EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT P. FITZGERALD, SR.

June 18, 2009
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Interviewer

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TRANSCRIPT

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Young: This is June 18th, an interview with Bob Fitzgerald in Boston. We were just talking about some of us his early connections or observations with the Kennedy family. You are Edward's [Kennedy] first cousin, right?

Fitzgerald: Yes, I'm his first cousin. Before we start, you had referred to the Gargan family: Joe, Ann, and Mary Jo. They had an unusually close association and relationship with the entire family because, very unfortunately, their mother and father passed away when they were young. At that time, Aunt Rose, Mrs. Kennedy, took it upon herself to see that the Gargan children were well cared for. Part of that caring was having them spend the summers with the family in Hyannis Port. During the winter, the kids all went to separate schools and probably didn't see too much of each other, but during the summer it was very intense and very warm relationships were developed between the Kennedy kids and the Gargan kids.

When it got to be campaign time, Joe Gargan became very much involved in [John F.] Jack Kennedy's campaign, and then followed it on to Teddy's campaign and also to [Robert F. Kennedy] Bobby's campaign.

Young: This was Bobby's Presidential?

Fitzgerald: Bobby's Senatorial.

Young: Oh, in New York.

Fitzgerald: In New York. Also in the Presidential campaign. My father, who was Aunt Rose's brother—and fortunately for me, both Mother and Dad lived well into their eighties. Therefore, I was really basically under the care of my mother and father. We went to the Cape every summer. We had our own home. I had some relationships and friendships, associations, contacts with Teddy and the Gargan kids. I did some sailing with them and played occasionally in the football games and softball games that they would have on the weekends. We also were invited to the family home on weekends.

Uncle Joe [Joseph Kennedy], being in the movie business, had movies that were basically pre-release, which we were able to see in the movie theatre in the basement of the home. Usually I would get back to Boston in September, October, and would have seen many of the movies that just were being released, due to my weekend movies at the Kennedy compound.

Although I was a cousin and we were friends—I went to Boston Latin School. I did not have much contact at all with Teddy or Joe during the winter months that we were in school. That is the early part of my relationships and associations.

Young: Could I ask about you and your grandfather [John M.] Fitzgerald—Did you know him?

Fitzgerald: Yes. My father, John M. Fitzgerald, Jr. and his father were very close. Grandpa lived at the Bellevue Hotel at the top of Beacon Street, right across the street from the State House. I used to visit with my father very often with Grandpa and Grandma in their hotel at the Bellevue. In those days, all of the major parades used to go up Beacon Street right in front of Grandpa's hotel. He had two balconies on each side of the corner, and we were able to stand up there and watch the parade. At that time, Ann Gargan used to be there, and Mary Jo and Joe used to visit too, so I would have associations at that time with the Gargan kids.

Young: Teddy has spoken at some length about his visits with his grandfather. This was when he was at school—

Fitzgerald: At Milton Academy.

Young: Milton Academy. He'd come in some Sundays. It seemed to me, hearing him talk about what they did together and what he learned, and also about Grandpa's visits to the Cape, that it was a very meaningful relationship for him, learning about the Irish in Boston and all the details. His Grandpa, he said, knew everybody.

Fitzgerald: He did.

Young: It was, I think, an introduction to real-life politics in a way for Teddy.

Fitzgerald: I'm quite sure it was.

Young: He didn't have that in Hyannis Port or in Palm Beach.

Fitzgerald: No. And also, Milton Academy was somewhat isolated. Those were Teddy's formative years, and it was really wonderful that Grandpa would spend the time with the grandchildren and try to educate them in the world of politics and how it worked, explaining many of the colorful people who were involved in the issues of the day. I remember at the hotel, you would walk in and there would be newspaper clippings scattered throughout the room. Grandpa would have sat and gone through all the papers and periodicals and have cut out the ones that interested him. He would then write a note on the article or a note on a piece of paper and send off his ideas to these people who were in the newspapers at that time.

