EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

FINAL EDITED TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES FERRIS

June 29, 2006
Washington, D.C.

Interviewer

University of Virginia

Stephen F. Knott

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Knott: Could you just tell us a little bit about how you became involved with Senator Mike Mansfield? That's probably the best place to start. Give us a little bit about your background and how you've managed to—

Ferris: I've always said that I've been very lucky in life because I was in the right place at the right time and have had so many opportunities. When I graduated from law school, I immediately joined the Justice Department in the Attorney General's honors program as a trial attorney. I was put in the admiralty section because I had spent five and a half years as a naval officer before law school.

Knott: I noticed this Harvard appointment on your wall here.

Ferris: Well, it's serendipity again. I was aboard a destroyer for three years after going to OCS [Officer Candidate School], and my second year aboard ship I got a set of orders out of the blue, transferring me to the Naval Academy to teach. And I thought, *Do I want to do this?* The thing about destroyers is that they don't send replacements. I was the chief engineer aboard the destroyer and my captain said, "Charlie, this is a great opportunity, but I don't have anyone to take your place." So he put an endorsement on those orders that if you take Ferris, you've got to send someone else. They came back and said, "We don't send anyone else. You've got to groom your own replacements." So that ended that, and that was fine with me. I loved being aboard the ship and the experience from those responsibilities had not peaked in my mind.

Well, I was getting discharged the next year and again, out of the blue, they sent the same set of orders. They said, "If you'll extend, we'll send you to the Naval Academy to teach." I had decided that I was going to go to law school, so I said no. "But if you send me to Harvard to teach in the ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] program, I'll go there and extend." So they sent me back a set of orders and sent me Harvard. I went to Boston College Law School nights for the two years while I was teaching at Harvard. Then I went two summers and a year full time after finishing my two years at Harvard. So I completed the Law School in three years but had two years of nights. When I was hired down at Justice, they apparently said, "Oh boy, Navy. We're going to put him in the admiralty section."

That again was great because the admiralty section had 12 lawyers who did all of the trial work for the U.S. Government. The U.S. Government was the largest ship owner and the largest shipper in the world, and there were 12 people who did all the trial work—magnificent opportunity. What they did is they threw you in court right away. It's like being thrown in a swimming pool; you either swim or you don't. So it was a great opportunity.

I loved trial work. You ran your own show and you had your own cases, and Justice is a great place to practice law as opposed to private practice because there's no economic constraint on your case management. If it was a piece of law that was interesting, you could devote all the time in the world to develop it, whereas in private practice, the client can't be expected always to fund such a luxury. So it was a great place to gain one's experience as a trial lawyer.

One of the fellows who joined Justice with me was the nephew of Bill Fulbright. He went to work on Capitol Hill with the Senate Democratic Policy Committee. We kept in touch. He told me that the environment on Capitol Hill was made for me. He would describe his daily routine and it was fascinating. He would be working on a Defense issue in the morning and the domestic issue that was currently before the Senate in the afternoon. He had offered me opportunities to interview for legislative assistant to Hubert Humphrey and administrative assistant to Joe Clark of Pennsylvania. Those jobs didn't seem nearly as appealing as what he described that he was doing on a daily basis.

I mistakenly thought that jobs in Senators' offices would consist primarily of answering legislative mail. I liked very much the work I was doing at Justice and wasn't tempted by those opportunities. But then in the fall of '63, Harry McPherson, who was the general counsel for the Senate Democratic Policy Committee and who had joined the committee staff in 1956 when fellow Texan Lyndon Johnson was Majority Leader, was nominated and confirmed as an Assistant Secretary of Defense. Later that fall, the so called "Bobby Baker scandal" erupted and Bobby Baker, who was secretary to the Majority Leader, resigned.

So there were openings in two key positions of the Majority Leader's staff—one on the Policy Committee and Ken put my name in to Mansfield. I had never met Mansfield in my life but Ken said, "Give me a résumé." I liked my job, but Mansfield was someone whom I admired. I really would love to meet him if nothing else, but I didn't know what I could offer him.

I sent my résumé up on a Thursday and I was due to meet him at 11:00 on Monday morning. I went in and we sat down, just the two of us. He was concerned about the civil rights bill, which had passed the House earlier in '63. It was coming over to the Senate. Jim Eastland was the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and his Judiciary Committee was the great black hole of civil rights legislation. So the Majority Leader's concern was how to overcome this institutional barrier. I didn't know parliamentary procedure, let alone the politics of the Senate, and was barely able to comprehend the gravity of the problem, let alone how one would handle it. It was an interesting conversation, I really don't know how I kept up my end of it.

It was the most uncharacteristic interview, especially looking back with the hindsight perspective of Mike Mansfield's temperament. He was a "yup" "nope" type of guy. He's a great listener, but has a particularly low threshold for B.S. [bullshit]. As I discovered later after

I had got to know him, he could see right through it and be repelled by it. He gave me 25 minutes of what I would, with the benefit of a hindsight, now call a third degree examination. Thank God I didn't try to a make a connection between my personal or professional experience and how I could be helpful to him. So in effect I said, "I really don't know anything about your problem, Senator. I'll do the best I can. I'll give you my best shot at whatever the problem is."

After 25 minutes of real aggressive cross examination he said, "All right, Charlie, when can you start?" I said, "Well, I've got two little trials I've got to do, so give me six weeks to tide those things over." He said, "No, you're going to start next Monday. I'll call Bobby Kennedy and tell him." I said, "Bobby Kennedy doesn't know I exist. I'm down in the bowels of the Justice Department. If you think it's absolutely necessary, I'll tell my boss down there that you think it's necessary, and I will leave." He said, "All right, I'm going to call the White House." With my Boston background and with my accent I imagine he didn't want confusion about how I arrived on his staff.

I started that following Monday. It turned out my wife was out in California visiting her family with my two little daughters at the time. I called her. She was always very supportive and said whatever you want to do, you do. My father was very different. My father lost his job in the Depression and he said, "Is that civil service up there?" I said no. He said, "Well, they can fire you and they can't do that at Justice, you know." I said, "I'll handle that, Dad, I'll take care of that." That's the long story, I'm sure you didn't want that long an answer.

Knott: No, that's great. When in '63 did you—

Ferris: October of '63.

Knott: OK. Just before President [John F.] Kennedy was killed.

Ferris: It was just a month before.

Knott: We read the beautiful eulogy that Senator Mansfield gave.

Ferris: Yes, that was very poetic.

Knott: He wrote that himself, or—

Ferris: No, he wrote that, but Frank Valeo, who was Secretary of the Senate, did an awful lot of the speechwriting for Mansfield. Mansfield's real interest was foreign policy. Frank Valeo was a researcher at the Library of Congress in foreign policy during the '50s and worked with Mansfield when he came to the Senate. In 1957 he was detailed over to the Foreign Relations Committee and really to Mansfield. So they had a long-standing rhythm together writing on foreign policy. I think it was Frank who put the final touches on something like that.

Knott: Do you recall Mansfield's reaction when he got the news about President Kennedy's death? Do you remember this day? I'm sure you do.

Ferris: I remember the day perfectly. I remember exactly where I was. Mansfield was very stoic. He kept his emotions very contained. Jack Kennedy, I think, was like a son to him. They came to the Senate at the same time in 1952. When John Kennedy was elected from Massachusetts, he looked like he was a high school boy. I could see how Mansfield would feel, you know—if there's someone you wanted to take on because you thought you could be helpful. I never knew Jack Kennedy, but learned that Mansfield and he had a very good relationship. I knew Mansfield only for a month before John Kennedy was killed, but the reminiscences of those memories stayed as a part of him for life. Of course, Robert Kennedy and then Ted [Kennedy] kept the memories alive. He was very close to them and was like an older brother to them.

