitement. Man, I was full of, "Let me tell you what's going on." Folk in Massachusetts were courteous, but they were not happy. Kennedy was were able to get the legislation through. And then we had to do some follow-up stuff to make sure that individual families got the support and got the help that they needed.

**Martin:** Let me ask about this trip and then your earlier trips. My guess is that you and members of the Black Congressional Caucus would have been the first black American political figures that these African nations would have seen come to the country.

**Bates:** Yes. Diggs, however, had been there by himself many times. He had built up a very strong history of having visited. Congressman Diggs died I think around '99. He had been in the Congress for many years. He went into Congress back in the early '60s or late '50s, so he had become the chair of the Africa subcommittee many years before I came to work there. And he

was known as Mr. Africa both here and over there. Every year he would go at least once. He certainly would have been the first U. S. political figure. But by the time the Black Caucus visited, I believe that was the first time they had that large a group to go.

**Martin:** Do you remember anything about how folks responded to you, natives of the different countries? Because part of what's interesting here is their experience with American politicians or political folks who would have been white.

**Bates:** Yes, exactly. If they had had any contact at all. But they loved it. It worked. First of all, we were bringing stuff that was worthwhile. But that's a good question. I wish my wife were here. My wife is an economist, and she got her degree in the economies of Africa, and she's written a hell of a lot about them. So she's got a much more professional reaction to African history and culture.

In my visits we were always well received. But I think it was primarily because we were representing the United States Government, and the United States Government had money, and we were providing aid and support. To the extent that there were these personal ties, I know everyone respected and admired Diggs because he'd been around so long. They knew Andy Young because of his connection with Dr. King. And then, of course, subsequently Andy became UN [United Nations] Ambassador, and so they knew him from that. But that was later. And what was really fascinating, I remember the very first time I went over there, when I went with Diggs, and we were in Senegal and these other countries, everybody's home that we went into, there was a picture of Dr. King and JFK.

**Martin:** Really?

**Bates:** Yes, Dr. King and JFK were all over the place. So it was an affiliation, a sense of kinship.

**Martin:** That's interesting. Could we talk a little bit about how Vietnam affected the office or your job in general, or whether it did?

**Bates:** The major thing I remember about Vietnam was John Kerry. John Kerry came to the office in his fatigues, fresh from Vietnam, declaring that the war was a sham and it should be ended. And he was like a rock star at that point.

**Martin:** Well, because the Senator, I guess it would have been '68. When did he get booed in Wisconsin? He was advancing, I think, for his brother.

**Bates:** In '68?

**Martin:** Could have been '68.

**Bates:** I don't remember the incident.

**Martin:** It could have been earlier than that as well. I could have my facts mixed up.

**Bates:** On the war, though?

**Martin:** Yes, he was in favor of the war up to a certain point, and then he changed his position.

**Bates:** Not unlike Iraq, except that he did the right thing on Iraq.

My biggest recollection was the visit of John Kerry when he came up to testify. And after testifying, he came to the office. Vietnam, the major thing were the demonstrations that were at the Pentagon. And Kennedy, of course, supported the anti-war effort.

**Martin:** So one of the reasons why I was asking is that you were saying that you became the staff member for all things black. And Vietnam greatly affected the black community in terms of the soldiers who were sent over.

**Bates:** Yes, but we were all against the war. So there was no racial divide on that. We were all opposed to the war. And then the whole thing about Nixon and Watergate, that was another major movement that affected everybody's mood.

**Martin:** Well, you would have been there also—we skipped right over this, but Chappaquiddick happens—

**Bates:** I was there, yes. Chappaquiddick happened the first year I was there. It happened right after we did the RFK Stadium. That was the point I made early on when I said that when I came to work for him, he was the Great White Hope. The idea was that he was going to be the next Democratic Presidential candidate. But Chappaquiddick is what derailed that, and I think in a strange kind of way, it relieved him from pursuing the Presidency. I left the Kennedy office in '77 and went to work for Mobil. And as you know, Kennedy made an aborted attempt again in 1980, '79 really. I took a leave of absence from Mobil for two months to come work on the campaign.

It was clear to me as soon as I got there and saw him, his heart was not in it at all. It was all of us who wanted to be connected to this person who could be President that was pushing him. And it just didn't work. It was not him. He was more like a shell, as far as I could tell.

**Martin:** The two months that you were there, were they late campaign, early campaign?

**Bates:** I came in November. I left right after the first of the year because I didn't like it; I didn't like being there.