Grandpa was very interested in the politics of the day, although he was not involved himself. On a number of occasions when I was there he would have a note to somebody who was either in the Massachusetts House or the Massachusetts Senate that was in the paper, and he would give me the envelope and ask me if I would deliver it to the person of interest, which I did.

Grandpa and I also used to talk about the public Latin School, because he graduated from the Latin School and I did, and we used to compare the Latin School that he knew and the Latin

School that I know, or knew. Of course, the Ambassador [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] graduated from the Latin School, and my daughter graduated from the Latin School three years ago, so it's really been a Fitzgerald-Kennedy tradition at the Latin School, which I think is wonderful.

Young: You and Teddy are two or three years apart?

Fitzgerald: Yes, that's right. I really did not have much to do with the President. In 1962 I was interested politically, and that's when Ted decided that he was going to get involved in the Senatorial fight. I was working with IBM at the time. I talked to a few people, and at that time they needed bright, young, resourceful people to become involved in his campaign.

Gerard Doherty was basically the campaign manager. He was the one who set all of the political wheels in motion. Gerard knew all of the players from his relationships at the State House, and therefore was an exceptionally good choice to spearhead the campaign. Subsequently, they asked me if I would like to get involved with the campaign. I said yes, and I did. I took a leave of absence from IBM and to this day I still have the letter from Tom Watson granting me the leave of absence and encouraging me to become involved.

At that time, when Teddy was just becoming involved, the climate for a run for the United States Senate for Teddy was not terribly positive. A number of people politically had reservations about his experience, his youth, and his abilities, and that he wanted to start at the top and not to—

Young: Work his way up?

Fitzgerald: And not work his way up as Jack did. I remember going to the gates of a lot of the industrial plants that we would subsequently visit during the campaign at six o'clock in the morning when the shift would change. Ted would be there to greet the people as they were going in. The people, some of them, would say, "You've never worked a day of your life." Other people would say, "Well, you haven't worked a day of your life, and you haven't missed a thing." So there was some humor attached to it.

Young: The Harvard people and the intellectual people were very outspoken, some of them, against Teddy. They were for Jack but they were against Teddy. They didn't think much of him. Is that a correct impression?

Fitzgerald: I think you're right—in the beginning.

Young: Right, in the beginning. It changed.

Fitzgerald: It changed dramatically. There were even a number of people in the White House who had reservations about Teddy in a run for the Senate and how it would affect the President.

Young: "Too many Kennedys in Washington," maybe. Or maybe, "Teddy's going to create a problem here."

Fitzgerald: Well, yes, I think that was it.

Young: Because they didn't think much of him either.

Fitzgerald: They didn't know him. They didn't know him, most of them, and they were afraid that it was going to cause them some problems. It was basically selfish on their part. I think that at that time, Uncle Joe stepped in and basically told them that it was going to happen, and to get ready to support him. Also, Teddy had no reservations.

Barbara [Souliotis], by the way—you probably know—is the longest employee that the Senator has had. She was 18 years old, from Haverhill, when she came to work. She has been a positive godsend. She's wonderful.

Young: Explain something about the Democratic politics that were involved. I've heard that Kennedy needed to get an independent vote from Massachusetts, but he also needed the Democrats. The Democrats, weren't they divided? Wasn't there [Edward J.] McCormack and then.. . .

Fitzgerald: Oh yes, the Democrats were divided, and McCormack had a very strong organization. Of course his uncle was the Speaker, so that lent a lot of leverage and strength. Eddie McCormack was the Attorney General, which also gave him a network across the state, of people that he could tap to work in his campaign. In anticipation of his running, he very shrewdly named a number of people from the various forty districts as Assistant Attorney Generals. They really didn't do anything, but they had the icon of being an Assistant Attorney General, and they owed Eddie McCormack. That was the sort of thing that we had to break through. Surprisingly enough, there were a number of them that broke ranks with Eddie McCormack and joined ranks with Ted.