Knott: Mansfield was Irish Catholic as well.

Ferris: He was Irish Catholic, yes. He was born in New York, Hell's Kitchen. His mother died when he was eight and he was shipped out to a distant relative in Montana for rearing with his older sister. I don't think it worked out too well because he ran away when he was 10, and again when he was 12; spent a stint in an orphanage or reform school and at 14 finally got into the Army, then upon discharge from the Army joined the Navy, and then upon discharge from the Navy, joined the Marines. It wasn't a very happy childhood. As a matter of fact, I remember talking to him—years later we had become very close—he had no memory of his childhood. Obviously, it's like everyone else, you block things out, you deny things that are uncomfortable. We all do that. He had no early childhood memories, at least none that he was able to share.

I know when Don Oberdorfer was researching for his biography on Mansfield, he located the death certificate of his mother and gave it to Mansfield shortly before he died, and Mansfield was fascinated. He didn't know what she died of, and she died of some renal dysfunction. She died as a young woman in her early 40s. Everyone has subtle little shadows and ghosts in their past.

Knott: You mentioned Bobby Kennedy briefly. What was your relationship with Bobby Kennedy like? Mansfield's relationship? We've heard some of the other Senators who served during that time talk about Bobby Kennedy being somewhat distant.

Ferris: Well, I had a great relationship with Bob Kennedy. He and I clicked together. I first met him when he was Attorney General. I was representing Mansfield and working on the civil rights bill of 1964. Most of our meetings were at the staff level in [Everett] Dirksen's back room, and periodically they would have a plenary session with the principals, the Senate leadership, and the Attorney General and his staff. Burke Marshall was the Assistant Attorney General heading up the Civil Rights Division. Burke and I worked very closely together. I was someone Burke realized was a kindred spirit working for the leadership.

They weren't all friendly characters in 1964 when it came to civil rights, even from the non-South. They always had respectable reasons for not proceeding. There was a lot of resistance, some subtle, some very overt. So when Bob was elected in '65, we had already met and had successfully worked together on the '64 Civil Rights Act. He had a friend who was part of the

"Senate institution" but I think it was at least equal part the fact that I came from Boston and talked like him.

Bob did not have the temperament for the Senate. People who are in the Senate are interested in process. They're interested in moving the ball. Bob Kennedy was an executive. He made decisions and you'd live with them. He'd be a good Governor, but a Senator—you're just throwing a little piece of a vegetable into the stew or something, and it's not your stew. It takes a different temperament, and that's probably why Senators don't make good Presidential candidates. They never have accountability for the whole thing themselves. They're associated with something but they don't have ownership of it because they can't, because so many people are responsible, not just in the Senate but in the House.

Bob didn't have the temperament for that type of stuff, but he was a very committed guy and he has a special status. After the Presidential assassination, the Kennedy name was really revered, and the entire family had a special status. They had star quality. Most people would recognize them, and that has reverberations within the Senate as an institution, because every Senator's constituents recognized them.

Knott: Do you think that caused some resentment, perhaps, on the part of other Senators who didn't have that sort of star quality?

Ferris: No, envy more than resentment. They all would love to have had that status. They all sought to have that. They didn't roll over for him, but when he gave a speech on something, it was in the lead of the story in the paper that day because every newspaperman knew if you used the Kennedy name in your lead, the editor would give your story greater priority. Bob was a very good Senator.

Knott: And he had a good relationship with Mansfield.

Ferris: Had a good relationship with Mansfield, but Mansfield had a special one with Ted because Ted was the youngest. Ted came to the Senate when he was 30 years old or 29 in 1962. I actually think that Ted probably might not have been in public life if it had not been for the family, if it had not been for Jack who was in it and Bob was in it, and their father Joe [Kennedy] considered Jack's Senate seat, his seat, at least that was the prevailing view. Ted Kennedy had an unenviable position. He had an older brother as President who was revered around the world and then Bob, who had made his mark as Attorney General, who had tremendous communication with blue collar workers and minorities. It was an impossible act to follow, and he didn't have the opportunity to mature the way either of his brothers did, as an anonymous person in the House and then the Senate, as had John or as Bob did running a Presidential campaign and being Attorney General. Ted started in the Senate but never had the luxury of being an obscure backbencher. It was very hard. Mansfield I think really understood that.

Knott: Took him under his wing as well as he had done with Jack?

Ferris: I don't know exactly how he took Jack under his wing. Other people have told me that Jack and Mansfield had a great relationship. I never saw it. Taking under his wing, it's not the idea that he's putting his arm around him or telling him what to do, but it's always nice to know that the leader has a very special relationship and a very protective relationship towards a particular Senator. If you come and talk to him, you know you're going to get air time, you're going to get any advice he can give. That's what Ted had.

I think Ted must have had an insecurity when he first came to the Senate, because how do you live up to this standard? You have no time to stumble and learn in obscurity when you are constantly in the spotlight. All of us benefit from anonymity. You can make your mistakes and learn from them, but if you're in the spotlight, you don't make them off camera, you make them in prime time. Ted had to mature politically in that type of environment, which just was brutal.

Knott: Do you recall—I don't want to press you on details—this is not about details—were there certain pieces of legislation where you recall any significant cooperation between Senator Mansfield and Senator Ted Kennedy? Were there shared areas of interest? Nadia cited in the timeline some civil rights related things, poll tax, things like that.

Ferris: Well, the poll tax, yes. My memory was refreshed by your research. Mansfield had a responsibility to get things through the Senate. Mansfield always knew what he wanted to get and he also had tremendous communication and relationship with Everett Dirksen. Everett Dirksen would know exactly what problems would be created on the other side. Back then, everything we did in the Senate was bipartisan.

Knott: This was the golden age—

Ferris: There's not one thing in my 14 years up there I ever remember done on a party line basis. There was a coalition always. There were very progressive Republicans and there were very reactionary Democrats. The reactionaries of each party could join and prevail as could the progressives. I always thought that was really why we would continue to have a two-party system, because we weren't fragmentized ideologically by party. Sometimes the conservatives would prevail and sometimes the progressives would prevail. The progressives were in the significant majority when I was up there.

Knott: You mentioned before we put the recorder on and we were looking at all these great photographs in your office of Senators, many of them from the '50s, '60s, '70s; Fulbright, Mansfield of course, and others. You referred to it as the golden age. If you could tell us what you think has happened or what has gone wrong. You touched on it just a little bit right now, but what happened?

Ferris: Well, the thing that happened was the Senate and the Congress then would make judgments about whether the Federal Government would get involved in the solution to a problem, whether it was appropriate and right. Appropriate from the standpoint of whether it was a state, local, or federal responsibility to address. So you argued not whether a problem existed but whether the Federal Government should provide the remedy. Should the Federal Government provide aid to education? Should the Federal Government be involved in

providing medical insurance to the retired? This was how the issues were framed before Vietnam heated up. The concern was never whether the Federal Government had sufficient money—it was whether it was appropriate for the Federal Government to address it, and was the solution proposed one that was wise?

Well, Vietnam changed all that. There was the realization that our resources were finite. We had to make choices between competing "goods." We had to prioritize. How much money do we have? Do we have enough money to do a project—not just whether it was jurisdictionally appropriate or whether it was wise. Can we afford it? During that transition the additional dimension of whether we had sufficient resources complicated the discussion in a way that diminished the purity of the dialogue. Was it jurisdictionally appropriate and was it wise policy was no longer enough.

