EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN CULVER

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Washington, D.C.

Interviewer

James Sterling Young

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TRANSCRIPT

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Young: This is an interview with Senator John Culver, the 5th of June in Washington, D.C. This is the second interview with Senator Culver, the first of which Jim Young has done. We were talking, before the tape started, about 1965 and the years that followed. Senator Culver first took the oath of office in the House of Representatives in 1965. Ted Kennedy was sworn in in January of '65 for his first full term in the Senate, and Robert Kennedy was a new Senator from New York—all at the same time.

Culver: When I think back to that period, I believe the bombing in Vietnam started in February. I remember driving to work as a freshman Congressman. I was a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. I literally was en route to the Capitol from my home when I heard radio reports that the bombing had started. My first overwhelming thought was, those poor people. I couldn't conceive of this underdeveloped country being subjected to that type of destruction and violence. I thought to myself, *They can't possibly last very long with that going on*. I remember distinctly how shocked I was. Such awesome power and destruction applied to that environment.

Then of course, early on, we hadn't begun a significant troop commitment until the summer of '65. We were called down to the White House—we being the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Appropriations Committee members. Lyndon Johnson was having a meeting with all the Cabinet officials, and [Dean] Rusk and [Robert] McNamara and all the team was there. He called on each of them in turn to make a presentation justifying the buildup and the increase in troops. He would periodically interrupt them and say, "Make this point; make that point." It was irritating, but I must confess that every time he did that, it enhanced the political persuasiveness of the presentation. He was so sensitive to what would work with the audience. When he finished, he got up to take questions.

The first question posed to him was from [Elford] El Cederberg, who was the House Republican ranking member on the Appropriations Committee, from Michigan. He said, "Cederberg, what's your question?" Cederberg said, "Well, Mr. President, I support you on this war, but what I don't understand, we give them all that money, and they never do what we want them to do." Johnson replied with a story: "Cederberg, my home county is Blanco County, Texas. One day the boys came in to me, and they asked me who should be sheriff. And I said, 'You go out and find yourself a big, good-looking man that doesn't smoke, doesn't drink, doesn't think the girls are pretty, and he's honest, and bring him in here to me.' And, Cederberg, they left.

"They came back shortly after that, and they had him, and he checked out on every particular. I reached in my drawer. I had a badge that said, 'Sheriff, Blanco County, Texas.' I took that out, and I put that right on that boy's chest. And he was the proudest man in Blanco County. In the first six months, he was the best sheriff we ever had. Seventh month he started to smoke; eighth month he started to drink too much; ninth month he started to chase all the girls; and every time you paid a fine in Blanco County, he thought it was to go to his bank account. So the boys came back and said to me, 'We've got to find ourselves a new sheriff.' Now, Cederberg, if I can't keep a sheriff in Blanco County, Texas, how the hell do you think I can keep a government in Vietnam?" And everyone roared with laughter. Clapped and cheered.

Of course the sad thing, upon reflection, is that neither he nor the rest of us were listening to the moral of that story. When I hear those tapes about his musing with Richard Russell and others about "Well, is this worth it?" and so forth, and when you think of how history pivoted at that moment, and there were all these real reservations—but nevertheless we were supportive. When we went to Vietnam with Senator Kennedy—Senator [Joseph]Tydings and Congressman [John] Tunney and I—Tunney was also on the Foreign Affairs Committee—when we went there in late November, early December '65, we were all supportive of the war. There was such unanimous support for the war at that time.

I remember either that year or the next year being invited to a meeting someone was hosting in Georgetown with Bernard Fall. I was tired that night. I said, "Well, I'm not going to go. I'm going to go home. I'm just too tired." I didn't go to that meeting where he held forth and talked about his opposition to the war, and I often regretted that. It's interesting that it's stuck with me ever since. I think we were all of a persuasion that we weren't the French; we weren't there for the same reasons the French were there. We were there for the right reasons. We were there to give these people a choice and a hope. Also, with our power at that time—massive, overwhelming military strength and power—it was inconceivable to appreciate the limitations of America. But in that environment, that context, as we've all learned, you're a crippled giant in many ways.

When we came back from Vietnam, I think all of us supported it—I certainly did. During the spring week vacation of the Congress I spoke in 82 public schools all over the Second District of Iowa in support of the war, talking about my visit there.