Young: How did that come about? What brought them around? This was before the debates.

Fitzgerald: Yes, before the debates. Teddy was very vigorous, was running a very strong campaign, showed that he had a grasp of the issues, showed that he had a good organization behind him. It just took some time for these people to realize that Kennedy was a good candidate and someone that they could see themselves—

Young: This was his first campaign on his own. Was he good at it?

Fitzgerald: Very good. He was a natural. As I mentioned, he would go to the gates over here at the Navy Yard. He was so outgoing and friendly and gregarious that people couldn't help but like him. Of course, he was a very hard worker. He worked extraordinarily hard himself, and that carried over to the members of the staff and the campaign group. To see him working as hard as he did, we put our shoulders to the wheel and got going.

Young: Did you have a chance to compare him to his brother John as a street campaigner?

Fitzgerald: No, I did not.

Young: Joe is rumored to have said that Teddy was the best politician of the lot. Is that close to the mark?

Fitzgerald: He was the best natural politician, absolutely. Jack Kennedy was brilliant, but he was less outgoing, very intellectual. People warmed up to him and appreciated—He too was a

hard worker and put together an extraordinary organization. But Teddy, I believe, was the most natural of them all. Even Grandpa Fitzgerald used to say—and of course Grandpa was dead—but he used to say that Teddy was the best natural politician. As you said to me, they had a lot of associations and contact together, so Grandpa knew.

As a consequence of the decision to run in the campaign, it was needed to put together very quickly an energetic, resourceful group of people to organize a campaign organization. I was part of that initial group in putting together the organization and I was prepared to do whatever I could do that would be helpful. I had graduated from Holy Cross, which was in Worcester, and I had a number of contacts in the Worcester area. My wife Sally [Fitzgerald] was basically a native of Cambridge. I had developed a number of close friends in Cambridge. With my contacts in Cambridge and Worcester, they asked me if I would take on Worcester, Cambridge, and Somerville as my responsibilities for the upcoming Democratic state convention.

They had to make arrangements in the 40 Senatorial districts to organize people that would be responsible for the delegates in each one of those districts. I had Cambridge, Somerville, Worcester. Don Dowd was in Springfield. Other people were in Boston. We had to report in on a daily basis our progress with the delegate situation—

Young: To Gerry Doherty?

Fitzgerald: To Gerard Doherty. Gerard kept the major map and he kept the tally. [Stephen] Steve Smith was very closely allied in overseeing what was happening, but Steve did not have the associations and the contacts that Gerard had. He let Gerard be the manager, but Steve knew everything that was going on.

Young: Steve also handled the money?

Fitzgerald: Yes, I believe Steve handled the money, and Steve reported directly back to the Ambassador. The Ambassador was extraordinarily interested. He had an apartment down in the lower part of Beacon Street that he would come to and stay and have meetings about the progress of the campaign. So this was not a hands-off situation for the Ambassador. He was also very much involved.

Most of the delegates—A lot of them were members of the House, the Senate, Selectmen, political people in the areas that they were delegates from, so they were seasoned pols. I had to learn very quickly that these people were very serious, and that you had to pay attention to them and babysit them, and give them access to the Senator, just basically try to get control of them.

Young: You were trying to get the right delegate spread and delegate count for the convention?

Fitzgerald: That's right.

Young: So this wasn't a primary.

Fitzgerald: No.

Young: That came later.

Fitzgerald: That came later. The convention was in June, and the primary of course was later. Those were the days before everything was computerized and the delegate counts were kept on a daily basis and updated by a computer. Gerard Doherty was the computer. Everything was in Gerard Doherty's head. Of course, he had lists and what have you, but I often wondered, if Gerard had ever walked across the street and got hit by a car, who would be able to very quickly pick up the tally and have as great a handle on the delegate situation as he did?