**Martin:** Well, he holds out until the convention, so he keeps the campaign going for another eight months after that.

**Bates:** Yes, but he blew it when he had that interview with Roger Mudd. That was the end of it. Roger Mudd asked him, "Why do you want to be President?" He effectively said, "I don't."  
[laughter]

**Martin:** At this point you decide to go back to Mobil?

**Bates:** Yes, but I could tell he didn't want it, see? You could tell that he didn't want it. He was a shell.

**Martin:** Personality wise, he seemed different than when he was in the Senate?

**Bates:** You could tell he was robotic. He was doing what people were telling him to do. He was not doing what he did in the Senate. See, he wasn't making jokes about it or making fun about it. His gut wasn't in it. You could tell his gut wasn't there. I don't even want to use the word manipulated, because he wasn't being manipulated. My wife and I were down in Fort Lauderdale a month ago, and we went one day to a radio-controlled model airplane airfield where we marveled at these radio-controlled model airplanes. That's just the way he was. He was being remotely controlled by those of us on the staff and by the operatives who had worked for his brother who were still out there in the political cosmos.

**Martin:** Well, and members of Congress also pushing him to challenge President Carter.

**Bates:** Yes, exactly. The other piece about that I didn't like was the cultural battle between this northern Catholic and this white southerner who was perceived to be a country bumpkin by the northerners. That to me was totally distasteful and unnecessary, especially when it got to the point where you realized that Teddy didn't want to do it. What you had was this side effect of folk around him who were trying to make fun of this guy from Plains, Georgia, which obviously didn't play and didn't work. So I was just very glad to get out of there.

**Martin:** Did you travel during those two months?

**Bates:** Only once. I remember going to an event in Las Vegas. I don't even remember what the hell it was now. I went by myself on behalf of the campaign. I did some stuff in D.C. I can remember going to a couple of meetings there as Kennedy's surrogate. I wasn't even advancing anything. It was nothing like working in the office, where I was directly connected to him. I was not at all connected to him.

I had a clash with his brother-in-law who was running the campaign, the one out of Chicago, Steve Smith. He and I had a battle. One reason it was a battle is because Ron Brown was brought in to assume the role of the top black staff person. Ron became—I don't know what the hell his title was, but he was presented to me as being *the* black guy on the staff. Ron and I were friends. I knew Ron, and I respected and admired him. And I was fully prepared to work with him. But the way Smith presented it to me was, "Okay, you can step aside now because we've got a real brother that's going to do things the way it ought to be done." So that turned me off, naturally, and we had a battle, a clash. I had a major run-in with Steve Smith. As I remember, though, mainly the run-in was about money; I wanted to get paid [*laughs*], which I did eventually. But I think that's when he told me that Brown was coming in. You know who Ron Brown was.

**Martin:** Yes.

**Bates:** Okay, and then the next year the Democrats lost the Senate. Ron was going to be the head of the Judiciary staff for Kennedy. And he was for a while, until the Democrats lost control of the Senate.

**Martin:** I didn't realize that.

**Bates:** And then he didn't stay much longer. Then Ron wound up running for chair of the DNC [Democratic National Committee]. And I was one of the first people to come out and support him, because I thought he would do a good job, and he did. Clinton made him Secretary of Commerce, and then he was killed over in Europe.

**Martin:** Did you come back for any of Senator Kennedy's later campaigns? Say, like, the 1994 one seemed to be where everybody comes out of the woodwork to rejoin the staff.

**Bates:** No, I didn't.

**Martin:** Against Mitt Romney.

**Bates:** Only that Presidential bid in 1980.

**Martin:** Any non-campaign political work connected to the office after that?

**Bates:** Nothing.

**Martin:** Well, you do wind up working for Jesse Jackson in '84.

**Bates:** Yes, '80 and '84.

**Martin:** Any connection to—

**Bates:** To Teddy?

**Martin:** Yes, are you a liaison? Are you connecting them in any way?

**Bates:** No, my sister went to work for Jesse in Chicago for a while, so I got to know Jesse better then. I knew him when I was on the Hill. Jesse even asked me to run his campaign before he got Ron Brown to do it. At this point I'm at Mobil and I had two mortgages, so I respectfully declined. But Jesse and I developed a great relationship. When he ran the second time, I held a couple of meetings in my home, particularly on foreign policy—got some folk in to talk about foreign policy and other stuff. So I was very much engaged in trying to be supportive of him.