Also, I had been a Marine Corps infantry officer between Korea and Vietnam for 39 months. When I was in Vietnam, I saw and talked with men that I'd served with in the Marine Corps. And it was just all too easy and natural for me to identify with them and with the cause as we understood it. So it was over time that that initial feeling and the realization with the other ensuing developments—

Young: Were you briefed by the military, by the people, the diplomatic mission?

Culver: Yes. By [Henry Cabot, Jr.] Lodge himself and others, yes.

Young: Did you feel they were giving you an upbeat story or —

Culver: I think so. People like George Romney later said he'd been brainwashed, and I think it was Gene McCarthy who rather cynically observed, "Well, a light rinse would have been enough to brainwash him." In any event, it's a little uncharitable. We were all susceptible, because you have to remember how early on it was and how worthy we felt those goals and objectives really were.

Young: And there were two things that the U.S. was making its case for. John Kennedy made this case, although he didn't put troops in there and didn't do bombs.

Culver: I think there were 16,000 there when he died.

Young: Yes, there were, and there were advisors and—

Culver: That's right.

Young: —he started the Green Berets for a different, new kind of warfare and all that.

Culver: And he also opposed, as you know, the French in Algeria in '58, which took a lot of courage at the time. It suggested he understood the nature of these Third World nationalist revolutions.

Young: Well, one of the things was the domino theory. "We are fighting for freedom against—" China was the real threat, I think, that was considered at the time—

Culver: Exactly.

Young: "—and if we fail here, other nations will fall prey to Communism."

Culver: I often thought at that time—and I still have never seen anybody look at this issue—I wonder today if there were ever any historical connections between the U.S. failure to truly understand the Vietnamese-China relationship and the "who lost China?" debate. The Foreign Service people, who in retrospect were right on the issue of the inevitability of the Communist takeover of Nationalist China, they were all gone and almost all universally disparaged in that whole period. We went into Vietnam with one hand tied behind our back in terms of historical understanding. It seemed, in retrospect, indefensible that we were as ignorant as we were about the true nature of that historic relationship between China and Vietnam.

The irony to me was that Dean Rusk, a hawk on Vietnam, was supposed to be a China hand, a contemporary of the experts on China.

Young: That's right. And also the assumption that North Vietnam could be a pawn.

Culver: Exactly.

Young: That's not what Ho Chi Minh was. He was the leader of a liberation against France.

Culver: The relationship between China and Vietnam deteriorated again, only to reaffirm the intensity of the dislike. And of course when the Vietnamese could, they tipped toward the Soviet Union.

Young: And another reason was we—well, this was a new country, a new nation, even though it was partitioned at that time after the French made that peace and got out.

Culver: Geneva.

Young: But then it was to bring democracy to the new nation, to help it become a nation. And Ted got very much involved in that by teaching them later on how to learn democracy in the camps and to have good experience so they could get on their own feet. So the rhetoric of that time was not only in U.S. national security interest, as one of the two great powers, to stop the spread of Communism into these areas, but also to bring new life to the people of South Vietnam as a new nation. And the government of South Vietnam didn't buy that.

Culver: Yes.

Young: So I'm just thinking of a few parallels with contemporary experience. But I think that was—wasn't that part of the reason why we were supporting this?

Culver: I think a great deal of idealism was involved.

Young: And it was really quite unthinkable that—and it was hard, wasn't it, when you came to oppose the war?

Culver: Very hard, I think.

Young: This is the first time, really, within any generation involved in—

Culver: Korea was unsatisfactory, the way it was ultimately resolved. But at the same time, the initial objective was essentially accomplished. South Korea was able to survive.

Young: And it did not create an antiwar movement or loss of trust in the executive.

Culver: That's right. Over time, many of us found that our initial views and beliefs were challenged.

Young: Was there a tipping point, do you think, for you or for Bobby or for Ted?

Culver: I know it was all gradual. I don't know if people really understood that the Tet Offensive was a turning point.