When the tide turned in the Congress on priorities and with defense budgets sucking up so much, it seemed as if domestic policies were relegated to what was left. Of course, that started all the mandates to spend money. It didn't go through the appropriation process, it was the automatic expenditures, and that started eating up all the budget. The discretionary money that was left was miniscule in comparison. This is when you get into the '70s and later. We knew subliminally at least that the Civil Rights Bill of '64 and certainly the Voting Rights Act of '65 would eventually erode the era of bipartisanship and start an ideological redistribution of the parties.

Before the '70s, those who were elected in the South were mostly conservative Democrats and they knew when they came to the Senate that this was the pinnacle of their political career. They were not going to be able to run for President. They considered themselves disqualified from that office because of the civil rights issues. So, upon election to the Senate, they were at the top of their profession.

The Southern culture had different priorities when it came to the professions. I think in the South, journalism, medicine, and public service and politics were revered professions. In Massachusetts politics was so local that sending someone to Washington was in effect eliminating a potential rival for the next higher state office. Send them down to Washington, because local politics was really what was more important. The State House was more important than the Congress. This is in the '40s and '50s when I was growing up. The President was important in Washington. Law and medicine were the revered professions in Massachusetts. Journalism, medicine, public service and politics in the South. The South sent their best and brightest to the Senate and to the Congress. Men like Lister Hill and John Sparkman.

Knott: Richard Russell.

Ferris: Yes, Richard Russell certainly was an example of the best and the brightest. William Fulbright. They were really just magnificent human beings and they thought clearly. They knew that on civil rights their discretion was limited—and we knew they had to have a pass on that because it was just suicide for them on civil rights. What they accomplished was remarkable—

the Hill-Burton Act, responsible for all hospitals built in rural areas in this country—that was Lister Hill.

They were great public servants, great progressives. The Civil Rights Bill and the Voting Rights Act would eventually change those that came from the South. The polarization of the political parties and of the regions of the country. The sadness is that horizontal communication in the Senate has greatly diminished. Senators don't talk to each other like they did. They have a proliferation of staff up in the Congress now. The staff in Congress is probably 10,000 more than when I was there.

Knott: Ten thousand individuals?

Ferris: People. It's incredible. The factor is incredible. Senators, in their office now, and on their committees, have people covering every subject matter on every committee. They don't have to talk to another Senator, they just talk to their own staff. So you have this silo type of communication, and of course computer technology has aggravated that, because every Senator can zero-base every problem because you can get the raw data about everything in your office, or your staff can. So you can come to your own conclusions and as a result, you don't have the cohesion that comes from log rolling. When I was on the Senate floor up during roll call votes—Senators would come down to the Senate well during votes and say, "What's this vote about, Charlie?" "It's so and so's amendment and this is what it does."

It's amazing how good you could get. You'd know which Senators would follow X on these types of issues and there would be a floating crap game. So you tell them, Lister Hill voted this way on this. Oh great, and they'll vote that way and they feel very comfortable doing that because Lister Hill represented their values on these sets of issues. You don't get any of that up there now. They go to their staff person, staff member 433, "What's the issue here and how do I vote?" That seems fine but it changes the chemistry in a body. There's no glue between the members, and so I wouldn't work up there if it was the last job in Washington.

Knott: Really?

Ferris: Oh, no, I don't know how they do it. I know why the staff does it, but I don't know how people like Ted Kennedy, Danny Inouye, and these people who were there before and knew what it was like and what it could be like, are now living in that environment.

Knott: One of the big issues of course, during the '60s and '70s was the Vietnam War. I'm interested in hearing from you about Senator Mansfield's opposition to the war, the extent to which that caused problems for him with President [Lyndon Baines] Johnson. Could you tell us a little bit about Mike Mansfield's position on the war and having to deal with Lyndon Johnson?

Ferris: Mansfield was one of the signatories of the SEATO [South East Asia Treaty Organization] Treaty back in 1954. The SEATO Treaty, had a provision in it that in 1956 there was supposed to be a plebiscite in all of Vietnam to determine who would rule Vietnam. In 1956, our government said no plebiscite because we were going to lose. Ho Chi Minh was

going to win. So we made sure that that didn't happen, and we commenced the march of the puppets—the puppets from South Vietnam. Mansfield gave a commencement address at Michigan State University in 1962, where he set out his opposition.

Knott: So during the Kennedy years—

Ferris: During the Kennedy years, absolutely. He was sent over by President Kennedy in the fall of 1962 to Vietnam with a delegation. I think George Aiken might have gone with him and probably Danny Inouye. He went over, came back, and wrote a report for the President. Mansfield told me he went down to Palm Beach in January or December and gave the written report to President Kennedy. They went on the *Honey Fitz,* he gave the President the report to read. It stated in summary, the effort was a losing action and we've got to disengage as soon as we can.

Kennedy was one of these Evelyn Wood speed readers. He had this report and he was going through it and would read down the page. I don't know how many pages it was but he said it took him about 20 minutes, 25 minutes to go through the whole thing. Mansfield sat there and was watching him, and his neck started getting red, but he had great respect for Mansfield, and when he finished the report he said, "Mike, this is not what my people are telling me." And Mansfield said, "Well, Mr. President, that's my assessment. Those are my views, that's how I see it." And that was it, that was fine.

In the late spring of '63, they were down for a meeting at the White House of the legislative leaders and at the end of the meeting, Kennedy said to Mike, "Mike, can you stay around for a couple of minutes after this? I've come to the conclusion that you're right and my people are wrong on Vietnam." I don't know if it was that conversation or another, but the connection was that he knew that [Barry M.] Goldwater was going to be his opponent and he said, "I can't do anything until after the election." But it was very clear in his mind that President Kennedy had concluded then that he was going to get out of there. They had not yet put combat troops in. They were putting support forces, the MAG [Military Assistance Group] forces in there, logistics people, and advisors. So you know, it really adds a big dimension to the assassination.

Knott: How did Lyndon Johnson take to Mansfield's dissent on the war?

Ferris: Lyndon Johnson was a victim to a great extent. Lyndon Johnson was a master politician and tactician. He lived the Senate and the members, and knew everything about them. He was like J. Edgar Hoover. I mean, he knew everything about everyone. If there was misconduct he knew about it and he'd allude to things. When he succeeded to the Presidency, he inherited Mac [McGeorge] Bundy, Walt Rostow, [Robert S.] McNamara, [Dean] Rusk. These were all the best and the brightest, and Kennedy had selected each one. President Johnson didn't have his own people, and these were the same people who were telling Kennedy what Kennedy had told Mansfield, they're wrong and you're right. But Lyndon Johnson didn't have that benefit, and so he was captured by them.

But you listen to some of those tapes, and Johnson wanted to get the hell out of there. He was no enthusiast for this war because he knew it was going to destroy him. It was an endless

process but he couldn't get out and it was like Dick Russell, in our policy committee meeting one time, we were talking about Vietnam. In the policy committee we used to meet, just the Senators, over lunch, and we took up Vietnam. [Averell] Harriman came back and talked to us when he was over negotiating in Paris and when [Richard] Nixon came, [Henry] Kissinger would come up and talk to us.

We never had a leak in the policy committee, not one leak in the 14 years that I was there. Senators were very open, candid, and unprotected in what they'd say in these sessions. We actually passed unanimously a motion to have Mansfield go down and represent them to Lyndon Johnson. This was in '67, '68. In effect, we've got to withdraw. I remember Dick Russell earlier on saying, "I'm against this war. Getting in there was stupid." He was an isolationist more than anything else, but he said, "You know, once the flag is planted—" The same mentality you see today. "Once the flag is planted, you've got to stay there." It's the macho mentality.