As it worked out, before we went to the convention, Steve asked Gerard where he thought we were in relation to the delegate count. Gerard gave him the number, and Steve wrote it down on a piece of paper. When all was said and done, Gerard was one delegate off. That's how closely he kept the tally, and how closely he knew the delegates because of his State House and political involvements.

Young: Were there sections that were—Were there Italian districts?

Fitzgerald: Yes, there were Italian districts, Polish districts— French-Canadian were one of the largest voting groups in the state.

Young: Is that particularly in western Massachusetts?

Fitzgerald: No, it was particularly, I believe, in the northern—Middlesex and up north there. They had come down from Canada. In the northwest they came down.

The Senator's mother, Aunt Rose, took a very active part in the campaign. I used to handle her schedule. She was very close to the French-Canadians, to the Italians. Talk about a campaigner—she was probably the best campaigner of them all. She worked tirelessly and was very helpful and instrumental in getting the vote out. She did it with Jack, and she also did it with Teddy. She would speak to women's groups and encourage them how important their vote was.

Young: She was experienced at this. She had been around with her father, had she not?

Fitzgerald: That's right.

Young: Campaigning, and was very politically savvy as they would say—

Fitzgerald: Very savvy. She did it also for Jack. She ran the famous Kennedy teas for women, which was really one of the first thrusts that any candidate made towards the women as a group.

I will never forget, one time we had a function in Worcester and it was a very snowy late afternoon. We embarked on our way back to Boston. We had a State Police escort with us because at that time she was the mother of the President of the United States. We left Worcester and the snow got heavier. The State Police all of a sudden pulled into a motel on Route 9, which was like an EconoLodge, nothing fancy. They said, "Mrs. Kennedy, it's dangerous for us to continue. We would like you to wait out here until the plows come and have a chance to open the road a little bit better for us to continue to Boston." We were sitting in the hotel, and she was busying herself with her notes and her schedule. She was reading and she said to me, "Bobby, who would ever think that the mother of the President of the United States would be holed up in this little hotel in Worcester, unable to go anywhere?" She was just laughing at the circumstance.

She wasn't upset at all, but she really took it as a very humorous situation. That's the way she was. She was very funny. She liked to laugh, and she loved people.

One time I was at the Cape and we were scheduled to have a cookout at six o'clock. Everyone was told to be there on board at quarter to six. For some reason I don't recall, I was five minutes late. She came up to me and said, "Bobby, if you are ever late again, you will not be allowed to sit at the table. Now go sit down." She was very loving, very friendly, but she was a taskmaster. She had to be, with the family that she had and the rest of us. But she was so giving, so very giving about ourselves, so interested in what we were all doing.

Diverting from the campaign, I remember when my father and mother—We used to spend some time during Christmas vacation down in Palm Beach. One time I was at Latin School and I was on the basketball team. I was captain of the basketball team. We went to Palm Beach, which interfered with our basketball practices at the school over the Christmas holiday. We had been selected to go to the tournament after Christmas at the Boston Garden. Aunt Rose found out about that and she made arrangements at the local YMCA in Palm Beach for me to go every morning for an hour to practice basketball—dribbling, shooting. She had somebody who was on the staff with me. It was so very helpful to me when I got back to have had that ability to stay with it during vacation, rather than to have taken days off and become rusty. That's the degree of interest that she took.

Young: I bet it surprised your teammates when you got back that you'd spent your vacation—

Fitzgerald: I don't think they ever knew about it.

Young: They didn't know about it?

Fitzgerald: I mean they knew that I was a relative, but I didn't see any purpose in parading the fact that I was in Palm Beach and that I had practiced basketball. They were just interested in winning.

So they gave me Worcester, Cambridge, and Somerville. As history will show, we did very well in all three. I was very pleased. That was in June, and during the summer, I was going back and forth to those areas, developing a primary organization because—

Young: Was it predicted that—Did you expect, or did Doherty expect, that Eddie McCormack would not accept the convention decision?

Fitzgerald: I think so.

Young: That he was going to appeal?