[One page has been redacted]

Culver: One of the interesting things in regard to Vietnam and political support for it in the Congress, was that Dean Rusk was remarkable as a Congressional witness. When I think back, of all the various witnesses I've seen and heard over the years, he would be one of the very finest I've ever heard as the spokesperson for whatever the position was. He was always so balanced and poised, persuasive, and he had such obvious integrity. After a while it was also hard sometimes to reconcile this man with his Vietnam views, when we all started moving away from them and felt that they were indefensible.

I remember one incident where Vietnam had an election, and we went into a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing the next day. The morning paper was full of the South Vietnam election, and [Nguyen Van] Thieu was retained in power. One of the things said was that they were disappointed when the rural vote wasn't very supportive. Congressman John Tunney asked Rusk, who was appearing that morning, "Mr. Secretary, I'm pleased with the outcome of the election, but I was disturbed with the failure of support for the central government from rural areas."

Rusk said, "Well, I would of course prefer, Congressman, that the rural areas found it proper to give greater support to the Thieu government, but I can't help but recall my own experience here in this country. My county's Peachtree County, Georgia. I grew up during the period of Woodrow Wilson, and the only federal officials we ever saw were the revenue boys. And we watched them very carefully until they left the valley." [*laughs*] "And I don't remember one occasion when I got up in the morning and threw open the windows and said, 'I wonder what I can do for Woodrow Wilson today.'"

Young: Bob was quite close to McNamara, wasn't he?

Culver: Yes.

Young: And I wonder how that played out as Robert lost faith. McNamara, of course, left or was put out.

Culver: Well, the thing about McNamara was that he was almost held in awe in the initial days of the Kennedy administration. He was a computer and had a reputation for brilliance in private industry. Also he was self-assured and confident in his presentations. When a President looks around for advice, it isn't the one sucking his thumb who says, "Well, on the one hand, Mr. President; on the other hand, this or that and the other."

That's one of the reasons that I've heard it suggested that Presidents can be particularly vulnerable to advice being given by the uniformed military sometimes. They are trained to be concise and make their points and boom, boom, boom. A President's looking for clarity; he's looking for help and someone who holds himself out as totally in command of a situation, no doubts. Now certainly good Presidents look beyond that, and good Presidents see the limitations of that. I think McNamara was admired and respected for his command of figures and facts.

That assurance and certitude, that's what took him down, too, at the end. He subsequently realized he was wrong. The sad thing about McNamara was that at one point he was out there at

Hickory Hill with Bobby taking one line, and at the same time he was still advising Johnson. I don't know where the truth lies there in terms of what was said to whom, when, and how. There was a divided loyalty there before McNamara finally went to the World Bank.

Young: Was Ted's relation with Johnson better than Bobby's?

Culver: I would say yes.

Young: Or were they neither of them—

Culver: I think, when Ted first came to the Senate, President Kennedy—I may have mentioned this before in my earlier remarks—there was this assumption that Ted would be a jerk. Here he was, he'd never had any background to speak of at all. The only thing on his résumé was, really, the brother of the President. He had very limited experience compared to contemporary members of the Senate. But by nature and disposition, Ted was sensitive to that, politically and personally.

But Jack urged him to go around and pay his respects to all, not only in the leadership but others like Richard Russell. And I went with him on a couple of those visits in which he took the opportunity to show proper deference. I was the press secretary and legislative assistant, and my whole job was to say no to every national television show and everything else, which didn't make me very popular with the people that wanted him on. But he wisely played the role in those days of the freshman Senator to be seen and not heard.

The old bulls looked you over pretty closely when you were new. In Ted's case, a lot of them had serious predispositions not to like him. He's 30 years old, and there he is. They didn't expect much from him. I think Jack, the President, also said to him that, "You should go by and say hello to these people." Ted didn't need a lot of outside instruction on that. It would be his natural temperament—he was someone who did comfortably respect elders. Brought up that way really, I think.

Bobby, of course, by the time he got in, had been a Senate aide to the [Joseph] McCarthy Army hearings, and he'd been around the [Herbert] Hoover Commission. He'd been Attorney General and a very outstanding one, played a major role as the President's chief advisor, and had a temperament, more of an executive temperament. Ted was a natural in terms of legislative temperament. He had a natural disposition as a legislator. He had the patience for it, he enjoyed it. He enjoyed understanding these other members, where they were coming from, who they were, and why they were the way they were. He found ways to work creatively with members on both sides of the aisle and to build consensus.