Knott: Stay the course**.**

Ferris: Yes, stay the course. There was a proposal up to build a ship, a fast deployment landing vehicle. It was one of these things that could move a battalion of Marines and all their equipment, and Dick Russell was against it. I remember his logic. He said, "If we build the capacity to move these troops this quickly to places around the world, we'll find places to go and things to do with this capacity." There was a great wisdom there. You know, if you give them all the capacity, hey, I've got all this capacity—then that option becomes the viable option. And you're going to do something.

On Vietnam, Mansfield had a historical line. He sent memos down to Johnson during his entire Presidency, never publicly. In the Senate, he'd give a speech and end up praising the President for attempting to do—he'd always try not to embarrass the President personally, but he would hold no punches when it came to the substance, what he thinks should be done. The memos he used to write to him, Johnson used to just go out of his mind—"Another one of these?" You're supposed to be in the hotspot when you're down there. Things aren't easy.

Mansfield probably was the earliest against the war and the strongest against the war, but he was never the point man. Bill Fulbright held the hearings in the late '60s and '70s and Fulbright wanted to be a point man. I used to talk to Fulbright about this. There's no doubt that he felt a sense of such shame and guilt over the Gulf of Tonkin resolution. He had voted for it but he was deceived, and boy, did that motivate him. From that time, you see the actions, and he always wanted to be out front on the issue, to the point where he lost his reelection in '74.

Knott: Do you recall interactions between Senator Mansfield and Senator Kennedy on this issue, on Vietnam?

Ferris: I don't recall any private sessions. I'm sure there were dialogues maybe on the floor when there was an occasional debate, and I'm sure there was agreement philosophically about what had to be done, maybe not on the details. I don't remember Vietnam being an issue that Mansfield had too many co-conspirators. George Aiken always was, because they had

breakfast every morning in the Senate. He was a farmer and Mansfield was a rancher. They used to get up at 5:00 every day and they'd come to the Senate and go to their office.

Mansfield used to answer his mail from Montana. He'd get about 50 letters a day from Montana and 35 would be, "I lost my social security check—" but 15 were on issues. He would dictate answers to anyone from Montana every day. So when you got a letter from Mansfield if you lived in Montana, it was him talking to you. That was their daily routine and after finishing their mail, then they came over to the Senators' dining room and the two of them would have breakfast. Sometimes Aiken's administrative assistant, Lola [Aiken], would be there. As a matter of fact, after Aiken's wife died, Aiken married Lola. They were married in their twilight years.

Occasionally someone might come over and sit down, but usually just the two of them were together. It was very good for Mansfield because Aiken loved to pick up the gossip in the Senate, and Mansfield, in my 14 years up there with him, I can put on the fingers of one hand the number of times Mansfield was actually in the Democratic cloakroom where gossip was the currency. He did not hang around with the guys. He'd go back to his office after the floor. Mansfield did not mind being alone. He liked to be alone.

Knott: How does somebody like that become Majority Leader? How does a loner become Majority Leader?

Ferris: Actually, Lyndon Johnson wanted George Smathers, and then Dick Russell said, "You can't have two southerners, Lyndon." So Mansfield was the choice. I think it was a specific recommendation of Dick Russell. Johnson probably reasoned, "Well, he won't be trying to steal the limelight from me." That's true, and I'm sure that was the mentality that went through Lyndon's thinking. So they got a Senator who didn't thirst for the job, and then they made him Majority Leader when Johnson was elevated to the Vice Presidency. Every new Congress, the caucus would elect the leadership, and Mansfield never seeded the caucus for someone to nominate him and second him. They had to do it themselves.

He always said, "I can walk away from this job and be happy." And he would have been. That's really very smart business to do that. You know, the old saying in Japan, the nail that sticks out gets hammered down. Well, when any one Senator who is getting a great deal of attention, the other Senators notice. Mansfield never sought attention. He always gave credit to everybody else, and Senators loved that. "Boy, the other guy's giving me a lot of credit." It was natural to his manner and his definition of himself, but it also turned out to be very good politics from the standpoint of being revered by his colleagues.

Knott: Senator Kennedy became the Majority Whip for a time. Do you recall this particular period? Of course I'm going to lead up to a question about what happened and why did he lose that race with Robert Byrd.

Ferris: He got into the race in '68. He was actually, I think, going out to Sun Valley to ski. Adam Clymer said I called him to get him to come. Actually, Dave Burke, who was his administrative assistant, called me and asked me, "What do you think about Teddy getting into

the race?" I said, "It would be great to have him in the race." And I think Teddy lost his ski shoes or something. They didn't arrive so he said, "Oh God, I can't ski." He had to do something, so he came back. I'm sure it wasn't a but for—but it made it easier because I think Teddy would probably prefer skiing than playing around with this thing, at least at that time in his life. He came back. I actually spent some time over at Teddy's house with David, arranging for calls to the Senators, and Teddy was very good.

Knott: Rounding up votes.

Ferris: Absolutely. Calling them and telling them he was going to run. You knew who would be with you, and then when you tied that knot, then you'd go to the people you're not too sure of and then you go to tell the people you knew would not be with you as a courtesy so they'll find out from you rather than someone else. I recall the reactions of Jim Eastland and Dick Russell who were both in the latter category—little anecdotes that tell a story. "I'll put no stone in your path," Dick Russell told Ted. And "Ain't no vacancy there, Ted," when he spoke to Jim Eastland. Ted, when he gets in something, he goes full bore. He doesn't do anything in a half-assed way, so he made the run and he won it.

Russell [Long] had two phases in his life. One was when he was drinking heavily and when he was he was an embarrassment sometimes when he'd come on the floor.

Knott: You're talking about Richard Russell?

Ferris: No, no, Russell Long. Bill Spong found him an embarrassment to the Senate, and I think Dick Russell did too; a lot of people did. He had a problem. I don't know if his first wife died, but he married another woman and he was a changed guy after that. He didn't have his drinking problem and he was marvelous after that. I mean, people have problems but it affects their work, and this affected Russell Long's work. So he was low-hanging fruit on the standpoint of this job. The Senate doesn't like to throw someone out. Jim Eastland's right—ain't no vacancy. When there's a vacancy, that's fine, but you just don't go throwing someone out. I mean, they might even think of throwing me out as Chairman of the Judiciary Committee if you start thinking like that.

The job of the Whip in the Senate has no defined responsibilities. The Majority Leader has no defined responsibilities. The only thing that recognizes the Majority Leader in the Senate is not even in the rules but by the tradition of the Senate, and that just comes down to under the rules of the Senate, the Chair, the Presiding Officer, recognizes the first Senator to seek recognition to speak on the floor. The first one to seek recognition—except if the Majority Leader seeks recognition, the Majority leader shall get recognition. That's the only power that the Majority Leader has, but that is a significant power because you determine the agenda and have the procedural advantage when parliamentary games get intense. So you get up and get recognition, you set the agenda, you motion bills up. That's your responsibility. That's your advantage.

The Whip's only responsibility is that which the Majority Leader delegates to him, and usually that is the grunt work. If someone is hanging around until 11:00—Wayne Morse, to give a

speech on Vietnam or ticket fixing in the District of Columbia—the Whip will hang around and Mansfield will go home. It's a lousy job. You get a title but you've got no responsibility. Teddy always had better things to do than that.

Knott: Why do you think he wanted it, though?