Fitzgerald: Well, I think he felt, or they felt, that they had a statewide organization and that they could rely on that to do the job for them. You know, with the President in Washington and Teddy winning the convention, and Teddy showing people that he was articulate, intelligent for the issues, and had a campaign staff and campaign organization that was all-inclusive, people took him seriously. In Worcester there was a large Italian group; in Cambridge, a large Italian, and

large Irish. Somerville was mixed, but we made our camps with the leadership of those groups and worked very hard on our organization to get the vote out.

Young: Now at this point, Teddy, I imagine, would be doing a lot more pressing the flesh, going around to homes, because now—

Fitzgerald: Yes, now it was the population and not the delegates. Yes, you're exactly right. The campaign was geared to a more diverse universe than the delegates.

Young: Making an impression on the people in the street, too, so to speak. Going to the clubs.

Fitzgerald: Precisely, and that's the way the campaign advertising would be put to a more diverse group of people than the delegates. He again worked very hard. The organization was broken down by groups and we were all responsible for our areas. We knew the Democratic strongholds, and we knew the Republican strongholds. The concentration was put on the Democratic areas, and they knew the percentages that they had to get in order to be successful. They knew that Boston was a key, that he had to carry Boston by a certain percentage in order to offset the western part of the state and the Cape and some of the more Republican-leaning areas, and that's what they did. They spent their money judiciously in those areas and they were successful.

Now, I must say that the debates played a huge role in the primary campaign. Over in Dorchester, in South Boston on top of the hill, the night that Eddie McCormack said, "If your name was Edward Moore and not Edward Moore Kennedy, your campaign would be a sham," I think people took that as really sort of dirty politics. Teddy rose above the comment, continued with the debate, stayed with the issues, and convinced people that his name was Edward Moore Kennedy and his campaign was not a joke. As the campaign unfolded—

Young: You noticed a change then? I've heard stories about the switchboards lighting up. People saying that was unfair.

Fitzgerald: That's right, and it was really the turning point, I believe. We went on from there, and the campaign became more volatile. We found more people willing to join us, and subsequently Teddy was successful in handily winning the campaign. I must say that the organization was superb and was very instrumental in the victory, and Teddy proved his mettle as a campaigner and a person who knew the issues, and as someone who could benefit Massachusetts in the United States Senate.

Young: You attended the victory celebration?

Fitzgerald: Yes.

Young: Could you just describe that?

Fitzgerald: Well, it was a just a large crowd of people. Everybody was happy. Everybody was just relieved that the campaign was over, but that we had won. It was at that time the most important thing in life for us.

Young: Was a celebration held in—What was the name of the deli?

Fitzgerald: The G&G. That was on election night.

Young: That was election night. So that was a big event too.

Fitzgerald: That was the final rally.

Young: That was the rally. Okay.

Fitzgerald: That really was, historically, the closing rally for the political campaign of 1963. All of the candidates came and spoke, and there was a huge crowd, very raucous, very loud, lots of music. Kennedy got a huge turnout. It was extraordinarily successful and exciting. Of course Teddy on the stump just lit up the crowd, and like Grandpa, was not averse to singing a song. He sang "Sweet Adeline" that night and then his other favorite is "Rosie O'Grady." He sings those to this day. I think his second avocation would have been as a song and dance man. It's fun at parties to have him do that because it really does liven things up.

Young: Somebody had mentioned to me there was an occasion when the three brothers appeared and sang. Do you recall anything about that? Up on the roof somewhere. I'm trying to remember.

Fitzgerald: No, I don't. It could have been at Hyannis Port at the house. They had a long porch, and then the porch overlooked this huge lawn where the famous touch football games were played and they would have clambakes and parties. It could very well have been that Jack and Bobby and Teddy sang from that porch to the people who were all out on the lawn.

Young: "Won't You Come Home, Billy Bailey" was one of them.

Fitzgerald: Well, they used to have that Dixieland band from Hyannis there, and the guy used to, and still does, play that.