Young: I was going to ask you about the three brothers. They're all Kennedys in certain ways. But in your observation, how were they alike and how they were different? You spoke about the legislative temperament, the executive temperament. Jack once said of Ted, "He's the best politician among us." What did he mean by that?

Culver: I think he meant that he was warm, outgoing, engaging, socially comfortable, and popular. He was the baby of the family, but he also used to get attention by performing for his brothers and sisters at family gatherings. And he enjoyed life.

Jack was a very magnetic and charismatic person by the time you saw him as President. Those who knew him well knew he had an incredible charm and personality. He had a great sense of humor, of course, but he wouldn't be one to perform at family parties and so on.

Bobby went through the greatest transformation of all. When I first knew Bobby—I first met President Kennedy in '51, I think, in the spring, and Bobby around that same time. We played touch football over the years. Bobby in those days was black and white. I think the Ambassador said, "He's more like me" once, did he not, referring to Bobby?

Young: He was quite conservative too when he—

Culver: Yes, exactly. He was more his father's son, certainly initially. I think that's entirely true. And he had strongly held opinions, if not rigid opinions, about most things—easily formed, never forgotten—and a somewhat pugnacious temperament. But Bobby at the same time grew and transformed more than any of the three. Jack didn't have long, and Bobby didn't either. But Bobby evolved, he really did. He softened up. By the time he was in his mature, final years in public life, particularly after Jack's death, which had such an extraordinary impact on him, there was a dramatic change. And I think it was genuine.

One of the interesting things about all three brothers is their capacity for growth. The capacity for growth is one strong common denominator of all three of them. I first got a snapshot of Jack Kennedy in 1946 running for the House. I then saw him run for the Senate in 1952. Then in 1960, when he visited Iowa, I watched him stand on a picnic table in a park in Marion, Iowa. That powerful voice was extraordinary. You couldn't imagine it was the same man who spoke with such confidence and conviction, and the eloquence. What a contrast to the shy, introverted public figure of his early years. And his physical size. He was diminutive, almost, in those early races.

With Bobby, of course, things were pretty simple. "You're either for us or against us."

Young: And relentless, wasn't he?

Culver: And *so* competitive. He had no business competing with us in touch football, but you couldn't beat him. You couldn't beat him because he would dive right into the rosebushes, thorns and all. I'd do anything I could to avoid those bushes that lined the edge of the lawn at Hyannis. You get hurt in there. But Bobby was so competitive and tough, for his size, physically strong and determined.

Young: I wouldn't say he ended up this way, but he became his brother's helper.

Culver: That's right.

Young: And instead of going on an independent career, he became number two to his brother.

Culver: That's right. He accepted it with absolute, total devotion. That was his mission in life. He was Jack's closest advisor. I think often his judgment wasn't the conventional judgment. The maturity of his judgment and insights, I think, were very helpful to John Kennedy, and respected by him.

Young: So for him, his brother's assassination, Jack's assassination—

Culver: Totally devastating.

Young: I'm sure it must have been. My guess is, probably more than Ted.

Culver: Well, I think I remember being with Ted. The closeness of those brothers is impossible to exaggerate. They were as close as any three men I've ever known anywhere, anytime in my life. And that was true of the whole Kennedy family. There was Joe Kennedy in terms of the family and the mutual support, admiration that each of the sisters and brothers had for each other. That was extraordinary. It was unique. These three boys were so close.

Bobby was more involved with Jack's political career. He was the campaign manager for the two Senate races and the Presidential campaign. Then taking that big job, Attorney General. Everybody wondered why and how on earth he was qualified to do that. He proved that middle age isn't the minimum age for maximum responsibility. I think that's what someone once said.

Young: Somebody way back at that time said about the Kennedys, "Most people grow up and then get into politics; but the Kennedys, they get into politics and then they grow up."

Culver: That is very interesting.

Young: That was a joke at the time.

Culver: Yes, but it's very interesting. I remember being with Ted all night before Bobby's funeral, when he spoke in '68 in the church in New York. The devotion among all three boys was deep. Bobby was totally dedicated to Jack, and so was Ted in his way. But Ted was more removed in terms of his life pattern, being in the Senate—and much younger too.