Ferris: Just the idea. You know, why do you climb a mountain? It was there. It was recognition by his peers that he had something of value even after his brothers were assassinated. Obviously, he didn't do due diligence as to what the job required, but Mansfield would trust him completely. He'd give him anything to do if he wanted to but it required hanging around the floor, and the floor of the Senate is very boring unless you're coming to a crescendo on some issue and you're going to vote. Now, when they all have TVs in their office, you never get them there on the floor for anything because they're watching what is happening on the floor and then they come over just to vote.

The Whip, if he wants to just hang around that's fine, he can do that. Bob Byrd was made for that job. He was the Uriah Heep of the Senate. He would pick up trash if necessary and do the menial tasks for Senators just to ingratiate himself to them. Teddy had other things to do and really, he did have other things to do. He certainly was so much more interested in legislation and developing issues and going out in the country and talking on issues. He liked being a point man on issues, and that's what he was good at. The Whip's job was nothing that he should have gotten good at, but he could have kept it forever because Mansfield was very comfortable with him and Mansfield wasn't inconvenienced because he wasn't around, because Mansfield was around most of the time.

Knott: How much of a factor was Chappaquiddick?

Ferris: Chappaquiddick was after that. Chappaquiddick was '69.

Knott: Right, but when Byrd—

Ferris: I don't think Chappaquiddick was a deciding factor. I think Bob Byrd got it because he was made for the job and Ted was not.

I remember Bill Spong was someone who voted for Ted. Bill Spong didn't like Bob Byrd, he just didn't like his manner. But when they were running for the Whip's job in 1970, Spong told me that Bob Byrd would call him up and say, "Bill, can you and Virginia come over to the house for dinner a week from Saturday?" Bill would say, "Oh, that's awfully nice of you, Bob, but we've got a commitment." "How about three weeks from Saturday?" "Well, geez, we're going—" "How about five weeks? Is there a Saturday night you can pick?" He wouldn't take no for an answer. He said you couldn't get rid of this guy, he was all over you, and he'd be doing that to everyone. But he had the time to do that too. He didn't care about issues.

Knott: But you would downplay the importance of Chappaquiddick in terms of Kennedy's losing it?

Ferris: I would. Ted won by a very few votes, I think, when he beat Russell Long, and he probably lost by about four votes when he lost to Bob Byrd. Bob Byrd thought he might lose the race with Ted. Dick Russell was out at Walter Reed on his deathbed and Byrd had Dick Russell's proxy, and he actually had his aide call the hospital the morning of the caucus of the vote to see if Russell was still alive to assure that the proxy would still be valid. That's how close Bob Byrd thought it was. So it was pretty close.

That's not a big swing. Ted was certainly embarrassed by Chappaquiddick, but I remember the day Ted first came back to the Senate chamber post-Chappaquiddick. The Majority Leader would have a press conference in the well of the Senate before the Senate opened every day. The Majority Leader had the first seat and the Whip had the one right beside him. The Whip was hardly ever there, never there, even when it was Russell Long or it was Ted. I used to stand beside Mansfield during the press conference. Ted came back to the Senate and came onto the floor of the Senate, and Mansfield said, "Come on down here, Ted. Come right down here where you belong." And all the press was there.

Knott: A show of support**.**

Ferris: Oh, absolutely, a show of support. That's the type of gesture that Mansfield would make and the press would notice. No one would raise a question about Chappaquiddick or anything like that with Mansfield there and Mansfield bringing him down. That was a tough period for Ted.

Knott: In the briefing materials, there are some references to Senator Mansfield taking Senator Kennedy off of a brewing Watergate investigation. Kennedy had some Administrative Practices Subcommittee investigations.

Ferris: Yes. There were a lot of people who were vying for using their committee to initiate an investigation. Mansfield, from the very beginning, and it was a brilliant political stroke, he was not going to let any of these Senators self-start an investigation. What he did was he put a resolution before the Senate to establish a special committee, and that passed unanimously. So the Republicans endorsed the investigation of Watergate by the embracing of that resolution. That aborted any self-starting by Democrats who had chairs of committees or subcommittees, so the unanimous Senate bought into the Select Committee whose membership the two leaders would choose. But the Republicans couldn't say this investigation did not have legitimacy. They voted it in the Senate and so the charter of the Watergate Committee was set up unanimously by the Senate.

Mansfield put on the Democratic side only Senators who he knew had no Presidential ambition; Sam Ervin, Herman Talmadge, Joe Montoya, Danny Inouye. None of them had any.

Knott: That's a good point. I never thought of it that way.

Ferris: So that way, it couldn't be perceived as someone making political hay out of this.

Knott: And of course Sam Ervin was such a TV star.

Ferris: Sam Ervin was no country lawyer type. He was considered the great constitutionalist. I don't know how great a constitutional scholar he was, but he was perceived as such in the Senate. Perception is everything in politics, and certainly in the Senate, it's a big part of it. It was a masterstroke because Sam Ervin was as conservative a southerner as you can get, and he was leading the investigation. Of course Howard Baker came out of that investigation very well as the ranking member.

Knott Did you mention Montoya?

Ferris: Democrat from New Mexico, yes.

Knott: Is it correct to say that you developed a friendship with Senator Kennedy over the years? How would you describe your relationship with him?

Ferris: Yes, I think a friendship. John Culver worked for him and left to go run for Congress, and I think that was in '64.

Knott: That's right, yes.

Ferris: John, I think, was his administrative assistant. Ted needed an administrative assistant and Dave Burke, who was his legislative assistant called me to see if I would be interested in being his administrative assistant. I liked Ted very much but the opportunity that Mike Mansfield was giving me couldn't be matched anywhere else in Washington. Working for the Majority Leader, especially one with the personal characteristics of Mansfield, was an opportunity that was unparalleled. I mean, once in a millennium you get an opportunity like I had with Mansfield because of all the stuff that was coming up, and Mansfield gave me a lot of discretion on domestic policy to keep the flow of things going.

It was a very nice compliment, but it didn't make any sense at all.

Knott: Has your impression evolved or changed on him over the years?

Ferris: I hope my judgment is better and based on a greater depth of knowledge. I'll tell you a little anecdote on the 18-year-old vote. Mansfield decided to take the action he did during the debate on the floor. He felt very strongly about giving 18-year-olds the right to vote. Jennings Randolph had been talking about it for years, and of course, Ted developed the notion of doing it legislatively. It came out of the head of Carey Parker. Carey Parker had clerked on the Supreme Court and in the Supreme Court's decision upholding the Voting Rights Act of '65, it became clear that this could be done legislatively.

I remember there was a dynamic with Jim Allen of Alabama that went back and forth. Then Mansfield said, "I'm going to offer the 18-year-old vote to this." Mansfield didn't usually jump in and take point positions on things like this, but he did it. Then of course, Jennings wanted to become a co-sponsor, and Warren Magnuson wanted to become a co-sponsor because he had a history of support.

Ted was in Ireland. Carey Parker asked me to put Ted as a co-sponsor. "He's over in Ireland but this is his issue." I said, "All right. I'll talk to Mansfield," and Mansfield put Ted on it. So the amendment and the bill passed the Senate The bill had to return to the House to accept or reject our amendments. This was '70, and the bill to which the 18-year-old amendment was attached was the extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. We originated the Voting Rights Act in the Senate in '65 and but the legislation had to be renewed in five years. There was just going to be an up and down vote on our Senate amendment on the House floor. There was question in the House whether it would pass. John McCormack didn't know how this was going to come out.