So we had the successful campaign for Teddy and we all had a bit of respite. I stayed in touch with my people because they then were looking for White House tours and visits with Teddy in Washington. I fortunately could act as a conduit to those people and it was very helpful to keeping these people happy that they didn't feel that Kennedy wined them and dined them, won the election, and then forgot them.

Young: And then forgot them. He was always very good about writing and thanking people. That's sort of legendary. Jack [John] Crimmins was his driver, wasn't he?

Fitzgerald: Yes, Jack Crimmins from South Boston.

Young: From what I've heard about him, I wish I'd been able to interview him.

Fitzgerald: Yes, because Jack is the guy that could write the book. Also, they threw the mold away after they made Jack. He would stand up to the Senator if he thought he was wrong. He made no bones about it. Teddy loved him, would listen to him, and oftentimes Jack had very

good street and political sense. He never got out of line, and he was loyal. Teddy never had anyone who was more loyal than Jack Crimmins.

Teddy really is probably one of the brightest people in the Senate, one of the most resourceful people in the Senate in using the resources that are available to him. He's one of the most considerate people of others that I know, the most thoughtful of other people, and the most compassionate and helpful person of everybody that I have ever known. You talk about him making phone calls or writing notes—you cannot imagine the number of people that he has touched just with a phone call out of the blue, showing his concern and consideration for whatever it might be these people were going through.

Young: This has been true from the beginning, hasn't it?

Fitzgerald: Right from the beginning. Teddy has got a very big, big heart. I've had some surgeries on my throat. I would be in the recovery room, and they would bring the phone to me, and it would be Teddy on the phone, speaking words of encouragement and thoughtfulness. After Bobby died and the kids were at school up here, nobody knew it, but Teddy used to sneak up here and spend some time with the kids as their surrogate father, get back on a plane, go back to Washington. It wasn't done just once. It was done all the time. That's the stuff that he's made of.

Young: Do you think that Bobby was like him in that respect? I was trying to get a sense of the three brothers and what was different about them and what was similar. Much more has been written about Jack and about Bobby than has been written about him, at least outside the gossip stuff.

Fitzgerald: Yes, Bobby was very much involved with justice for all and for people in situations and circumstances—civil rights, things like that. I don't know, personally. Bobby was wonderful with his children, wonderful to his wife. All I know first-hand is Teddy. People would say that Bobby could have been the greatest President in the United States because of his heart and his intelligence.

In 1965, Gerard Doherty again was involved and they asked him to go to Indiana for the Presidential primary that Bobby was embarking on. Indiana was run by the Democratic Governor by the name of [Roger] Branigan. He had a stranglehold on the electorate out there. Anyway, Gerard went out there and started his organization.

Young: Branigan was not in favor of Bobby?

Fitzgerald: No.

Young: He was a [Lyndon B.] Johnson man?

Fitzgerald: A Johnson man. Then Gerard brought a number of people from the '63 campaign out to Indiana and organized it similar to the way that it was organized in Massachusetts for the primary. I was given Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago Whiting as my areas of concentration. Gary, of course, was the big city of the group.

Young: Was it still working then?

Fitzgerald: Still working. We did much the same in Indiana that we did in Massachusetts.

Young: It must have been tougher though.

Fitzgerald: It was tougher.

Young: Because you were not from Indiana. You were working against the powers that be.

Fitzgerald: That's right. But Jack Kennedy was the President. "Kennedy" was somewhat of a magic name, and they saw Bobby working, campaigning, and they got to love him. We just worked to get the vote out and put together a better organization than Branigan. We came about and won the Indiana primary, which was a huge surprise to a lot of people. Then the campaign went on—

Young: Excuse me—Martin Luther King was killed when?

Fitzgerald: Just before Bobby.

Young: Just before Bobby, but didn't that happen while he was working Indiana? I seem to remember Bobby going before and giving a speech in Indiana and he gave the news about Martin Luther King.