Young: Do you think Bobby's death was as devastating for Ted as Jack's death was for Bobby?

Culver: I think so.

Young: I don't know how anybody—you think of what that family went through.

Culver: I know, exactly. And I do. With Jack's death, I think, if anything, Ted and Bobby were closer. Just like with Joe's death, Jack and Bobby were closer. You just step up. And the fact that they, after Jack's death, they were serving together in the Senate on the same committee. Even though '65 to '68 is a brief period, here they've got a shared, much more intimate professional

life. Ted was in a position to be a big help to Bobby in terms of people in the Senate and how it worked.

Young: But they were—I mean, their staffs were often—

Culver: Competitive.

Young: Very competitive. And Bobby and Ted had a competitive thing too, but it didn't affect the bond, I think, between them. But it does seem to me that they had their own projects, some things they worked together on in the Senate. Some people opined at the time that Bobby was really the one who was orchestrating and helping Teddy. I don't think it was that way at all. I think Teddy was on his own, and they worked together some of the time. Do you have an impression of that? They're both individuals interested in somewhat different things.

Culver: Yes, and I don't think Bobby—I don't know if this is fair, because I was not in the Senate then; I was in the House. You're busy with your own life. But Bobby was never a natural for the Senate like Ted Kennedy. I think Ted is just extraordinary in terms of his natural fit as a legislator. Bobby, very impatient, wanted to do things now, and he'd been Attorney General during the critical civil rights period, and he made decisions. He had the relationship with his brother, the President, that he essentially made decisions without asking if he felt strongly enough. So that was not only more power that he had shared and experienced during his career—

Young: People thought of him as the next Kennedy to be President. He was not only the former Attorney General, but he was next in line.

Culver: Yes, next in line. I think Ted accepted that too, to his credit. But in the Senate, I don't think Ted felt any real threat from Bobby because Ted was personally well liked, accepted, and recognized as a serious, committed member of the Senate. The competitiveness between them was always good natured.

Young: They were all family. After Bobby's death, after he recovered somewhat from it, he couldn't bring himself to go back to the Senate for a while after that. I wonder if he felt—

Culver: Terrible, June of '68, right.

Young: It's remarkable to me that he came back at all. Is it to you?

Culver: Yes, it's unbelievable, really. It would take not only Sigmund Freud but a lot more than that to explain the strength of the personality that could withstand what Ted has experienced. The pain of that is just inconceivable by any standards. Not only to weather it, get through it, but then to continue along a constructive path of accomplishment in the same world of public service. It is remarkable that he retained his strength and confidence to go on, excel, and not be totally destroyed. And not just get on a boat and never come back. It just defies my ability to imagine.

I'm with him enough to know that there have been threats to his life over time. Once at his home, there was a knock at the door, and some strange woman was there. I told her she had to go away,

and when I told Ted, he asked, "Well, where'd she go?" That was a good question, because of the windows. So I went outside, and I couldn't find her. It turned out she was behind the woodshed. The Police were called and found her there with all kinds of crazy papers, poems. She was obviously mentally unbalanced. Unfortunately similar incidents were commonplace during this period. I hope whatever the combination of circumstances that creates that kind of environment has passed for Ted now.

To carry on with such threats on your life and have the continued commitment to serve in public life took great courage. Athletically in football, he was strong physically, but he was also tough. He wasn't the most coordinated athlete, but like Bobby, he worked hard to develop what skill he had.

Young: It's also, this had become his life, seems to me. And it's hard to imagine nowadays him doing anything else but what he was doing.

Culver: I think that's true. I think it's also true, really, in a way, of Jack.

Young: Well, I asked a question once not of Ted but of one of the members of the family. I was asking what would Jack have done after he'd finished his eight years as President? And you know, it's "Never thought of that." He couldn't be a president of a university or anything like that. But it's hard even for them—

Culver: He could have been used in an international role,.

Young: Oh, there's plenty he could have done.

Culver: But the more interesting question for me was, what if his father hadn't been alive when he came out of World War II? What would he have done? Would he have been a journalist? Probably. It was his first love. He was somewhat reluctantly drafted into politics after Joe died. Absent his father's presence and counsel, it would still be uncertain whether or not he would have ever run for the House. Maybe I'm wrong on that. Ted would have better insight on this, of course, than I would. But that's a different question than a post-Presidential role.