Carey drafted a magnificent letter to go to the *Washington Post.* He wanted it to be signed by Teddy and Mansfield on how to do this legislatively. It was a great letter with great impact. So I bring it to Mansfield and he says, "Yes, that's fine, but I want you to put Magnuson on it and I want you to call Barry Goldwater." Barry Goldwater supported the 18-year-old vote. "Go get Barry Goldwater on that. If you get Kennedy, Goldwater, Magnuson, we will have the spectrum covered for the House members."

That goes over and it's in the paper the day before it's being voted on in the House. I actually called Barry Goldwater out at Burning Tree Club and I read the letter to him. I said, "Would you be willing to sign?" "Absolutely, put my name on that." Magnuson wanted to get on it too, and so I called back Carey Parker and said, "Carey, the boss says the letter is great, ready to go. We've added Magnuson and Goldwater." "Oh, you can't do that," Carey said. I said, "Well, I think it makes an awful lot of sense with that lineup to help provide cover in the House. When Senators are young, they want the credit for their creativity and Ted and Carey Parker were the intellectual force behind the 18-year-old by legislation." He said, "You're going to risk your relationship with Ted." I said, "Hey, what's more important, getting a little pissed off or getting the 18-year-old vote through?"

About ten minutes later Teddy calls me on the phone. He was yelling and screaming at me, and then hung up. So, that was probably the nadir of our relationship, but that passed very quickly. We have had over the years a very good relationship. To this day we have a very good relationship. I consider Ted to be the most effective U.S. Senator of the latter half of the 20th century.

Knott: Can you give us some sense of his reputation amongst his Senatorial colleagues from the vantage point of the Majority Leader's office? Did you pick that up?

Ferris: At that point in time, or when?

Knott: If you can give us an overview of the time that you were in the Majority Leader's office. It's a lot to ask.

Ferris: I think Ted is a very likable guy. He's a guy who is willing to work hard on issues. The Kennedys—I know Bobby and Teddy—they attracted the best staff and they ventilated their staff's work product, and that's how you keep good staff. A lot of Senators had great—

Knott: By ventilation you mean—?

Ferris: I mean they come in with ideas and they would run with them if they thought they were good ideas. Your ideas wouldn't be put in a file cabinet, they'd get air time. He'd be fighting for an idea that you created, and that's very important for staff people—hey, I'm not working in a library. All the Kennedys are that way. Bob was that way and Ted's that way, and he's willing to get involved in a lot of issues.

Ted could pick up the phone and call three professors from Harvard and MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], "Come on down for dinner. We want to talk about [issues]." They'd be on the plane down here and he'd have a tremendous discussion with the best people in the country, and he'd educate himself on these issues. That's a pretty stimulating environment when you have a person of Ted's curiosity and you bring the best people you can find around the country and talk about them and learn about them. Your staff is there learning about them too, and Ted does that.

He puts his time and his opportunity to very good use and other Senators recognized that. They were probably very envious because they couldn't pick up the phone and call the Harvard faculty or MIT faculty or wherever. But Teddy wasn't limited just to Massachusetts. He could call Stanford faculty and they'd come in. He used his time well that way, and when he addressed an issue in the Senate, they knew he was well prepared, and that's a nice reputation to have, that you're well prepared.

Knott: Right. You left the Majority Leader's office or I guess Senator Mansfield left the Majority Leader's office in '76.

Ferris: Mansfield announced in March of 1976 he was not going to run for reelection. No one knew until that time. Talk about being in the right place at the right time That day, Tip [Thomas] O'Neill calls me. I had never met Tip when I was growing up in Boston but I had met Tip during the joint leadership negotiations when working with Sen. Mansfield. Usually at the end of legislative sessions the Majority Leaders of both Chambers get together to make sure nothing falls between the cracks before adjournment sine die—do you think we'll be able to pass this one? Can you get this one through? That was my exposure to Tip.

So on the day that Sen. Mansfield announces that he will not seek reelection, Tip calls me and says, "Charlie, I've got the votes to be Speaker next year." This was in March of '76. "I'd like to have you come over, set up my shop, and do for me what you've been doing for Mansfield." I said, "Tip, that's the nicest offer and a most appealing opportunity, but I've been on Capitol Hill for 14 years. It's déjà vu more and more for me now."

But I thought, I don't know where the hell I'm going to go, but that's the nicest thing that could happen because Tip O'Neill was so different from Mansfield in the sense that he was a gregarious guy. He'd walk through the Capitol and people would see him, not just his constituents but people recognized him. "Hey, Mr. Speaker." Or, "Hey, Tip." He'd stop and talk with these folks. Even if he had a Cabinet officer in his room who was waiting for him,

he'd give that person 30 seconds of undivided time and then move on. What a beautiful characteristic. I gave a eulogy for Tip up at Boston College when he died and that was one of the characteristics I mentioned about Tip. Mansfield sort of relied upon me for non electoral politics, the political subtlety of the Senate, the politics of people working in the Senate. Tip, he read a room so quickly. He didn't need me for reading anything.

Knott: Although that's what he said he wanted you to do.

Ferris: He wanted me to set up his office and get him started. For Tip, all politics is local and Tip lived by that rule. However, the country and the world was not always a microcosm of his district. Tip as Speaker would meet with the national press every day as the Senate Majority Leader used to, but Tip previously had to read just the *Boston Globe*. Well, sometimes the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* might have something of national interest not covered in the *Globe.*

I learned that the White House prepared for the President a synopsis of the network news and of major newspapers, their editorials and significant stories in probably 15-16 pages, every day. They didn't distribute this, I guess they didn't want the press to know what the President was reading or what his staff felt was important. However, I persuaded them to give a copy each day to Tip's driver on his way to Tip's house before coming to work. Tip would read this summary and be briefed for each day's press conference. I think that event alone was of value to Tip. We're getting off onto tangents.

Knott: No, no, this is great. Actually, I want to ask you. We were told that you played quite a significant role for that period you were with O'Neill in terms of Northern Ireland and the Irish peace process.

Ferris: Yes. We worked with Gov. Hugh Carey, Pat [Daniel Patrick] Moynihan, Ted Kennedy, and Tip O'Neill. We were working on letters addressing the conflict in Northern Ireland. Carter was the first President who addressed the Northern Ireland issue, and it was these four respected public officials who provided the political umbrella to permit the President to engage this issue and be insulated from the "Irish" factions that were feuding over legitimacy. The head of the Irish caucus up in New York was Congressman [Mario] Biaggi, an Italian Congressman, who was a former policeman. There were questions about that group, who were successful in raising funds but there was great question about their distribution. This was not a caucus of Congress. Some suspected that the IRA [Irish Republican Army] was receiving their aid. There were a great many Irish Americans that wished to do something to aid in the peace process but were provided little guidance.

Knott: Is that NORAID [Irish Northern Aid Committee] or you mean this group itself, the actual Congressional—

Ferris: Yes, they were sort of facilitators. The idea of saying that there's someone else who has a viewpoint on Northern Ireland, which is not one to raise money that ended up buying arms for the IRA. They weren't saying overtly it was going for arms, and they didn't say it was going to the IRA. It was a plea to "Help them in Northern Ireland." President Carter intervened with the

strong backing of these four horsemen and his intervention made it easier for succeeding Presidents to do so as well.

Carey Parker takes a month off during the Congressional summer recess and goes to an island up in Maine that doesn't have a telephone. He would come over to the mainland by boat at a certain time, usually 4:00 P.M., and either I would call the payphone at the landing or he would call me at the office. It sounds in recollection like an episode out of a John Le Carré novel but we a were working on this letter and checking the latest changes in the draft. Matt Nimitz, who was the counselor at the State Department, was working on behalf of the Administration. He played a very significant role in this process. Moving in conjunction with the Administration was very important in making this more than a PR undertaking.