But having left the Senator's office, I really left it. I had a funny experience with him once. I used to serve on the board of an organization in the city called Everybody Wins. It's a reading project for kids in the D.C. public schools. And he's a member, Teddy is a reader. We call ourselves readers. For one hour a week, we go to a designated school, and we read to an elementary student one-on-one. He is still doing it, so am I. They held a fundraiser reception on

the Hill back during the Clinton administration. [Richard] Riley from South Carolina was the Secretary of Education. He attended this event. There were a couple of other Senators—[James] Jeffords from Vermont.

I was asked to speak on behalf of the organization, and I did. In the course of my speaking, I said that I used to work for Senator Kennedy and that when I worked for Senator Kennedy, I used to read to him just like I read to these young people. I went on about it, and everybody got a big charge out of that. So then when Riley got up to speak, he said, “I’m so glad to be here. And I’m just so glad to know that Bob Bates taught Senator Kennedy how to read.” By the time the Senator got up, he said, “Now, it is true that Bob Bates used to work for me. But I hope he’s got a well-paying job now because he’ll never work for me again.” *[laughter]* And he has had Christmas parties for the staff over the years. I’ve gone to maybe two or three of those. But I’ve never done any political work subsequently.

**Martin:** One of the things that strikes me that many of his staff have done is come back not in a lobbyist fashion in a negative way, but almost working like extra staff, unpaid, but on the issues that they then work for private companies for.

**Bates:** No, I never—it may have been because I was at Mobil. Now let me tell you about how I got to Mobil. In 1976 I was getting ready to take a trip, my last trip to South Africa. That’s when I went with Bob Hunter. I got an invitation to interview API, the American Petroleum Institute, as a lobbyist. Now, this was right after the gasoline shortages—remember in the early ’70s, that was the gas crunch. After the oil industry got back on even keel, the companies started hiring women and minorities, to try to become more user-friendly with the public. API is the professional association of the oil companies.

One of our Kennedy guys had left the Senate staff and gone to work with API. He invited me to come over and interview, which I did. They were prepared to offer me a job—this was, I think, April of ’76. So I told Kennedy just before I was going to South Africa that I had been offered this job with API—and there was a good amount of money. They were offering me \$50,000. I was making maybe \$40,000, \$35,000 with him. Was I making that much? Anyway, it was more than I was making. So he said to me, “Talk to me when you get back, but I don’t think you should go work for a trade association. If you’re going to do anything with the industry, you ought to go work for a company.” And I said, “Fine, but no company has offered me a job, and I got an offer from a trade association.” So when I got back, he said, “I know the people at Mobil, and I will set up an interview for you.” And he did.

**Martin:** Why not a trade association?

**Bates:** He was absolutely right: because the money is with the companies. The companies are the ones that support the trade association, and the clout is with the companies. The trade association does what the companies tell them to do. I didn’t know that at the time, but I soon found out after going to work for Mobil. He was absolutely right.

It turns out that the guy who was the president at the time, whose name is [William] Tavoulareas, Teddy knew him. And then Teddy’s law school classmate was also at Mobil, a guy named Tim

Hanan. Herb Schmertz was the vice president for public affairs, and his portfolio included the lobbying arm. Mobil was in New York City at that point, so I was going to work in the Washington office as a lobbyist. Schmertz, who was the vice president, had worked for Bobby Kennedy, and that's the connection that Teddy had with Mobil. So I flew up to New York and met with Schmertz and met with Tim Hanan and met with a couple other people, and the rest is history. So I got my job at Mobil through Ted Kennedy.

**Martin:** Through old political connections and college connections.

**Bates:** Through old political connections, yes, right. Then when I asked to go to work for Teddy's campaign, it was easy to do, because I had these guys in Mobil who were connected to Kennedy.

**Martin:** That makes sense.

**Bates:** Yes, I had these guys right there who were already connected to him.

**Martin:** So when you decided to leave, was it financial? Or were there other things that you decided, I've done all I can do here; time to move on, or—from Kennedy's office, I'm talking about.

**Bates:** Yes, right. Well, like I said, it was accidental. One of our guys had left and gone to API. He got over there, and he said they were looking for lobbyists and said, "Bates, I think you'd be a good fit." At that point, I really hadn't thought about it. What's so interesting is that when I interviewed there, I came back and I told Andy Young, who said to me, "You don't want to go work for the oil industry. You know what they've done to us. You know how terrible they are. No, you don't need to do that." I was disappointed, because this sounded like a good opportunity, and it was different.

A couple weeks later, I guess, by the time I was working on the thing with Mobil, I told Andy that now I had a chance to go to work for Mobil. And he said, "You know, I was wrong. We need to have black folks in every part of our society. Wherever we can get in, we need to be there." He had changed his position, which made me feel better, because I really wanted it. It was also a testament to his maturity as well, his understanding of the way the world works and what we need to do—as opposed to that old-line view that there are bad guys and good guys, and we only need to be connected with the good guys because they're the only ones who are going to be supportive and helpful.