Young: But Ted has developed a remarkable reputation in the Senate. It's interesting from a historical standpoint how he's the poster boy for spendthrift liberal, left wing everything. That's the way he is made out to be, the red meat for the conservatives.

Culver: Stereotype, yes.

Young: Yes, the stereotype. But in the Senate, he's very well respected on both sides of the aisle.

Culver: Even many of hose who respect him, nevertheless do not say so publicly. That's the sad thing. However, if you were to ask the hundred members of the Senate on a private poll, "It would never be known to anybody, but we want you to list the top ten," I think he'd be the top one or two with nearly every one of them.

Young: Well, he said, "You should talk to my adversaries." The first thing he told me, he said, "I work my alliances; I know them a lot; I work my alliances. And you've got to understand that. You ought to talk to the people." It's interesting when we have. They all say the same thing, those who will consent to be interviewed, his colleagues, past colleagues and present colleagues. They love the guy in many ways, even though they fight like that, have opposition. But it's interesting that some of them get very nervous about, "When is this going to be released?"

Culver: Exactly. He never misses an opportunity to work across the aisle.

If you are to be effective in the Senate, he knows you don't burn bridges. There is always going to be a new issue, a new day, and new alliances can be formed. You never close the door on anything. Therefore you treat your colleagues with respect even when they oppose you, even when they go against you, even when they disappoint you. You have to learn to roll with it and take what you can and work with it. But he's a master at that.

Young: Did he ever talk to you a lot about Grandpa [John] Fitzgerald?

Culver: Sometimes. About the times in Florida when his grandfather would wait to greet people from Boston in the lobby of a hotel and talk about the price of fish in the Boston market. He would sit in the lobby and pay the bellhop five dollars to tell him anytime somebody from Boston registered. He'd run over and talk to them. What an incredible character. Ted had great affection for his grandfather.

Young: When he was at Fessenden, and maybe later at Milton Academy, as I understand it, his mother talked to her father and said she wanted him to pay attention, wanted Teddy and—

Culver: To have some relationship.

Young: Have some relationship with him. And so it worked out, he'd go down to the Bellevue Hotel in Boston.

Culver: And have lunch on Sundays?

Young: Yes, and Grandpa would take him around Boston.

Culver: Pointing out historic things. Yes, that's a lovely story.

Young: And not only that but introducing him to the history of the Irish in Boston, taking him into the neighborhoods, demonstrating his gift with politics.

Culver: And people.

Young: Yes, I think that's where—

Culver: That's a very good point.

Young: I once asked him, "How did you get into politics?" And I talked about this working in Ted's campaign. And he said, "Well, actually it started long before that." And he went back.

Culver: To Grandpa even.

Young: Yes.

Culver: That's nice. When he first finished with Jack's campaign in 1960, he thought about entering politics in New Mexico.

Young: Yes, but I think that was when what Bobby was going to do was not yet settled. That was before the selection of Bobby as Attorney General and Bobby's agreement to become Attorney General. Father was very much behind that.

Culver: But the father wasn't interested in Ted staying out West either.

Young: Oh, he said, "No. You stay here." So I think his father had the Senate in mind for Ted.

Culver: When Ted first declared interest in a possible run for office in '61-'62, (the campaign I was involved with) Kenny O'Donnell and Larry O'Brien didn't want any part of it, because they first wanted Jack to get reelected in '64.

Young: That's right. "He'll screw us up."

Culver: The last thing we need. The story is that Ambassador Kennedy said, "Bobby and Jack have theirs. Now it's Teddy's turn." That settled it.

I may have mentioned this in the previous interview. I don't know. I remember the occasions when I would go down to the—I was at Harvard Law School, and I would go down to the Cape on a Friday and work on issues with Ted and another Harvard classmate named Milton Gwirtzman. Around four o'clock in the afternoon, helicopters would come in with Jack from the airbase and land in Ambassador Kennedy's front yard. The next day, I went out on the boat, the *Honey Fitz*, with Ambassador Kennedy, the President, Bobby, and Ted.