Knott: Do you have any sense of why—I'm taking you a little bit afield here. President Carter put you as Chairman of the FCC [Federal Communications Commission]. Senator Kennedy challenges him in 1980 for the Presidential nomination. What's your take on that? Why did that happen and where did you stand on that?

Ferris: I think that was the great turning point in Ted's career. I think there was a political infrastructure that wanted a Kennedy to get back into the White House. I always wondered whether Ted ever would have made a run for it unless all these people who worked for Jack and worked for Bobby felt that they were incomplete because of their tragic endings. Ted had the bug, but that 1980 venture killed the bug. Ted went back to doing what he did best, being the point man on the development of social policy in the country.

The 25 years that he served in the Senate since then have been his golden years. Mike Mansfield told me a couple years before he died—he used to have an office up the street with Goldman Sachs and I'd visit him every day for an hour, an hour and a half, and we'd just talk about old times and current events. He said, in his lifetime in the Senate, Ted Kennedy was the most effective Senator he had ever served with. I think you can see a dramatic change in his focus after 1980 because he no longer was suspected of running for President. When he'd address something, he was addressing it not for personal political gain or to further his political ambition, but because he felt committed to an issue, and he's done that for the past 25 years and been extraordinarily effective.

I can remember Jack Nelson, who was the Los *Angeles Times* bureau chief, asking me in the spring of 1980, "Charlie, where are you on this thing?" I said, "I grew up in Dorchester, Massachusetts. A very big thing in life and politics where I grew up is loyalty; Carter appointed me and I'm loyal to Carter. I don't even have to tell Ted Kennedy. Ted Kennedy would know exactly that's where I am and that's where I should be." I loved Ted, but Carter appointed me. I'd step down from the job if I was going to do anything other than that. That wasn't a difficult decision for me to make if I was going to remain Chairman of the FCC.

Knott: Where was Tip O'Neill in all this? I know he had problems with President Carter. He was a Democrat and probably felt some sense of loyalty to his President and to his party, and this was a divisive challenge.

Ferris: I wasn't with Tip then. In 1962, when Speaker McCormack's nephew ran against Ted, Tip was the only member of the Massachusetts Congressional delegation who supported Eddie McCormack over Ted because it was the same thing. "John McCormack was his colleague from Massachusetts and the Speaker of the House."

I'm not saying there was any problem. I don't know. I used to keep in contact with Tip because he used to go up there just to pick up the vibes. I don't recall where Tip was, but I would be surprised if Tip went out openly on this issue. I'm sure he didn't go against his President publicly, but I think in his heart, Ted would be a President from Massachusetts. That would be positive. It's interesting. I don't recall that whole dynamic. I'll have to find that out.

Knott: Feel free to write it in the transcript if you wish. Did I hear you correctly in that you believed once Senator Kennedy got the Presidential bug out of his system, he became a far more effective Senator?

Ferris: Far more effective because his motives were never suspect. He concentrated his energies on issues that he believed in and he put all that energy to work towards those issues. He was extraordinarily effective in this period of time. Mansfield is not one to blow smoke. He's a man of few words and never has idle gestures, and he just said, "By far the most effective and best Senator that I've ever served with." And he goes back to the '30s. That's a pretty good evaluation to have.

Knott: Have you had contact with Senator Kennedy over the years since you've left public service?

Ferris: Sure, casual. As a matter of fact, it was sort of nice, he came down to St. Croix, he and Vicki [Reggie Kennedy] came down there at Christmas time.

Knott: Is that St. Croix on the TV set there?

Ferris: That's my place in St. Croix.

Knott: I was in St. Croix two years ago. It's a beautiful place.

Ferris: Where did you stay, at the Buccaneer?

Knott: Yes, exactly.

Ferris My place is a mile or so east of the Buccaneer. Geraldine Ferraro's condo was right next to mine. We both looked out to Buck Island. Ted and Vicki came down around Christmas time occasionally for a week, rented a place near the Buccaneer. We had dinner together on several occasions. Geraldine, who was a great cook, prepared dinner and the six of us used to have dinner. It's so nice to see Ted when he knows all the people and he's comfortable with all the people. You know, every politician has to be on. When you're in front of people that you don't know, who they see is not you. It's nice to be with him when he doesn't have to be on.

The conversations are very different. There aren't people who are unconsciously human tape recorders.

Knott: We've heard that his marriage to Vicki was a very important event in his life**.**

Ferris: Oh, I think she's been marvelous for him. She's a great woman. She gave up her career. She's with him all the time on the campaign, and she's a great support to him. I'm sure these are very happy years for him.

Knott: Is there anything else you'd like to add? I don't want to push these things. I think we've probably reached the end.

Ferris: We're early then, aren't we?

Knott: We are early, but that happens quite often. Is there something that you want to add to the record that I failed to ask? I know lawyers hate to be asked questions like that.

Ferris: No. I mean, you all set the agenda on it.

Knott: We've heard a lot of stories of behind the scenes personal generosity that don't get reported, that he does not even want the media to be aware of. Have you seen any of this or heard of these kinds of actions?

Ferris: I had one happen to me. My father died in 1967. Bob and Ted still had the *Caroline* then and they'd fly into Hyannis on weekends I'd be going to Boston to visit my Dad. I remember one time I'm getting off and Bobby says, "Charlie, where you are going?" I said, "I'm going to go rent a car because I'm going back to Boston." "To hell with that." He told the pilot, "Fly Charlie up to Boston." So a very disappointed pilot and crew fly me up to Boston, leave me, and then come back to Hyannis.

Knott: That's a nice touch.

Ferris: A lovely touch. Bob Kennedy came on the floor in August '67 and was looking for me. My assistant was down in the well and he said, "Where's Charlie?" He said, "Charlie got word in the night that his dad died, so he's gone up to Boston." I was up in Boston with my mother, the phone rings and Angie Novello was on the phone. I answered the phone and she told me how sorry she was and said, "The Senator wants to talk to you, but he also wants to talk to your mother after he finishes talking to you." He was very gracious, and then of course, he talks to my mother and you know, a Kennedy in Massachusetts in '67 I mean, the Pope would be second in the line then. Then of course he blew all sorts of smoke about me to my mother. God, talk about what a marvelous thing to do.

That was on a Friday, and the funeral was at St. Mark's in Dorchester on Monday at 10:00 A.M. When our family enters the church, who's in the church, Bob and Ted. They came up to Dorchester for the funeral mass and both came out after the mass and got into the car to talk to

my mother. No one knows about that. That's the personal gesture that meant a great deal to me but more so it was so important to my mother that my Dad was so honored.

Knott: We hear these kinds of stories quite often.

Ferris: My mother didn't die until 21 years later in the late '80s. Her funeral mass was in the same church and with the same undertaker When I went to make the arrangements he said, "Oh, yes, the Kennedys were at your father's funeral." This was 21 years later. It was a lovely gesture that had long-term impact in my mother's community.

We all try to distinguish ourselves and leave a legacy of what we stood for. I think that's what an Irish wake is all about—it's the idea that people get together and tell stories about the deceased. The stories are about the experience each had with the deceased. It is a statement that expresses the significance of the deceased and the impact he or she had upon them. It's a ritual that testifies that they weren't insignificant, they had impact, and their friends and relatives want to tell what impact by telling a story; that's a beautiful tradition because for the working poor the written histories will not record their journey; most of them lived below the noise level of history. The ritual that accompanies one's passing seeks to raise that life above the noise level. He did that, I'm sure, to so many people. You know, when people need a little—

Knott: What would you say to somebody reading this transcript or listening to this 50-100 years from now as to why the Kennedys—and I think you've just partially answered it—but why the Kennedys and perhaps Ted Kennedy in particular have had such a hold on the people of Massachusetts? How would you explain that to somebody who is perhaps not familiar with the whole situation?