**Martin:** That's interesting.

**Bates:** I ran across this. I don't know whether this is any good at all for you. But this is a *Congressional Record* listing of voting rights votes and how Kennedy voted. That's 1974. It's a request that I made, I guess, to the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress. That's one of the services.

**Martin:** And it has every single vote attached.



**Bates:** Up to that point in time. This is an oral history. So I don't know if there's a hell of a lot you can do with it.

**Martin:** This would probably be better kept for when the Senator opens the Center for the Study of the Senate.

Do you mind if we go on for a few more minutes? I have a couple other things that I'm curious about.

**Bates:** Sure, of course.

**Martin:** We were talking—for another project that we were working on—we were calculating that if people actually charged us their normal hourly rate, it would be quite expensive. We were just interviewing former Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater over down at Patton Boggs—beautiful offices, the whole deal. “We can't afford this.”

**Bates:** Did you talk to Ken Feinberg?

**Martin:** No.

**Bates:** You haven't talked to Ken? You know who he is?

**Martin:** No.

**Bates:** He's the guy who did the settlement on 9/11. He was on the staff when I was there. Nobody suggested him?

**Martin:** What areas did he do?

**Bates:** He was on Judiciary Committee. He's a lawyer. Ask Carey. It's interesting that Carey didn't mention him. Yes, he's the guy who you saw on the news talking about how difficult it was to decide how much money survivors ought to get.

**Martin:** He was the actual administrator, okay.

**Bates:** He was the administrator.

**Martin:** I remember him as a person but not the actual name.

**Bates:** And then the Supreme Court justice.

**Martin:** Oh, [Stephen] Breyer?

**Bates:** Steve Breyer.

**Martin:** I don't know. Obviously we should talk to him, but he's probably a little bit difficult to get in to.

**Bates:** Probably not.

**Martin:** No, you don't think so?

**Bates:** Ask Carey.

**Martin:** Yes, that's true.

**Bates:** Carey'll pick up the phone and call.

**Martin:** If the Senator wants a favor, he usually gets the favor. Well, the question I was going to ask was, any memory you have about working with other Senators' staff during this period, particularly people like Charles Mathias or other people who were racially liberal and working on Voting Rights Act and other things like that?

**Bates:** It's interesting you mention Mathias. There was a black guy who worked for Mathias named Colby [Colbert] King, who is now an op-ed writer and assistant editor at the *Washington Post*.

**Martin:** Oh, I didn't realize that.

**Bates:** Yes, and Colby and I met. If you talk to him, he'll give you a different version of this story.

**Martin:** That's the beauty of this oral history. Some of the stories converge. Some of them don't.

**Bates:** On an education bill, Colby was prepared to give Mathias an amendment. I have even forgotten what it would do. Colby and I were in the lobby room talking about it, and I thought it was such a good idea that I went back and told Kennedy, and so Kennedy offered it, and the Senate adopted it. But of course you can imagine Colby's reaction. Colby and I are good friends. But at that point, we were not good friends. I made it clear to Kennedy where it came from, and I thought it should go on. I guess the issue was, Colby was talking to me about it as if to say, "Do you think we should do it?" He was saying that this would be a good thing to do, but do you think we should do it? And I did. I thought it was a great idea, and I told him it was a great idea. But I guess I didn't tell him that I was going back to give it to the Senator. Of course, in some ways Teddy was impetuous. He would just do something on the spur of the moment. But whenever he did that, his instinct always turned out to be right. So he offered it, and it was accepted. I don't remember the details. But if you ever get a chance to talk to Colby—

**Martin:** Well, I had wanted to interview folks, especially from Mathias's office, because they seemed to work so much together.

**Bates:** His name is Colbert King, and he is on the editorial staff of the *Washington Post*. And as a matter of fact, I got him to be a speaker at my church last January. We do a Martin Luther King celebration every January. So he was our speaker this year.

**Martin:** So your shenanigans didn't affect your—

**Bates:** Well, they did, but that was 30 years ago, and we're both grown-up big boys now. But he was not a happy fellow. He didn't like that. I wouldn't have liked it either. So that was one instance with Mathias.

I mentioned [Walter] Mondale and McGovern, because Kennedy was on the Nutrition Committee, and I did the staff work for the Nutrition Committee, and I got to know McGovern and Mondale. I

**Martin:** Well, and then Senator [Robert] Dole as well was connected both to the Nutrition Committee, then also—

**Bates:** Dole was also on the Nutrition Committee, and my sister, who I told you went to work for Teddy at one time, also worked for Dole. She started out on the Hill working for Dole on the Nutrition Committee, then worked for McGovern, and then came to work for Teddy. Dole was a good guy. Those were different Republicans.