Fitzgerald: Then he went to Watts, because he was the one who could cross those lines. He loved them. He felt very deeply their injustice, and he was able to communicate to them.

My involvement took me to San Francisco, where I worked in much the same way that I had in the previous states.

Young: Was Teddy doing any campaigning in Indiana for Bobby?

Fitzgerald: I think so.

Young: He was doing some work, in Iowa mostly.

Fitzgerald: Yes, Iowa, the famous picture of Teddy on the bronco and then skiing off the ski lift. Yes, Teddy was there. But I know that in Hammond, Gary, Chicago Whiting—Teddy was not there, I don't believe.

Young: But he was in San Francisco, right, when Bobby was killed?

Fitzgerald: I was with him.

Young: You and Dave Burke?

Fitzgerald: That's right: Teddy, Dave Burke and I. Congressman [Phillip] Burton arranged a military jet to fly us from San Francisco to Los Angeles and then a helicopter to the hospital. And then Bobby passed. It was such a tragedy.

Young: You wonder how he could go on, how any of you could go on after two of them passed.

Fitzgerald: That's right. It was difficult. But Teddy's the backbone. Teddy's the one who encourages us all, the one who stays in contact and keeps the engine going.

Young: But it must have been very difficult for him for a while.

Fitzgerald: I think it was.

Young: For that summer, I think, he was grieving.

Fitzgerald: He was, and he still has moments, times even in the present that he'll speak, and the memory of Bobby and Jack comes up and he'll tremble a little bit, and you'll see that. I don't think he's ever gotten over it, and will ever totally get over it. They were all close, extraordinarily close.

Just a little sidelight: after Jack was assassinated, we were all in Washington. The morning of the funeral, I was assigned to go and be with my Aunt Rose. Bobby and Teddy marched behind the casket to the cathedral with the rest of the family, the girls. Aunt Rose's age just did not allow her to participate in that way, so I went to the White House to pick her up. She had me come upstairs to the living quarters, and she was all ready to go to the cathedral, but she said, "Bobby, I want to show you this now." She took me around on the second floor of the White House and showed me all of the rooms, and especially she stopped in the Lincoln bedroom. She told me how historic that this was, and she said, "I want you to remember this, because you may never have this opportunity again." Now here is a woman who is going to her son's funeral, and takes the time and the interest, and has the sense of history to do that with me.

Then I took her to the church, and Cardinal [Richard] Cushing came and met us at the back of the church. He walked up to her and said, "Rose, my dear," and put his hands on her. She knelt down on one knee and took his hand, kissed his ring, and said, "God bless you, Richard." Then, Cardinal Cushing took her by the arm and we waited for the casket to come. They met the casket, and she walked in with the family and the Cardinal. Here is woman who is burying her son, who was so humble and gracious to the Church, that you know that her religion was so deep.

You know, we've had a lot of fun, a lot of happiness, a lot of sadness, and I've met an awful lot of wonderful people who have brought happiness and fulfillment to my life. This era of my life I will never forget. It's been just too wonderful to imagine, and too sad, at times, to imagine.

Young: I've tried—One can't do this, but to put one's self in the shoes of a young man like Teddy: to be only 32 in the Senate, and the tragedies, the setbacks, the disappointments, the challenges, the very bad things that have happened, and so forth. I wonder what it is that allows a person to go through all of this and be what some people would say today is a survivor? It's much more than that. It hasn't got him down. He always gets up and goes on. His political life could have ended after Chappaquiddick. He didn't know but that it would.

Fitzgerald: That's right.

Young: He's going to go ahead.

Fitzgerald: I think he just feels that the torch has been passed, and he is the final one. He is there to carry the torch and to complete the unfinished business of his brothers, and to complete the vision that they had, and to complete the mission that they were on. I think that is something that keeps him going.

Young: Maybe to go beyond what even they could do because their lives were cut so short.

Fitzgerald: That's right.