Ferris: I think it's probably more than Massachusetts. It's probably a hold on the country. I think you have a family with a great privilege and every one of them was committed to public service. They went against so much of the values of this era now, the 21st century, of what's in it for me and self-gratification. They were thinking of others. They really felt that government was there to help those that the system passed by, and they were going to represent those that the system passed by. There's a nobility to public service if you look at it in those terms, and that's what the Kennedys stood for and Ted has stood for his entire life. That's one hell of a legacy.

He had greater opportunities because of the family and because of his brothers and what they did, and therefore, he was able to get attention to issues and to have impact on issues beyond another Senator who had the same motivations. He also had opportunities to be a playboy, to go off and ski for six months of the year. He squeezed in his playtime but it didn't interrupt what his real commitment was. That's a nice legacy to leave behind.

You can come up with a laundry list of things, of legislation—and he's personally a great politician in the sense that Orrin Hatch—I've seen him say publicly, "Ted Kennedy is my best friend in the United States Senate." Now, here's this ultraconservative Mormon from Utah who considers Ted Kennedy to be his best friend in the United States Senate. I mean, that says

something. He's worked closely with him on the same committees. Whether it's on the Judiciary or the Labor or Public Welfare—I don't even know what they call it now—and to publicly make statements like that. It doesn't help Orrin Hatch out in Utah to talk about Ted Kennedy being the closest friend he has in the United States Senate.

Knott: Hardly.

Ferris: But he goes out of his way to say that publicly. I saw him say it at some big dinner or something, dedicating something to Ted. I think it was the Irish-American dinner that they have every year here. That's a tribute, how people who observe you closely evaluate you and how they trust you, and that means something.

Knott: I should have asked you this earlier, but you knew Bobby Kennedy fairly well. Could you contrast the two men for us—different strengths, different weaknesses.

Ferris: It was probably Bobby's experience. Bobby ran Jack's campaign and was a caddy on Adlai Stevenson's '56 campaign to learn—and then ran a campaign and was at the Justice Department. He was a decision maker. Teddy, I think, didn't have that experience. Dave Burke used to do this too, you know, they'd have an issue that they wanted to get educated on. Dave Burke would be doing the calling—call George Ball on foreign policy. You'd get every name that was recognizable on a certain issue and get their views, and they'd all give you their views. Teddy would get them and just sort of distill and know where to go.

Bobby Kennedy wasn't that way. Bobby Kennedy, from my experience, would think it through himself and then he'd come to a kind of conclusion. Then he'd decide who would be a good guy to test his judgment against, and he'd pick someone. I remember Bobby doing this one time with me. It was on the Amendment on President Succession, the 25th Amendment. Birch Bayh, I think, was managing that on the floor, and the issue was if a President can be determined to be incapacitated by a majority of the Cabinet, then who determines when he's able to come back in and take it again. It was not clearly thought through. Bobby had a very good staff. Peter Edelman was one of them, and who was the other guy?

Knott: Adam Yarmolinsky?

Ferris: Adam, yes. Adam was the bad cop and Peter was the good cop, but both very bright cops. They had a speech that they wrote to really focus on the imprecision of the language on the shifting of the power of the Presidency.

So Bob calls me up and says, "Do you have a moment?" I said sure, and he said, "I'm coming over to the floor." We went off into the Secretary's outer office and he said, "I want you to read this thing." Those who wrote it were all sitting there as I read through it. It was as would be expected clearly written and raised important issues. After I finished Bob says, "What do you think?" I said, "I think these are points that have to be made, but I don't think you should do it." This notion of dealing with possible coups, etc., was best left to others if the changes were to have a chance of adoption.

I said you don't do this and he said, "What do I do?" Well, you pick up the phone and call John Pastore. John Pastore is the best debater in the Senate. And you pick up the phone and call Phil Hart. Phil Hart, the conscience of the Senate. You call them, have them come over to the floor, have them make your points. He picks up the phone immediately and calls John Pastore, calls Phil Hart. They make the points on the floor, and he just sits there on the floor quietly.

Obviously he had some question in his mind and he felt that I had good judgment, certainly with respect to the dynamics in the Senate. He didn't take a poll and he didn't want credit. He just felt that this is something that has to be addressed, but do I further the effort by addressing it myself? He made the decisions. I mean, he didn't say Well, what about X Senator or Y Senator and go through the list of all the Senators, who were the best ones. I just felt that these were the two best ones off the top of my head, and he just acted on it. Obviously, he came to the conclusion that he was going to follow my judgment and he did it. It was very flattering, but it was the right thing, and I think he wouldn't have done it unless he agreed in his own mind that he probably should not be the one raising these issues on the Senate floor.

Knott: Ted has this capacity as well?

Ferris: Well, Ted was younger. Ted now, I'm sure. Ted during his first term had the Frank Morrissey nomination. Joe Kennedy tried to get Bobby to put him on the federal bench and Bobby refused. He knew that Frank Morrissey wasn't qualified. When the Judiciary Committee hearing on the Morrissey nomination was taking place, I remember Quentin Burdick—he was on the Judiciary Committee at the time—coming over to the floor and telling me, "God, Charlie, Morrissey's is a disaster. I [Burdick] attempted throw him watermelons to hit, and he can't hit a watermelon. I was afraid to ask him what a tort was."

There was a statement in the paper that morning talking about should he withdraw, and Lyndon Johnson loved this little bit of theatre, this nomination from the bosom of "the best and the brightest." Frank Morrissey would put a little taint on this image. So the press asked the White House if the President would withdraw his name and the White House said, "No, I spoke to the Senator and the Senator said no, and so we're going to stick right with him." Bobby didn't get involved at least publicly in the selection or advocacy of Morrissey.

This was Ted's issue. This was a Massachusetts appointment. I'm sure Bob did not want to be perceived as playing big brother. But the nomination was proceeding to a vote. Bob called me on the phone and said, "Charlie, what should we do on Morrissey?" I said, "Without that statement by the President and Ted, it's hard to consider the options still available." He said, "Are we going to win it?" I said, "I think you're going to win it by two or three votes, but you're going to make an awful lot of Senators walk the plank for you on something that is going to be very distasteful to them." Then he said, "Well, what do you think we should do?" I said, "Get this guy to write a letter to withdraw, but I think that's probably foreclosed because of the statement of Ted and the President that they were not backing down." He said, "Nothing is foreclosed."

Damn it, the next day, a letter withdrawing the nomination is released. Bob got involved only when it got to the point where it was going to be messy, and that's the value of Bob's

experience. He could take bad news and say, “Hey, you cut your losses.” And Ted at that time in his professional career probably didn’t recognize as quickly as Bob did the unintended consequences of persistence. How much should you ask of your colleagues? You lose an awful lot of your capital when you make people do things that are very distasteful just because you want them to do them. Bobby just sort of stepped in and that was the end of Frank Morrissey, and that was the right thing. That was early in Ted’s career—Ted was a Senator for three or four years when this thing happened. He hadn’t developed the wisdom that comes from experience; he was not then what he is now.

Knott: This has been great. We appreciate it very much.

Ferris: I usually get on to anecdotes. I feel I’m letting you guys down**.**

Knott: Absolutely not. You are not disappointing us at all. This has been terrific. If you want to tell some more stories, we’re ready to listen.

Ferris: Delighted to talk to you. It’s always fun for me to go back and reminisce.