**Martin:** One of the things that I find fascinating is the development of Senator Kennedy as a civil rights icon, almost, to some degree now. But at the time, he was running in a pack of a lot of Senators who were quite active. And Mathias would be at the top of the list in my book.

**Bates:** Those were different days.

**Martin:** The question that I wonder about is, what explains Kennedy's trajectory, so that by the time you have the—this is after you were gone—but in the 1982 reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, he became the central Senator that most things seemed to go through. And then you get the [Robert] Bork hearings, and he becomes the connection piece to all the civil rights organizations. And what I wonder about is whether it's just that he stayed the same and all the other Senators dropped away—the Mathiases of the world and the McGoverns—and the Republican Party shifts completely to Jesse Helms and other folks, or did Senator Kennedy do something differently?

**Bates:** Well, the other thing to keep in mind is that Kennedy is there, and the rest of those guys left. Kennedy was elected in 1962. This is 2007. I don't know how many guys are there now who were there then.

**Martin:** There's a couple.

**Bates:** Yes, right, Bobby Byrd, but he—

**Martin:** Daniel Inouye.

**Bates:** Inouye.

**Martin:** Comes in the same year as Kennedy.

**Bates:** [Theodore] Stevens from Alaska. But on the Republican side, there was Jacob Javits from New York. There was, well, [Everett] Dirksen was there just for a short time. But I very well remember Javits. And then Democrats: [Abraham] Ribicoff from Connecticut; and there was Pete Williams from New Jersey; and, of course, the Republican Brooke from Massachusetts; there was [Charles] Percy from Illinois, Republican, who was quite liberal. It was a different Senate at that time.

Now, your point is that Teddy is still there, still carrying the same mantle, and why? I just have to believe that that's what he grew up into, and that's what he knows, and he does it well. He's successful at it, and he gets good feedback for it. He's 75 years old now. It's too late for him to change his stripes. But I think he really enjoyed doing it. And he learned to do it well. He is a terrific politician. I think the man knows that's his thing, and the Senate is the place for him to be. So he's there because he's there. He's there because he's been able to hang in.

The other question, though, I think the better question is why the people of Massachusetts keep electing him if he keeps doing this stuff, especially when they elected Romney as Governor and they've had other Republican Governors. All right, so why do they keep electing Ted Kennedy to the Senate when he's still running around in the civil rights era? And here we are in the 21st century, and even black folks have changed, and Teddy is still doing his old NAACP thing. Maybe that's a good research project for somebody to delve into.

**Martin:** Well, he was accused a couple years ago of operating in this old-fashioned way of cooperating with Republicans—mostly on the No Child Left Behind and then other things, and maybe even the prescription drug bill—that the world had changed, and he hadn't.

**Bates:** And he hadn't, yes. There's something to be said about having done it for 40 years, 45 years, because he went in when he was 30. He's now 75—45 years, hell of a long time to do anything, especially that. And that's why it fascinates me that you say he has agreed to do 50 interviews.

**Martin:** Something like that. It's around that number.

**Bates:** One for every year. How can he remember all this stuff? See, that's the other thing. All I had to remember is the little piece that I was involved in.

**Martin:** Well, and part of this is getting the little pieces here and there and trying to piece together a whole.

**Bates:** And use that to trigger responses from him, I guess.

**Martin:** Or at least so we know the right questions to ask later on.

**Bates:** Are you going into his personal life as well?

**Martin:** Yes. My understanding is that he wants an open record as much as possible, and he's willing to speak on pretty much everything. Well, he's the kind of figure that I think people are going to want to know about. There are few Senators who have had as much impact or public persona as he has.

**Bates:** And everybody respects his ability as a legislator, whether you're Republican or Democrat. The guy knows how to make the system bend to his will, and you just have to give him credit for that and respect him for that.

**Martin:** Yes. Well, we should probably wrap this up and let you have the rest of your beautiful day out here.

**Bates:** It is gorgeous, isn't it?

**Martin:** But I appreciate you spending time with us and recalling your stories for us, and I hope it wasn't too taxing.

**Bates:** Well, Paul, I enjoyed it, and I'm glad you asked me to do it. And I hope that my contribution is worthwhile.

**Martin:** Again, if you remember anything that you wanted to add, you're welcome to do so. The revise and extend your remarks policy is a good one.

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