The White House official line, of course, was that the "People of Massachusetts must decide Ted's Senate election." And here we are on this boat. "Teddy, how's your campaign going? What do you need?" [*laughs*]

Young: Yes, well, some of them on the staff were afraid he might lose and give them all a black eye, or get into some sort of trouble, something like that. You spoke about Kennedy, and I guess it's about time for us to wind up. You spoke about his growth, and all of them grew in office. You've known him over all these years. How has he changed from the time—30 years old in the Senate—over these many years?

Culver: I guess the one thing that I would never have anticipated to the extent that it's proven to be the case is how hard he's worked consistently and purposefully all those years. In the short time there I worked with him the first year, he had this briefcase he would pack with—

Young: The bag.

Culver: The bag he'd pack with stuff, and could hardly carry it out of the room. It's the same thing tonight. Just prodigious, and the dedication, the concentration, I don't think that would have been predicted as a college undergraduate. He did enjoy life, he enjoyed a good time. He also knew the importance of grades. He didn't want to disappoint his father—there was an unexpressed standard that he felt under real pressure to live up to. So he took his studies seriously, particularly after he returned to Harvard.

He had the example of Jack saying, "Never be without a book in your hand." And he was inspired by that kind of instruction in terms of seriousness.

Young: But this is study. He does enormous amounts of study. He started doing that in the beginning, fairly early in his Senate career, when he got on the Health Care Subcommittee.

Culver: Yes, he'd bring in people for dinners all the time, experts, absolutely.

Young: And learn from them and master the subject.

Culver: Yes, and I'll tell you the other thing that's interesting, that's unique about him: we'll go out on a sailboat, a bunch of friends, like we will this summer. We'll be out there talking about the weather and the water and what a nice time it is to all be together. The subject might move to politics or the Senate. Because the friends will be people like myself or Tunney or people who know something about it. And I am just continually amazed at his ability to recall the details of a legislative subject that will come up, he will talk about a debate on a public policy issue, for example, which occurred 12 years ago. It's like someone with a photographic memory in another context how he can recall the issues, the debate, the amendment, and who was there.

Young: The names.

Culver: And the names.

The other thing that I don't think has changed either is his thoughtfulness for his friends. I don't know anyone among all my friends over the years who is as busy and as thoughtful.

Just going up to the Cape at the end of the session he called me. It was ten o'clock at home, just talking. "I'm going tomorrow, and I'll be gone next week." He'd been all day and all night in that crazy place debating. He had to be exhausted. I was tired and I hadn't done anything, and we're the same age. And I thought later, after I hung up, what did he call me about? He just called me to say, "Goodbye, I'm going up to the Cape. I'll be up in Boston, the Cape for a week." But we talked about things close friends talk about. It was typical of his kindness.

When I was in college with him, one day we went down to Hyannis, and his father had a horse stable. His father would ride every morning. One day Ted and I went out there, and he put me on a bronco, no one had been able to stay on. I soon was flying all over the place on this horse until hitting the ground. He's laughing.

Afterwards we were talking along the fence. In the ring were several young Shriver kids. They were on horses, and they had a trainer going around the ring with them and holding on to the reins. We were looking at that scene, and Ted turned to me and mused, "It's really going to be interesting how this generation all turns out. It's so different now than with Jack, Bobby and me." I said, "Well, like what?"

He said, "Well, like when we went out sailing, we had to bring in the sails and dry them in the yard or we couldn't go out again on the boat. And one time the chauffeur brought me and Joe Gargan up to the house—we were supposed to be camping, and it rained. I was about 10 or 11, and Joe was 13. We'd taken the sailboat down a half-mile away to camp out all night. My dad came out, and said to the chauffeur, 'What are you doing with those boys? Why are those boys in the car?' And he said, 'Well, Mr. Ambassador, they called, and they were all wet, and they got rained on.' 'Well, where's their gear? Where's their boat? Put them back in the car and take them back to where you picked them up.'" And Ted said, "That's what we did."

Young: This has been a help. We're talking with people who've known him different ways, different lengths of time, different connections. And then he's speaking in his own words. So that all goes into the—

Culver: But this kindness point, I think, is the most important. When I think of him among all the friends I've been fortunate to have in my lifetime, there's no one who has been as thoughtful about illness or birthdays or concern than he has been. And again, it's so amazing because nobody's half as busy.

Young: Thank you very much. This will end the interview.