Young: He's been in office the equivalent of four or five Presidential terms, dual terms. Bobby was never President. Jack was cut down before his first term was even over. You look at how many Presidents have come and gone during this period of time, and match what they could do or accomplish with what he's been able to do over the period of time. In a way, it's like he was kind of President, don't you think?

Fitzgerald: Yes, but also there are so many of these issues that he has involved himself in so deeply, over and above health, that were issues that were Jack's and Bobby's that he is just carrying on and trying to bring to fruition and fulfillment.

Young: It's been a very consistent commitment to all these areas that came very early.

Fitzgerald: Well, that's one of the things that people who are associated with him say, that you know what you've got when you deal with him. What he says is what he does. His consistency is there. He doesn't change in midstream. He's able to cross the bridges in order to achieve a goal, but yet his consistency is something that allows people to believe in him.

Young: And he's a straight shooter. He's not saying something for its current effect, and then he moves on to other things. One of his real adversaries in the Bush White House, who really crossed swords a lot with Teddy—This is not the current [George W.] Bush; this is the former [George H.W.] Bush—He said, "You know, he drove me up the wall. But that was one thing about him. You knew where he stood. He just let you know where he stood and what he was after, and when he told you he was going to do something, he always kept his word." He said, "You know, I didn't have that experience with a lot of our own folks."

Fitzgerald: That's right. That's true. I think that's part of his success.

Young: He's basically true to his principles, and he loves politics.

Fitzgerald: Oh yes, he loves politics, but also he's a lot of fun. People love to have him around. He walks in and he lights up a room. He really seizes the moment when he's there. He knows why he's there, but yet he can depart a little bit and have some fun, tell stories, sing some songs, but yet be consistent with what he believes.

Young: He's almost a man who's at home in the Senate, even more so than he might have been in the White House. But you become a Senator. You grow. It gets into your blood. You become a master of the institution. You know how it works, you honor it, you work within it, and you can accomplish wonders.

Fitzgerald: When he was sworn in for this last term when he was elected, I was in Washington at the swearing in. After the official ceremonies, there was a group back in his office, laughing and having a wonderful time. All of sudden he got up and he said, "I've got to leave you now for a while, because I've got to over and see my colleague, Senator [Robert] Byrd," who was sworn in on that day with him. Senator Byrd had his people at his office, and he just wanted to go congratulate and commiserate with Senator Byrd on their swearing in day together, and to show the respect and love and admiration that he has for the man. He just got up and left his friends. He came back, but first things first.

Young: And he and Byrd started out and really crossed swords.

Fitzgerald: Sort of, yes.

Young: Really crossed swords. It's very interesting to see how that changed.

Fitzgerald: Well, as we said, you know where you stand. His consistency—You can depend upon him, and that grows after 40-plus years.

Young: And his hard work. He works at his job. Both of them do. That's when—it's when Byrd saw him getting himself educated, doing his work as a Senator, doing his work on the committee, and qualifying by knowledge and merit on an issue. He would always become the most well informed on that subject of anybody else once he took hold of it. I think that's what first earned Byrd's respect. Byrd had no love for any of the Kennedys.

Fitzgerald: Well, I think a lot of the people that serve with him are fearful of getting involved with him on an issue and not doing their homework.

Young: They should be if they aren't. [*laughter*]

Fitzgerald: That's right.

Young: Well, do you have any parting thoughts you'd like to—

Fitzgerald: No, I'm just delighted to be able to sit with you and give you some of my thoughts on what has been a very rewarding life. I just thank you.

Young: Thank you for making this contribution. It becomes, after we're all dead and gone, what survives that people look back to when they connect with the past. Too often, it's just a bunch of paper, but at least in this project, they'll be able to hear people live, so to speak, speaking their own thoughts and describing the life as they knew it. I just think it's going to be a wonderful educational experience for people.

Fitzgerald: I think so. He was wonderful to work for because you knew that he was working just as hard.

Young: Very hard. The bag every night—you know about that.